

ANNUAL REPORT
OF
THE CENTER FOR HUMAN ENVIRONMENTS

For the period July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015 (FY 15)

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Doctoral student support

Contributing to the education of Graduate Center doctoral students has always been an essential part of CHE's mission. In the past fiscal year CHE projects have provided research employment or fellowship support for 17 GC students. Also of significance for their educational and professional formation, CHE funds in 2014-2015 have furnished support for travel to conferences for a number of GC students: Anthony Buttarro (meeting of the Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies in Lausanne, Switzerland); Kimberly Belmonte, Jennifer Chmielewski, Talia Sandwick (annual meeting of the National Women's Studies Association in San Juan, PR); Amanda Matles (Allied Media conference, Detroit MI); Andrew Greene and Sonia Sanchez (Race & Pedagogy National Conference in Tacoma, WA) and Bijan Kimiagar (CATS conference "Children as Actors for Transforming Society", Geneva, Switzerland). Also, while working on the many grants and contracts of the Center, our doctoral students often collaborate with others in research overseas. In the past year, for example, our doctoral students conducted research in a number of African countries and in India.

Major accomplishments of CHE researchers during the 2014-2015 fiscal year

FY 2014-2015 at the Center for Human Environments has been our most successful year ever. In addition to the continuation of support by most of our funders, we have seen the inauguration of several exciting new projects and initiatives.

CHE continues to operate as a federal structure linking related subgroups that address specific research areas, including children's environments, health and society, participatory action research, youth development, housing environments, public space, and the evaluation of social change and advocacy projects. Here are highlights from the past year's work conducted by these research subgroups:

Children's Environments Research Group (CERG)

Director: Prof. Roger Hart

CERG continues to expand its research in support of children's rights in many countries of the majority world through its partnerships with UNICEF, Plan International, WorldVision and Save the Children. In the past CERG collaborated with Plan to develop and pilot test a toolkit for use in its child protection program for adolescent girls in cities. ("*Because I Am a Girl*"). Two doctoral students from the Environmental Psychology Program field-tested these new materials with children and youth in West Africa and Indian cities. CERG is currently seeking funding to digitize the "Scorecards" approach to enable children and youth to critically assess and act upon neighborhood conditions, in partnership with the MIT Media Lab and Plan International.

Another important CERG endeavor for 2014-2015 was the enhancement of the research group's website, at <http://cergnyc.org/>. Among other features, the upgraded CERG website hosts the Child Friendly Places resource kit, an online tool developed and piloted over the past five years in nine countries with funding from UNICEF and other sponsors. The methods and tools continue to be adapted and scaled up, and have now been implemented

in more than 27 countries by a range of organizations interested in children's rights.

CERG is continuing its development of the *Article 15* project, on building the capacities of children to manage their own child rights-based organizations. Using data collected in partnership with Save the Children, World Vision, Plan and UNICEF, two doctoral students in Environmental Psychology recently concluded research on a year-long Spencer Foundation grant, "Analysis of the organizational structures and processes of new kinds of rights-based children's groups".

CERG members recently forged a relationship with ECPAT ("Ending Child Prostitution and Trafficking"), an international NGO headquartered in Bangkok. Two doctoral students worked with the CERG Director in developing a global plan for ECPAT on how to enable child 'survivors' of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) to be at the heart of the movement to eradicate CSE by involving them in the governance of their local organizations and in the international network.

CERG is currently returning to its long-term commitment to supporting the "child friendly city" approach to the fulfillment of children's rights by critically evaluating and preparing guidance materials for UNICEF for use by cities in many countries.

College Access: Research & Action (CARA)

Directors: Dr. Janice Bloom and Dr. Lori Chajet

The College Access: Research & Action (CARA) program continued to expand its programming and win recognition for its model of peer-led college access and college retention counseling. Now working with several dozen NYC public schools, CARA's centerpiece is its Youth Leadership for College Access program, which relies on peer-to-peer and near-to-peer models to support first-generation-to-college students through the college access and matriculation process. In 2014-2015 CARA won Pinkerton Foundation funding to initiate a multi-year collaboration with Graduate NYC! and CUNY Collaborative Programs in order to develop best practices for preventing first-generation college goers from dropping out in their early years of study. In 2015, CARA also began partnering with Prof. Fine's US Dept. of Education grant, "Moving the Dial on Inequality Challenges: Broadening Student Access and Success and Transforming Institutions through Campus-Community Engagement." Analysis of CARA's programming and dissemination of its model for expanding college access are expected to feature prominently in this four-year federal grant's activities.

In addition to funding from the Pinkerton Foundation, CARA has a five-year Multiple Task Award Contract with the NYC DOE, and also receives support from the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, the Capital One Foundation, JP Morgan Chase, the Local Initiatives Support Corp., the New York Community Trust, and the Fund for Public Schools. Following presentation of a documentary film on CARA's work at the Graduate Center in November 2014 (see details below, under Events), new funders added their support to CHE programming through the Graduate Center Foundation.

The Developmental Studies Research Group

Director: Prof. Colette Daiute

The research group is preparing a new proposal to the Spencer Foundation, which funded the 2013-2014 work on the community college as an agent of change in the current US policy debates over immigration reform. The new project, which will be submitted to the Lyle Spencer Award Competition, seeks to draw lessons about the positive potential of educational innovations and reform in addressing social conflict, inequality, and marginalization. The three case studies underpinning the planned multi-year project are: Serbian reform efforts to increase educational access for Roma children; a Brazilian program to reach pre-school children in the poorest urban neighborhoods (the “favelas”); and the CUNY Citizenship Now! Program and its response to the needs of undocumented students currently protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (commonly known as the “Dream Act”).

Health and Society Research Group

Director: Prof. Mary Clare Lennon

Prof. Mary Clare Lennon’s multi-year study of housing mobility and children’s well-being, funded by a consortium grant from the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council, came to a conclusion in May 2015 with a conference at University College London. The conference, “Moving home in the early years: family and child outcomes in the UK and the US,” included UK and US academic contributors, as well as representatives from governmental and nonprofit spheres. Prof. Lennon’s ESRC research was also the basis for a symposium organized by her at the Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies International Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland in October 2014; a special issue of the SLLS’s journal *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, which will be edited by Prof. Lennon, will include several of the papers presented.

Housing Environments Research Group (HERG)

Director: Prof. Susan Saegert.

HERG has focused in the last year on producing journal articles based on their recent housing research, and on organizing joint work with the NYC Community Land Initiative, a coalition of social justice and affordable housing organizations and academics. Also under development is a Fall 2015 meeting in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, which will pilot the application of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology to community-based planning efforts. Although Prof. Saegert’s 2015 proposal to the NSF on Community Land Trusts was declined, she has been encouraged by the strong reviews and by the NSF Geography Program Officer to re-apply under the Geography rubric in September. (*Note: a re-submission of this three-year NSF grant has been given preliminary approval as of Spring 2016.*)

The Public Science Project

Directors: Dr. Maria Torre and Prof. Michelle Fine

In the past year, the Public Science Project (PSP), led by Director Dr. Maria Torre in collaboration with Prof. Brett Stoudt, has continued its participatory action research work on policing practices as they affect local communities. The PSP's Morris Justice Project, which grew out of community-based research in a Bronx neighborhood noted for particularly high rates of "stop-and-frisk" policing, presented their project at the American Psychological Association annual meeting in August 2014, and at Bronx Community College and Binghamton University/SUNY in April 2015. PSP has also developed, in conjunction with Pratt Institute and the nonprofit Make the Road New York, a new project, "Researchers for Fair Policing," which has applied the community-based research model to an examination of policing practices in central Brooklyn neighborhoods.

In Fall 2014, the Public Science Project also started work on a new project, funded by the Ford Foundation and a consortium of other sponsors: "What's Your Issue? Informing a national agenda by and for LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth." This project has drawn on the expertise of a national advisory board with both academic and community-based representation, and culminated in April with a community meeting of 125 NYC-area LGBTQ youth, who are engaged as collaborators and co-researchers. In the coming year, the task of the project will be to disseminate a national survey of LGBTQ youth (developed in partnership with recent GC Psychology alumnus Dr. David Frost of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health) and produce a series of local- and national-level programs, events, and research meetings based on the survey findings.

In June 2015, PSP sponsored the fourth annual edition of its Critical Participatory Action Research Institute. Led by Dr. Torre and Prof. Fine, this week-long series of workshops drew 45 participants from schools, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and academic departments from the US and abroad.

Public Space Research Group

Director Prof. Setha Low

Professor Low has worked in 2015 with visiting scholar Helene Littke, who is writing her doctoral dissertation at Sweden's KTH Royal Institute of Technology. A principal focus of their joint work has been the changing relationship between the urban environment and nature, with Stockholm's conceptualization of the "green walkable city," and New York City's recent development of the High Line as a public park taken as key examples. Prof. Low is also Co-PI for a NSF proposal on public space, submitted in partnership with her colleague Dr. Suzanne Scheld at the University of California, Northridge.

ActKnowledge (AK)

Director: Dr. Heléne Clark

ActKnowledge, which has been a CHE affiliate for more than a decade, has been increasingly involved with international projects as interest in its Theory of Change model has grown. In the past year, AK staff developed an initial Theory of Change with UN Women, a United Nations entity with responsibility for women's equality and empowerment. The Theory of Change focused in particular on economic empowerment and on the preconditions to achieving it for women across different regions of the world. AK has also worked recently with a group convened by UNICEF-UK to develop a Theory of Change to promote children's rights within the local authority structures of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition, working with the UK government's Department of Energy and Climate Change, AK collaborated on a Theory of Change to aid evaluation of a major UK program to ameliorate climate change and promote community cohesion through development of solar and other locally-based power generation technologies.

In Ireland, AK has worked with the national NGO "Inclusion Ireland" to develop a Theory of Change for advancing the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. In the past year, AK also collaborated with Ireland's Gay and Lesbian Equality Network in creating a roadmap for full LGBT equality following the achievement of civil marriage equality in the nation's recent referendum.

With the NGO Action Aid, AK has undertaken research to map and understand the often non-linear nature of change in developing countries; this research includes case studies on local development projects in Uganda, Nigeria, and Pakistan. AK also works with a European Commission group to advise on applying a Theory of Change perspective to an economic development project involving small business loans in various EU countries. And for Oxfam Australia, AK developed a Theory of Change for the organization's Youth Partnership Program, a global youth development program that focuses on supporting young people working for positive change locally and globally.

Based on its long partnership with the Children's Aid Society, AK is collaborating with the National Center for Community Schools to build the capacity of community school programs around the US so that they can develop clear program models and specific indicators of success. AK has also been a multi-year evaluator on two community school programs with close ties to the Children's Aid Society— Hartford Community Schools, CT, and Paterson Public Schools, NJ. In July 2015, AK will begin a new partnership with the NYC Community Learning Schools Initiative to evaluate community learning school programs at 30 schools in the city.

Following an evaluation of a Colorado state initiative to promote inclusion of LGBT young people in public education, AK has done further work with the stakeholders to develop a Theory of Change that will underpin the initiative moving forward. The theory focuses on the roles of state-level organizations, local school districts and individual schools in promoting inclusion and addressing the bullying and harassment experienced by many LGBT young people.

AK's online software package, Theory of Change Online (TOCO), designed to build organizational capacity in creating and making use of social change models, has now reached 18,000 registrations worldwide. A new version with many more features will be released later this year.

Welcoming a new member of CHE

In 2015 CHE was also pleased to welcome as a faculty affiliate the Graduate Center's newly appointed Marilyn Gittell Professor in Urban Studies, Celina Su. Professor Su is currently planning the first national meeting of the URBAN Network, an association of social scientists engaged in research on the urban environment, which is scheduled to take place at the Graduate Center in March 2016. CHE received start-up funding from MIT for the URBAN Network in past years, and new grants from the Spencer Foundation and the W. T. Grant Foundation, channeled to CHE through a subaward from the University of Massachusetts, will be allocated to support this first national meeting.

Major events sponsored by the research groups at the Center for Human Environments during the past year

1. ***The Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology***. Introduced by Michelle Fine and Maria Torre, Public Science Project at CHE, with panel discussion by the editors and selected contributors. Supported by Springer Publishing. Graduate Center, Sept. 26, 2014.
2. ***What was the Detroit Geographical Expedition and what is its relevance now?*** *Gwendolyn Warren and Cindi Katz in Conversation*. Supported by a grant to Prof. Cindi Katz (a long-time CHE faculty affiliate) from the Antipode Foundation. Graduate Center, Oct. 16, 2014.
3. ***Great expectations or failed aspirations? Findings from Young Lives, a longitudinal study of children in Ethiopia, Andhra Pradesh (India), Peru and Vietnam***. Presenter: Virginia Morrow, Dept. of International Development, and University of Oxford. Co-sponsored by the Children's Environments Research Group at CHE. Graduate Center, November 4, 2014.
4. ***Stepping Up: A documentary about a group of extraordinary teenagers who dream of being the first in their families to go to college—and are determined to bring their peers along with them***. Film showing and Q & A session moderated by Prof. Michelle Fine. Supported by a grant from the Turrell Foundation. Graduate Center, November 20, 2014.
5. ***Book Presentation: A Critical Youth Studies for the 21st Century***. Supported by Brill Publishing, RMIT University and Monash University (Australia). Graduate Center, March 19, 2015.
6. **Second annual meeting of the Society for Qualitative Inquiry In Psychology (SQIP), a section of Division 5 of the American Psychological Association**. Supported by contributions from Duquesne University, Fielding Graduate University, and the University of Saskatchewan. Graduate Center, May 14, 2015
7. ***Moving home in the early years: family and child outcomes in the UK and the US***. Concluding conference for Prof. Mary Clare Lennon's ESRC-funded work with UK colleagues, 2013-2015. Conference held at London University's Institute of Education, May 27, 2015.