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AHEAD

Social Work Research at the University of Michigan

**INTERSECTIONALITY
AND POSITIONALITY**

**DATA MINING HELPS
MICHIGAN KIDS**

**COMMUNITY-ENGAGED
HIV RESEARCH**

WORLD AIDS DAY 2018



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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welcome



It is with great pleasure that I introduce the third issue of *AHEAD*, a magazine focusing on social work research at the University of Michigan. This issue honors the profession's commitment to building knowledge that is grounded in sound theory and myriad research methods.

Social work has a history of interdisciplinary research, and this is reflected in our School's joint PhD program and in the many collaborations we have across the U-M campus. From the beginning of the social work profession in the late 1800s,

social workers have borrowed from and contributed to social science theories, concepts, ideas and methods. We use both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer contemporary questions, and we mix different methodological approaches to study problems, the complexity of which could not be apprehended by using just one or another method.

This issue of *AHEAD* highlights three areas of theory development and research in our school. First, we introduce the concept of intersectionality as a major line of research pursued by our Critical Intersectionality Learning Community, led by Professor Beth Reed. Intersectionality is situated at the core of social work's mission and of our School's five-year strategic plan.

Second, we describe key contributions achieved by our Child and Adolescent Data Lab, co-directed by Professors Joe Ryan and Brian Perron. The Lab conducts applied research using big data to inform child welfare and juvenile justice policy and practice decisions.

Third, we introduce the Interprofessional Collaboration Implementation Group (ICI Group), which I lead in collaboration with colleagues here in Michigan, in New York, in Brazil and in Spain. The ICI Group focuses on interprofessional collaboration as a key variable to improve access and delivery of research-based services in myriad areas of practice.

This issue of *AHEAD* also reports on our School's celebration of World AIDS Day, which took place on December 3, 2018. The theme for World AIDS Day 2018 was "Know Your HIV Status." But myriad forms of stigma and discrimination deter people from taking an HIV test. Therefore, we come together to affirm that HIV testing is a crucial first step to accessing treatment and ensuring healthy lives for people living with HIV. We concluded that we still have a lot of work to do!

I look forward to highlighting the work of more individual faculty members and research groups in the coming issues of *AHEAD*.

Rogério M. Pinto, PhD

Associate Dean for Research

University of Michigan School of Social Work



INTERSECTIONALITY & POSITIONALITY

Contributions from the U-M School of Social Work

Intersectionality in social work research: Our school's history

In 1989, "intersectionality" entered the language courtesy of Kimberlé Crenshaw, LL.M, JD, in her paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," written for the University of Chicago Legal Forum. An existing body of law dealt with race, but it assumed maleness. An existing body of law addressed gender, but it assumed whiteness. Crenshaw demonstrated that bodies of law focused only on race or on gender failed to capture the impacts of race and gender operating *together*. Although Crenshaw's was the first documented use of the term "intersectionality," women of color scholars and activists had argued long before that focusing on only one source of oppression at a time "erased" their experiences because race, gender, economic class and other factors operate together in their lives.

Intersectionality approaches recognize that multiple culturally defined characteristics, called positionalities, are associated with different levels and types of power.

They interact in complex ways, resulting in much less justice for some and systematic advantage for others. In the United States, important positionalities include race, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, age, disability, sexuality/LGBTQ issues, religion, economic class and immigration status.

At the U-M School of Social Work, considerable developmental and evaluative research incorporating intersectionality frameworks has been conducted as a way to learn from and guide the implementation of curricular changes in the early 2000s. At that time, we introduced a subset of required courses and a portion of field education "intensively focused" on justice, including four interrelated concepts: privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice (collectively dubbed "PODS").

In 2012, a group of Michigan Social Work faculty with Associate Professor Beth Glover Reed as principal investigator, received a grant from the National Center for Institutional Diversity (NCID) to explore how to incorporate intersectionality into their own scholarship and to focus on its applications within social work.

Scholarship in “Critical Intersectionality” and Positionalities

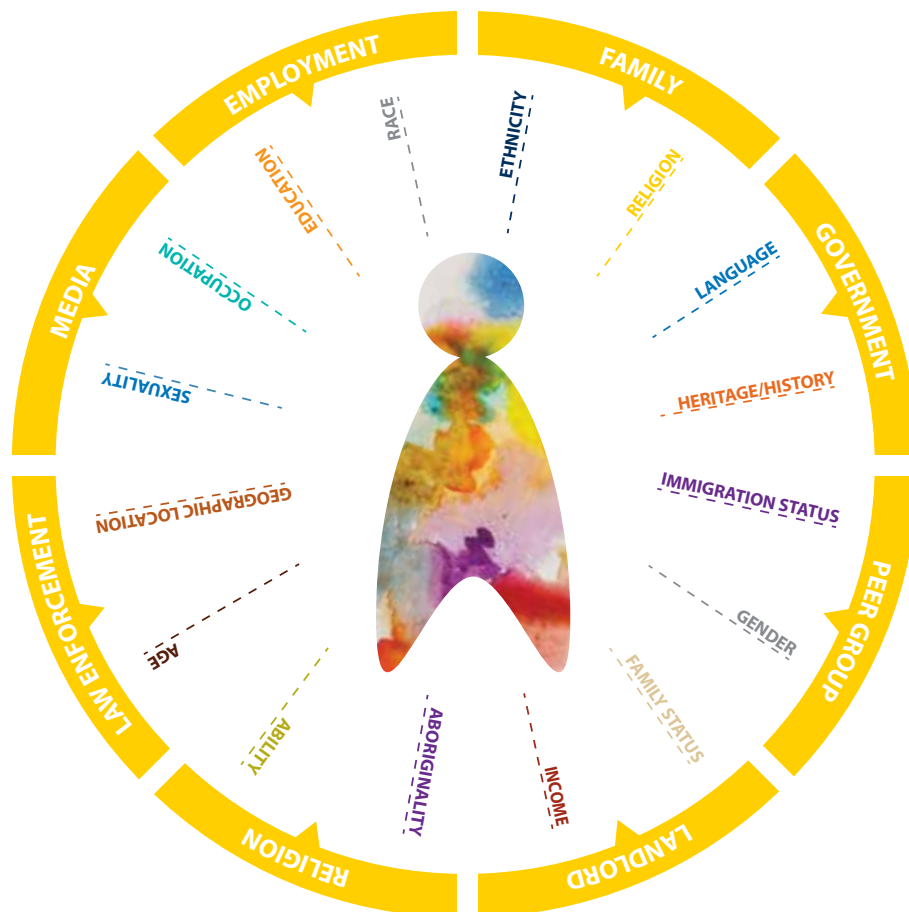
In the NCID grant, the term “critical” was added to the title and to the goals of the work as a corrective to the erosion of how intersectionality was being understood and operationalized as it entered into more common use. Critical Social Theory focuses intensively on sources and consequences of oppression, with pro-justice goals. Although intersectionality was intended by its founders to focus on interacting systems of oppression and privilege, many now use this term to focus on people simply navigating multiple “identities.” This individualizes the concepts, paying less attention to larger system forces and their impacts over time. Our faculty are pioneers in this particular area of research.

Faculty involved in this project felt that a focus primarily on identities raised serious ethical questions for those concerned about justice and about knowledge that can inform work for justice. An emphasis on identities can

obscure the very forces that create and sustain injustice and produce incomplete knowledge that over-focuses on individual factors and responsibility. Well-intended people and researchers may even contribute to oppression by excluding systemic frameworks that help illuminate how oppression works.

“Different people in the same environment have different experiences, depending on their positionalities and how power is operating around them.”

Focusing primarily on identities can also lead to what Michigan Social Work Professor Larry M. Gant calls an “oppression Olympics:” people with different positionalities comparing themselves with others, struggling to establish who is more oppressed. This interferes with their ability to collaborate to challenge how systems of power work together, affect everyone, and recreate inequalities.





Beth Glover Reed

Research to understand oppression and to predict the effects of oppression may fall flat without consideration of multiple positionalities and without a full consideration of how individuals, groups and communities perceive their own positionalities vis-à-vis experienced oppression. In order to best understand these concepts, faculty at the School of Social Work have worked in groups.

"The very nature of intersectional work means you can't do it alone," Reed says. "An individual is bounded by their positionalities, so you want a research team that brings together different positionalities. Then you navigate those differences in a way that enriches the work and lets you see what you wouldn't see otherwise."

The initial group to tackle intersectionality in our School focused on elements of justice or injustice in different arenas important to social work (child welfare, health and mental health, intimate partner violence, HIV, alcohol/other drugs, higher education and K-12 schools, Jewish

communal services) and to different populations, but all were concerned with *interacting* positionalities. Sources of power identified include structural (locations), cultural (meanings), social processes (how systems work), and interpersonal (relational) components.

"Student experiences matter to us. So, we look at how students with different positionalities navigate personal and social stress."

These also shape and interact with other demographic, social or professional categories, e.g., employment and family roles—as embodied in individuals or groups.

Critical Intersectionality in Action in Research

In 2012, the same year that Reed and her colleagues received the NCID grant, former Dean Laura Lein founded the Social Work School's Learning Communities, and the earlier PODS group evolved into the Critical Intersectionality Learning Community (CILC). Through various activities,

intersectionality would become an important subject of scientific inquiry in the School, and we would emphasize the implications for teaching and practice. The transition from the NCID grant to the Learning Community was marked by a working conference on critical intersectionality methodologies relevant for research attended by faculty, doctoral and postdoctoral students.

Members of the CILC worked on multiple ways to develop and operationalize theories of privilege, oppression, diversity (intersectionality) and social justice that are useable in social work research, education and practice. Research included a complex survey and focus groups conducted in southeast Michigan communities and with MSW students. Some of the focus groups were intracategorical, meaning that everyone in the group shared one or more positionalities, although members may vary substantially on other positionalities. Others were inter-categorical, with no positionality common for all members. Participants were asked to identify their positionalities,



Mieko Yoshihama

how different positionalities influenced their lives, and how these varied in different contexts. “We wanted to translate complex, evolving concepts into something people could use,” Reed says.

Methods for Studying Critical Intersectionality

Attention to critical theory and intersectional complexity creates challenges in designing and implementing research methods that capture key elements in language relevant for different positionality categories. This called for evolution in research instruments and interview protocols. “Every time we went to a new group of participants,” Reed says, “we needed new or modified questions.” The rich data that CILC has now amassed provides great opportunities to develop innovative analytic strategies to generate further empirical evidence about intersectionality in daily living. In addition to producing new knowledge, another goal of CILC is to develop ways to help people navigate often difficult lives, create systems of meanings and relationships, and learn more about how to combat oppression and work for justice.

The complexity also creates challenges in data analyses. “You must account for multiple, interacting positionalities, all of which can change with context,” Reed says. “You have complex environmental variables and complex personal and group variables, and how do you measure them and their relationships? Different people in the same environment have different experiences, depending on their positionalities and how power is operating around them.”

“We want to produce knowledge that will further justice.”

Professor Mieko Yoshihama adds, “Only a few studies truly capture intersectional experiences. You are documenting how people experience the world. You must develop a methodology that captures how intersectional forces impact lives and that captures shifting experiences of diverse people in a racialized, divisive, marginalizing, disempowering society.” Many researchers advise qualitative analysis, arguing that quantitative methods are incompatible with intersectional perspectives.

Yoshihama refuses to choose. “I let the research questions and project goals point to the method. If there is no method suitable to those goals and questions, we create a new method. I do believe we can capture quantitatively and qualitatively the ways in which multiple systems intersect to create privilege and oppression and how these in turn affect people’s day-to-day lives.”

What can we learn for these methods?

In a focus group conducted with men whose families were originally from the MENA regions (Middle East, North Africa), Larry Gant recalls an example of intersectionality and positionality with real-world consequences. Many of the men had found work in healthcare professions. Participants identified systems of power and contexts such as hospitals’ administrative structures and groups with which they interact: patients, families, physicians, nurses, students, social workers, etc., as well as interactions between some of these groups. Also, they discussed American society in general, observing, through the lens of its many cultural assumptions about Muslims and Arabs, the men as they went

“You can’t live if nobody interacts with you, so you adapt. You try to change yourself as much as you can.”

to work, perhaps stopping and interacting with people at gas stations, airports, parking garages or restaurants. These men navigated larger Muslim and ethnic communities as well. Here, the overlapping positionalities might include (at least) Arab, Muslim, male, and the individual’s age and immigration status, as well as roles related to employment or student status and complex family and community responsibilities.

In the focus group, the men described how they deliberately minimized their ethnic and religious characteristics to avoid negative consequences and gain status in the structures they had to navigate in order to hold jobs. Said one, “For me, it’s about the beard. I try to make sure it’s not long. And in our religion, we say ‘Allah.’ When I talk to a patient of a different religion, I avoid this word.” The men also reported altering their accents, and adopting generic diminutive “American” nicknames like “Buddy” and “Sonny.” Another participant explained the alterations, and, in so doing, articulated the dilemma he and his friends faced:

“You can’t live if nobody interacts with you, so you try to adapt. You try to be accepted by others. You try to change yourself as much as you can.”

There were also examples, especially among younger participants in another group, of being “proudly Muslim,” emphasizing these positionalities through dress, for instance, in order to invite questions and to educate others. Perhaps most intriguing, Gant’s focus group was the first time many of these men realized that others also engaged in such behaviors, suggesting that they were navigating these consequences mostly alone, without support.

Gant also reported on findings from student surveys and focus groups within the School. Systems of power include admissions procedures and the curriculum, norms and values about social work itself, classroom processes and various types of relationships and interactions.



Larry Gant

The Intersectionality Team

An early working conference on CI methodology was implemented by Beth Glover Reed, Mieko Yoshihama, Daphne Watkins, Reuben Miller, Michael Woodford, and Rikki Patton, a postdoctoral student, with assistance from doctoral students Finn Bell, Angie Perone and Ed-Dee Williams.

Those involved in designing and implementing the research methods included Reed and Yoshihama, Larry Gant, Robert Ortega, Sandra Momper, Katie Richards-Schuster, Pinar Üstel, Cintia Huitel, and other doctoral and MSW students.

Later on Addie Weaver and Emily Nicklett provided leadership in coordinating various efforts to collaborate on applying intersectionality methods in different types of research and practice, and Tina Jiwatram-Negron, Odessa Gonzalez Benson, Angie Perone and Shanna Kattari provided leadership in conceptualizing conference presentations and disseminating results.

Other faculty and doctoral students attended various sessions, and several cadres of MSW students assisted with focus group implementation and with data analyses.

Some of these forces are explicit and intended, while others are implicit—unintended consequences of how things are perceived and implemented. “Student experiences matter to us in a clear, material way,” says Gant, “so, we looked at how students with different positionalities were navigating personal and social stress. Their positionalities might be transformed dramatically simply by landing on this campus. Those defined by race and ethnicity, as well as those struggling financially, may get defined solely based on these positionalities. Class positionality may determine with whom they associate.”

“The impacts of positionalities hinge on yet another issue—*visibility*. Reed notes, “Within the School, you have to navigate to your positionalities as part of your social work practice.” But some positionalities are more visible and salient than others. Some LGBTQ students say that “people just know” about their sexuality or gender expression, while others must repeatedly choose whether or not to disclose their positionality to others. Students may also have psychological issues or they may have visible or less visible physical disabilities. How people identify themselves and how much they disclose often affects physical and emotional health and well-being.

Why we study what we study: The Long Run

Why does Yoshihama choose to study intersectionality? “Everything is intersectional. Long before intersectionality took off in academia, I talked about power, structure, privilege, oppression and marginalization. To practice social work requires an intersectional lens.” Larry Gant’s reasons for studying intersectionality sounds similar. “I have navigated different identities all my life,” Gant says. “I have been doing intersectional work and been an intersectional being all my life, personally and professionally.”

“In the long run,” Reed explains, “we want to produce knowledge that will further justice by capturing the complexity of how power, privilege and oppression work for different positionalities and in different contexts”. By pursuing theory development and empirical methods for understanding intersectionality, our colleagues in CILC are contributing to a large dialogue that will enhance social work’s impact on the ability to intervene in order to create justice and equality in society. **M**

The Future of Michigan's Kids

Our Child and Adolescent Data Lab Is Improving Their Chances

The kids are not all right

In 2016, more than one in five Michigan children lived in poverty. Some five percent of the state's children are currently in out-of-home care, and from 2010 to 2016, the rate of Michigan children confirmed as victims of abuse or neglect rose 30 percent. In some Michigan public schools, it is estimated that more than 50 percent of students have experienced investigations for maltreatment prior to third grade. Recurrence of abuse is a perennial issue. To reverse these trends, the state must first understand them, must see fully their forms and dimensions before they can choose plans of action. This requires data. To get the right data, the state has turned to the School of Social Work's Child and Adolescent Data Lab. The lab is mining mountains of Child Protective Services' (CPS) data, some of it quantitative but much of it textual.

The lab, co-directed by Professors Joe Ryan and Brian Perron, is an applied research center that uses big data to inform child welfare and juvenile justice policy and practice decisions. Now in its fourth year, the lab's public-private partnership with MDHHS (the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services), and with certain Michigan foundations and child welfare agencies, helps the state find data-driven ways to reduce child abuse and neglect, reduce recurrence of maltreatment, and help children in out-of-home care find permanent homes.

After being sued in 2006 for neglect of children in foster care, the state's welfare system came under the supervision of a federal monitor and so had to meet federal standards for reducing the recurrence of maltreatment in care. Data analysis became the great need. "Normally," Joe Ryan explains, "a researcher would ask the state for data, publish a paper and give it back to the state—but the state didn't ask for it and probably won't use it. In the wake of that suit, though, we went to the state and asked what it needed. We asked, 'What are the issues you'd like to address?'" Preventing recurrence of child maltreatment and achieving permanence for children in care were two of those issues.

What the state knows—and how

Data mined by the lab now helps the state see, for example, where and under what specific family circumstances recurrence happens. "We can look at kids' involvement across all state systems—CPS, juvenile justice and so on—with our ultimate focus on *prevention*," says Terri Gilbert, MSW, program manager for the lab and a LEO lecturer at the School of Social Work. Before Gilbert came here, she was state Director of the Child Welfare Improvement Bureau, then state Director of Juvenile

Justice. "When I was a bureaucrat," she says, "we had questions about kids and families that we didn't have resources or expertise to answer. The Data Lab mines state data for answers to those questions." The lab then reviews reports that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services sends to federal monitors.

The fascinating innovation is the lab's application of text mining—a tool long used in the healthcare and insurance industries and others—to child welfare. When we think of a university "data lab," we probably think of quantitative data. But Perron explains that, "the state has tens of thousands of case notes and text summaries on children and families. Unstructured text contains nuances that cannot be captured in quantitative data summaries. Making that text analyzable—quantifying it—produces insights that can save the state money and create better outcomes for children, such as permanency in foster care." The Casey Family Foundation in Washington, DC funded the Data Lab pilot; Casey Family Programs funds the text mining and recurrence work in particular.

What data does the state have, and how do they get it? Reports of child maltreatment reach CPS by many pathways, including an abuse and neglect hotline (855-444-3911). CPS requests basic, quantifiable information: What type of abuse is alleged? Who is the perpetrator? What is their relationship to the victim? What are the victim's age, gender and race? These types of questions come with boxes that can be checked, and answers can be tabulated.

A worker then investigates the allegation and summarizes their findings in a wider-ranging, more individualistic text document of about 1,500 words, also entered into the state database. About 300,000 of these summaries,

Data Lab intern Lindsey Brabb introduces a new addition to the team, her son, Teddy, to fellow interns Alex Lu and Jill Schaefer. Students in the lab benefit from a collegial culture and the variety of life experience they bring to the work.





Left to right: Joseph P. Ryan, CADL Co-director; Terri Gilbert, CADL Program Manager; Brian Perron, CADL Co-Director

going back a decade, are available to the Data Lab. The summaries, along with the quantifiable information, together create longitudinal data sets that track children from the initial reports of abuse to the time their cases are closed. The text summaries can answer questions that the basic questions don't, such as: What factors contributed to the child's situation? Was there a pattern of domestic violence? Was there substance abuse in the home. If so, what types of substances are mentioned?

Text mining and linkages to other data

To mine text for this information, the lab has built a program to search summaries for key words and phrases related to certain issues. This is a nuanced process. You would certainly want your program to find "substance abuse" or "addiction," but you would want it to find other, tangentially related terms, as well. Some terms, by themselves, might point in any number of directions (take the word "prescription") but they might indeed point to substance abuse if they appeared in combination with words such as, for example, "dependence." Those in the lab who mine and code the text must discuss terms one by one and reach agreement on what they might mean in relation to other, established terms. Coders must also recognize ways that different caseworkers report similar incidents or situations. One caseworker might strive to be nonjudgmental. Another might be more blunt.

Text mining thus extracts potentially salient facts, patterns, assertions and syntactic relationships from the summaries. Once extracted, these individual pieces can be counted and tabulated, just as the data on race, gender, identity of abuser, etc., can be. From its text, the state then has data suitable for analysis, visualization, and integration with other data, already structured, from other sources. "The mining lets clear, actionable insights arise from text," says Gilbert. "Our program looks at those family disposition summaries holistically and in context, and finds out, for example, what might have led to recurrence of maltreatment. We structure what is found and return empirical evidence to the state so they understand children's lives—including family patterns of substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence. Now the

state can make data-driven decisions. From the text we mine and the data we structure, Lansing can develop and evaluate better services for Michigan kids."

"The CPS dataset is the keystone of our work," says Andrew Moore, Data Analyst in the lab, "because of the linkages we can make from it. The most basic dataset we have comes from CPS intakes, when people call the state hotline. If a case is opened, we then have information about the family's continued involvement. If a child is found to be a victim of abuse or neglect, we can follow them for a year and note recurrence, which the state needs to track to meet federal requirements. If services

"From the text we mine and the data we structure, Lansing can develop and evaluate better services for Michigan kids."

are rendered to the family, however, that should push down incidences of recurrence. Later, unfortunately, a child might move into the juvenile justice system and then the adult criminal justice system." Preliminary research from the lab suggests that youth with a history of both CPS and juvenile justice involvement have an increased risk for criminal justice involvement as adults.

With all the data at the lab's disposal, there are still missing pieces, hence the "linkages" Moore mentions to other entities with CPS relationships. Kids' school data, for example, is not available to the lab. It is housed at the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) in Lansing, protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. That does not mean, however, that the lab cannot collaborate with educational providers. "If we can work with those who have school data or family data or information about the perpetrators," Moore says, "we can detect details, such as whether a family conflict is temporary or ongoing. We might find precursors to the events that bring children into foster care."

Analyzing those precursors could help the state practice prevention. Two families might experience stress due to inadequate housing, and that stress might play out as abuse. For one family, the precursor to the housing issue might be a parent laid off from their job. That family's response might be different from another family that also had a housing issue, but with a different precursor, such as illness or addiction. "If we knew those family patterns and precursors," Moore says, "the services put in place could be better tailored."

Student involvement

Over the past three years, School of Social Work students have played important roles in the work of the Data Lab. "Our students address social change and use evidence and science to improve lives," says Joe Ryan. "We have top-notch students in these areas, interested in social justice, poverty, and child welfare. They are pushing the needle on innovation, building partnerships, and helping to meet the needs of families and the state through policy."

Gilbert defines the type of student the lab seeks: "We look for students on the School's Social Policy and Evaluation track, in particular those interested in research. We also have great opportunities for management track students. The students get to work with our principal investigators and data analysts to interpret the data and write up findings." A recent example of this would be work done by graduate student Alex Lu to streamline the qualitative coding being done for the CPS text-mining project. The lab needed a secure and user-friendly tool for its qualitative coding staff to review and annotate the text data with which they would be working.

Alex, a dual-degree student in the Schools of Information and Social Work, designed and built a custom software application in collaboration with the lab's data analysts.

Since its inception, the lab has hosted 14 students as field placement interns or research assistants—training the next generation to think critically about using data to address child welfare.

The tool has since been used to review hundreds of summaries, and it may well be adapted and repurposed for future projects.

Community partnerships have been highly productive for the faculty and students involved in the lab. The lab partners with private agencies, engaging communities in specific projects, such as a current community-based impact study in Kent County, in western Michigan. Kent County is highly privatized, and the lab will be evaluating the performance of providers with whom the County contracts.

The next generation benefits

At the suggestion of School of Social Work students, the Lab went out into the community and identified 15 young people involved in the Michigan juvenile justice system to pilot an advisory board that would add a youth voice to policy development in juvenile justice. These youth presented a resolution to the Washtenaw County Commission to raise the age of criminal jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years old, and the resolution was adopted. (A similar resolution is pending in Ingham County, which includes Lansing). The youth board now works out of Ann Arbor's Dispute Resolution Center. Two youth advisory board members have been appointed by Governor Snyder to sit on the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice in Lansing.

So the next generation is already at work on this unique and productive partnership. The Michigan child welfare system, once the target of a lawsuit, now has resources of which it might never have dreamed. "No other state has taken these data sources and linked them up in long-term partnership to drive policy and practice," says Joe Ryan, and then he concludes with what are, for researchers, the magic words: "Now other states can replicate what we're doing." **M**





Celebrating World AIDS Day

RESEARCH, PRACTICE AND ADVOCACY

Activists, practitioners and academics working in the HIV/AIDS field came from across southern Michigan to the U-M School of Social Work on December 3, 2018, marking the 30th anniversary of World AIDS Day, an annual commemoration begun in London in 1988. (The actual day is December 1.) This was the School's first World AIDS Day symposium, held in collaboration with the Michigan HIV/AIDS Council (MHAC). Rogério M. Pinto, the School's Associate Dean for Research and a member of the Council, organized a program to honor the struggles of those who live with HIV, the day-to-day work of those advocating for HIV prevention and effective treatment, and those researching HIV-related issues.

In her welcome, the School's dean, Lynn Videka, recalled the feelings of shame, stigma, and helplessness of those diagnosed with the disease in the 1980s and 1990s, and reminded the audience that, in many cases, these challenges continue to this day. She and Pinto also acknowledged great progress made in the treatment and prevention of AIDS and shifts in attitudes toward those infected with HIV. The program that followed focused largely on progress and challenges in the state of Michigan.

Keynote speaker Dawn Lukowski of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services addressed recent trends in HIV and AIDS prevention in Michigan, and reported on the success of new programs in Detroit and Flint. She concluded provocatively, stating, "We know how to stop the spread of AIDS!" She then ticked off such solutions as expanded HIV testing, syringe exchange programs for injection drug users and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), that is, the use of pharmaceuticals to help prevent disease in those who may be exposed to HIV.

Prevention aided by evidence-based interventions and interprofessional collaboration (IPC) is a focus of research conducted at the School by Pinto's ICI Group (see related story on page 17), a group of researchers, practitioners and community members who have helped guide Pinto's work since it began at Columbia University in 2008, and which, since



Keynote speaker Dawn Lukowski of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services addresses World AIDS Day participants. Right: Assembling tributes to families, friends and people affected by HIV/AIDS the world over.



Photos of World AIDS Day award winners, clockwise from upper left: Amy Hamdi, Michigan HIV/AIDS Council, Lansing, MI; Andre Truss, Acting Unit Manager, Michigan HIV/AIDS Drug Assistance Program, Lansing; Levi Berkshire, Community AIDS Resource and Education Services, Kalamazoo; and Leon Golson, UNIFIED – HIV Health and Beyond, Ypsilanti.

2015, has included several Michiganders. Pinto explained that research shows that IPC improves access to all the services Lukomski spoke about in her keynote address. He then presented awards to four “local heroes” active in the struggle against HIV/AIDS in Michigan, one of whom, Leon Golson, belongs to the ICI Group.

Three of the award recipients are members of the Michigan HIV/AIDS Council: Levi Berkshire, a case manager at Community AIDS Resource and Education Services (CARES) in Kalamazoo, who described CARES’ support and prevention efforts; Amy Hamdi, who came with her family and who narrated her personal journey, launched by an AIDS diagnosis the day after her high school graduation; and ICI Group member Leon Golson of UNIFIED – HIV Health and Beyond in Ypsilanti, who movingly recalled a personal history that began in an era when little was known about HIV and prejudice ran high against LGBT people and people living with HIV. The fourth award recipient, Andre Truss, Acting Unit Manager of the Michigan HIV/AIDS Drug Assistance Program (MIDAP), discussed early interventions services and barrier reduction programs.

One phrase repeated often throughout the morning was “Ryan White funds,” a reference to critical federal funds provided via the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS

Resource Emergency (CARE) Act, passed by Congress in 1990. The Act was named after the young hemophiliac who contracted AIDS in the 1980s and gained national attention for his fight to attend public school in his hometown. Following the awards ceremony, the audience heard from Ryan’s mother, Jeanne White-Ginder, a seasoned AIDS activist (she helped pass the CARE Act and has maintained a full schedule of appearances since), who recounted her family’s struggles and urged the audience to join her in carrying forward her son’s legacy of determination, education and compassion in the face of devastating illness and prejudice.

The day’s presenters and attendees adjourned to the School’s downstairs atrium for a communal meal and for two related art activities. Paying tribute to those they knew affected by HIV/AIDS, participants turned personal feelings and memories into art by creating memorial panels for a paper “quilt,” a counterpart to the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, which since 1987 has honored more than 90,000 individuals who died from the disease. Our equally impassioned if smaller quilt included panels honoring family (Hamdi’s children honored their activist mother, and White-Ginder drew a large, bright red ribbon in honor of her son), friends, and both survivors and the dead in general.

Quilt panels went up just outside a small room off the Atrium which housed a Social Justice Art Collection, ten fine art works belonging to the School, each of which addressed AIDS and/or social justice. Visitors who joined the day's awardees to tour the collection saw works by Keith Haring, Ross Bleckner, William Kentridge and many others. (The School's collection overall comprises

"We have not made survivors comfortable with disclosing. I am thinking especially about the LGBT community and sex workers."

more than 90 pieces, with work by those above as well as by Frank Stella, Diane Arbus, Robert Rauschenberg and more.) Larry Gant, appointed jointly to the School of Social Work and to U-M's Stamps School of Art and Design, spoke about the collection and praised Pinto for his ability "to not only talk about art but to engage with

art" as part of a day devoted to social justice and public health issues.

The day's activities also addressed personal health and well-being. Each participant left with a small gift bag containing a stress ball, a pouch of lavender (the scent of which relieves stress) and other self-care items. The crowd thinned but the paper quilt had grown to several dozen panels. As one social work student observed, "It is about understanding and compassion. We have not made survivors comfortable with disclosing. I am thinking especially about the LGBT community as well as sex workers. It is time for us to go further with our vision."

Those who attended the School's 2018 World AIDS Day activities left very well equipped—with inspiration and information—to further their visions of a world without the many challenges posed by HIV and AIDS. **M**

Below: Participants gather materials to create their AIDS quilt panels. Second Row (left to right): Viewing the Social Justice Art Collection. Special guest speaker Jeanne White-Ginder displays her panel, dedicated to her son, AIDS activist Ryan White (1971-1990).





ENGAGING COMMUNITIES TO CLOSE THE RESEARCH-TO-PRACTICE GAP

The ICI Group

Social work and health research show that the general population can wait years, even decades, for new drugs or evidence-based behavioral therapies to complete testing and reach those who need them. We call this the “research-to-practice” gap.

To help narrow the gap between research and practice, Rogério M. Pinto of the U-M School of Social Work has established the Interprofessional Collaboration Implementation Group—the ICI Group—to identify solutions at the social service agency, individual provider and consumer levels. The group began as an Implementation Community Collaborative Board (ICCB) at the Columbia University School of Social Work in New York City in 2008. Pinto, now a professor and the associate dean for research at Michigan Social Work, has expanded the ICCB

“ICI has deepened my appreciation for community collaboration in ensuring relevant, quality findings to inform practice and policy.”

to include professors, postdocs, PhD and MSW students, and providers of social, public health and medical services from Michigan. Pinto’s collaborative research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health in order to study how collaboration between service agencies might close the research-to-practice gap in particular for delivery of HIV-prevention services and therapies.

Agencies often lack the infrastructure to deliver new therapies to clients in a timely manner. Social workers, psychologists, drug and HIV counselors and medical personnel may lack adequate training or access to scientific literature or information technology. They may decide that certain research-based services do not yield enough benefits for them to invest the time and training needed to make these services available. Meanwhile, clients who would benefit from such services lack knowledge about them, and so do not think to demand them. Socioeconomic issues or side effects of medications may also dissuade clients. These barriers—and thus the research-to-practice gap—affect people of all gender expressions, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. They affect much more those groups already disenfranchised and underserved: people of color; men who have sex with men; women in the sex industry and others.

The ICI Group, now housed at the University of Michigan, includes researchers, practitioners, and community members not just from New York but also from Michigan, New Jersey, Illinois and California. Members conduct research in their home states and in communities in Brazil, Canada, Spain and Mongolia. Says Leon Golson, an ICCB member serving on the Michigan HIV/AIDS Council, “Working with the ICI Group has given me a renewed sense of just how effective collaborating on a national scale can be.”

The group and its many collaborators conduct research with service providers and with the public, including cisgender and transgender women; men who have sex with men; women who engage in sex work; and other populations who may lack access to research-based

HIV-prevention and treatment services. "I have learned the value of integrating communities' expertise in intervention development," says Carolina Velez-Grau, an ICCB member and a PhD student at Columbia University. "I enjoy the creative process by which our multidisciplinary team looks at a research question from different angles, strengthening the scientific inquiry and making research truly participatory." Co-principal investigator Susan Witte, PhD, also at Columbia, agrees, saying, "ICI has deepened my appreciation for community collaboration in ensuring relevant, quality research findings that can inform future practice and policy."

What blocks individuals from access to life-saving interventions?

In addition to structural barriers within agencies and barriers created by individual providers, many people also face manifestations of stigma, misogyny, racism, homophobia and transphobia.

ICI research suggests that policy makers can help agencies develop better infrastructure and increase providers' abilities to implement research-based services or to collaborate with other providers who may implement these services. Mary Nagy, Public Health Detailer for the State of Michigan's Division of HIV and STD Programs, praises ICI from a provider's point of view. "In my former life as an ER nurse," Nagy says, "I found collaboration and trust to be essential in meeting the needs of my patients. It's been exciting, with the ICI Group, to imagine these principles applied on a larger scale." **M**

The ICI Group commitment to social justice

ICI Group research helps to break down stigma, misogyny, racism, homophobia and transphobia, and it advances social justice by helping vulnerable people access life-saving drugs and therapies.

In the words of New York City-based ICCB member Charles Sanky, a student at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai College, "ICI Group can transform the way we help the clients and patients we serve through explicitly understanding and fostering collaboration, caregiver wellness and continua of care."

For more information, please visit us at icigroup.ssw.umich.edu

What is Interprofessional Collaboration?

Interprofessional collaboration can facilitate access to and implementation of evidence-based interventions to prevent the spread of HIV. Interventions include HIV and STD testing; primary care; education about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a daily pill for individuals at risk for HIV; and support services such as drug treatments.

Interprofessional collaboration comprises: mutual referral-making, information-sharing, service program evaluation, and outcome dissemination. When everyone works together, clients and providers benefit. By teaching clients the advocacy skills to beat down barriers to access, providers become active participants in obtaining the services for those clients. The ICI Group has developed many interventions to help vulnerable populations. Nearly 300 providers have received ICI Training, building skills to engage in interprofessional collaboration.

New ICI Researchers

In addition to its original Implementation Community Collaborative Board, the ICI Group has gained many new members in Michigan, including three researchers here at the University's School of Social Work.



Ashley Lacombe-Duncan is an assistant professor who is passionate about understanding and addressing health care access inequities among people who experience intersecting oppressions. Her research focuses on understanding barriers to access to health care for LGBT people; developing and evaluating interventions to increase HIV care engagement among LGBT people living with HIV; and advancing LGBT-affirming social work practice from an intersectional approach. To the ICI Group, Lacombe-Duncan brings expertise in conducting mixed methods research, which aims to understand barriers to engagement of LGBT people in HIV prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and treatment cascades. She brings an intersectionality theoretical lens, attending to how racism, classism, HIV stigma, trans stigma and sexual stigma are experienced by individuals and in the context of patient-provider relationships. Her macro social work practice experience includes policy analysis, grant writing, practice-informed research, program development and program evaluation in community-based and hospital health and mental health settings. She received her MSW and PhD from the University of Toronto.

Sunggeun (Ethan) Park is an assistant professor and an organizational and management scholar with deep interests in intra/inter-organizational collaborations, particularly (1) service user's engagement in service decision-making processes and (2) interprofessional collaborations within and beyond organizational boundaries. Park brings in organizational and management perspectives to the ICI Group, explores factors associated with user engagement and interprofessional collaborations, and examines collaborative efforts' relationships with service outputs. He earned his PhD from the University of Chicago (SSA) and earned MSW and MBA degrees from Washington University in St. Louis.



Emma Sophia Kay joined the ICI Group in July 2018 when she began her postdoctoral fellowship at the U-M School of Social Work under the mentorship of Associate Dean and Professor Rogério M. Pinto. Since then, Kay has been actively involved in expanding the group to include researchers, public health workers, service providers, and

community members in Michigan. Kay is also involved in several research activities with the group, including a longitudinal study of providers in New York examining the frequency with which they educate clients about PrEP. In addition, Kay is leading a study that will compare Ryan White-funded HIV care organizations in Alabama and in Michigan; several members of the ICI Group are consulting on this study. [M](#)





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Detail from The Real Blue (1998) by Sam Gilliam (U.S., b. 1933), commissioned by the U-M School of Social Work. The four-part work is installed in the School's atrium, where it can be viewed from multiple perspectives, speaking to concepts of equity, diversity and intersectionality.

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