



# ImPrints

MPSI IS PART OF THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY, DETROIT, MI

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## Restoring Lives Shaped by Trauma

Stella Resko cares deeply about people who are at increased risk of interpersonal violence, substance use and trauma. Early in her social work career, she worked in a drug and alcohol treatment center, mostly with adult women. She realized many of the current problems had roots in adolescence or childhood. "I saw the salience of these early traumas and how it impacted my clients throughout their life," Dr. Resko said. She now primarily researches

adolescence, a time when interventions might build resilience to avoid or reduce later problems.

Dr. Resko is a recently tenured professor, jointly appointed with the School of Social Work. As an expert in substance use and interpersonal violence with a talent for quantitative analysis, she is a partner on two grants and a principal investigator on a third proposal about marijuana use in adolescents.

She likes being jointly appointed. "We have such a strong group of researchers at MPSI, people with expertise in a large number of areas. Interacting with faculty from education, developmental and clinical psychology, neuroscience – it all helps me broaden my ideas," Dr. Resko said.

### Stable Homes for Teens

The first grant project is developing trainings for adoptive and foster parents (known collectively as resource parents) of adolescents with moderate to severe behavioral health challenges, often resulting from trauma. These youth are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, have peer conflicts, and perform poorly in school. Training varies by state, but overall there is little available to support resource parents. "By better equipping resource parents to provide care for older youth experiencing challenges related to substance use, mental health, and trauma we hope to provide greater stability and a nurturing environment," Dr. Resko said. An evidence-based training that

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Dr. Resko conducts a graduate seminar on research methods in social work.

## Toddler Study Yields Trove of Insights

Once in a while, a research project exceeds expectations, delivering more insights, data and ideas for follow-on projects than investigators could have imagined. TEDY, or Toddlers' Emotional Development in Young Families, is one such project. Launched three years ago to determine whether family routines and rituals could buffer the stress on 131 toddlers living in poverty, TEDY shined new light on fatherhood, trauma and racism. The study became "an exploratory lens through which to think about the effects of stress and poverty on young Detroit families," said PI Dr. Erika Bocknek.

So far, TEDY has uncovered four main take-homes captured in several papers and research presentations with other data yet to



SEE  
**Main Teachings  
from  
TEDY Study**  
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be analyzed. Fortunately, Dr. Bocknek thrives on activity. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist, the director of the Family Resilience Laboratory, an assistant professor in the College of Education, and an affiliate faculty member at MPSI. She thinks of TEDY as the gift that keeps on giving. "I learned an incredible amount about partnering

in the community, engaging our parent participants in research, setting aside assumptions, and letting the research guide next steps," she said. Not bad for her first research study in Detroit. See Tedy take-always on page 4.

### Swaddles, Books & Connections

Dr. Bocknek's other research is "Creating Connections," a partnership with United Way for Southeastern Michigan. As new mothers leave the hospital after childbirth, they will receive a children's board book, and/or information on how to soothe babies. Dr. Bocknek's team will assess the impact of these simple, low-cost interventions. The children's book is part of United Way's Little Steps proj-

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## What is Giant Step?

It's the oldest, continuously run teen conference on diversity and inclusion in Michigan and possibly the U.S. The Giant Step Teen Conference celebrates 34 years of uniting hundreds of teens from different backgrounds so they can get to know and respect each other. Trained facilitators foster discussion on topics like bullying, social status, and future plans. Within hours, prejudice and bias start to vanish. Students enter as strangers and leave as friends.



### Did we mention: It's free!

Would you like to help a Michigan teen experience the beauty of acceptance and inclusion across race, religion, neighborhood, culture, and income? A donation of \$50 sends one local student to Giant Step held October 24 on Wayne State's campus. The more money we raise, the more students we host.

For more information or to register students email Cheryl at [cheryldeep@wayne.edu](mailto:cheryldeep@wayne.edu) or visit [www.mpsi.wayne.edu/outreach/teen-conference.php](http://www.mpsi.wayne.edu/outreach/teen-conference.php)

## Students Say:

*"We were able to create a better understanding of each other."*

*"We learned to not be judging. Everybody is perfect in their own way."*

## Research Shows:

**92%** of students said they talked about issues that were important to them.

**95%** said talking with teens from different backgrounds was interesting and educational.

**80%** plan to stay in touch with the new friends they met at Giant Step.

**95%** stated that Giant Step was a positive experience and they want their school to attend again.

**Your donation helps keep Giant Step FREE to all students**

☐ \$50 each to Sponsor-a-Teen for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_

☐ Sponsor a Table-of-Teens for \$350

### MAIL THIS FORM TO:



Giant Step Teen Conference  
Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute  
71 E. East Ferry Ave.  
Detroit MI 48202

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Full Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Make CHECK payable to:** WSU – MPSI Giant Step Conference

Check # \_\_\_\_\_

**CREDIT:** ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sec. Code \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



## NEWS &amp; HONORS



**Heading to the Rockies:** Laurel Hicks, PhD, has accepted a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Denver for the newly funded clinical trial, *Reducing Fetal Exposure to Maternal Depression to Improve Infant Risk Mechanisms*.

She will conduct interpersonal therapy with depressed pregnant women to understand the effects of prenatal stress on infants using fMRI, hormonal, behavioral and observational data.



**Help for Parents of Disruptive Children:** Dr. Lucy McGoron, a post-doctoral fellow at MPSI, won a National Institute of Mental Health KO1 award to create internet-based parent trainings. The four-year, \$533,000 project

begins with a tablet-based check-up to identify disruptive behavior in children and to motivate parent engagement in training. It continues with evidence-based training tailored to specific needs. Dr. McGoron's primary mentor, Dr. Steve Onderma, said this is "a tremendous accomplishment that will form the perfect base from which to launch an independent program of research."



**You Must Remember This:** Trainee Lingfei Tang, a cognitive neuroscience major, won 3rd place in WSU's 2017 Graduate and Post-doc Research Symposium, a day-long campus-wide exhibition. His poster, *Age-Related Differences*

*in the Functional Connectivity of the Medial Temporal Lobe support successful Memory Encoding* competed against more than 150 graduate students to take home the prize.



**Three Cheers for Mentors:** Faculty researcher Valerie Simon, Ph.D., won WSU's 2017 Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award in Social Sciences. Winners are chosen in only four categories and determined by department and graduate student

recognition of their superb mentorship and support.



Jinhan Yu (center) accepting award from MPSI Board Chair Debra Partrich.

**Lifespan Research Day** spotlights student projects from MPSI and its affiliated Institute of Gerontology. A record 31 graduate and undergraduate students discussed their research in either a poster or an oral presentation.

MPSI'S WINNERS:

**Patricia Richardson**, Best Graduate Presentation, *Exploring the Superwoman: Parenting Strengths of Urban African-American Mothers*

**Jinhan Yu**, Best Graduate Poster, *Sentence Final Particles as a Potential Clinical Marker of Autism in Chinese: A Pilot Study*

**Sanaya Irani**, Best Undergraduate Poster, *Neural Correlates of the Development of Spatial Navigation Ability*

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improves resource parent confidence and competency would likely reduce foster placement turnover and increase the number of available adoptive homes.

The team includes professors of social work Angelique Day and Debra Patterson; the training will be developed in partnership with three other agencies. The WSU portion of the grant is a three-year, \$330,000 award from Spaulding for Children, a Southfield, Michigan child welfare agency. The WSU team will interview parents who have successfully fostered adolescents with challenges, young adults who were formerly in care, and child welfare staff to learn the most productive strengths and strategies. The curriculum developed from this work will be tested in five states and one tribal community across the country.

The training will include in-person sessions but also technology-enhanced resources that can be accessed by resource parents as

needed. Dr. Resko and her partners aim to keep costs low and convenience high, so a maximum number of resource parents can benefit. "Resources are limited," Dr. Resko said. "We're looking at technology to enhance or deliver trainings. We'd like the training to be free and include some components that resource parents can access 24/7."

She is genuinely excited about the chance to make a difference on a national scale. "If we can bring more stability into foster care and adoption, we can improve the lives of so many youths who had trauma and hardship as young children."

## Culturally Sensitive Help

The ways that survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence cope are complex and varied, so determining how best to encourage them to seek help can be complicated. Drs. Resko and Patterson's new study will work to evaluate strategies to tailor these

services to the cultural values and needs of Latina women in hopes they can increase help-seeking.

The two-year study is in close collaboration with the LA VIDA Partnership in Southwest Detroit, a non-profit that offers an array of services to Latina women and children. "This is true community-based, participatory research," Dr. Resko said. "LA VIDA leads the project. We'll try to learn the unique needs of Latinas, such as where they feel comfortable talking about what happened." At present, many seem to prefer confiding in a medical provider over a counselor. Language barriers, privacy, many things could be at issue. LA VIDA will ask and find out."

Little research exists in this area. Dr. Resko's 10-year-old dissertation included a literature search of culturally specific interventions for Latina survivors of sexual assault. "Sadly, not much new research has emerged since then. The need for more work in this area is high."



## THE FREER HOUSE



### Sharing our Home

Art Students Discover History in  
Their Own Backyard

Dear William,

I write to express sincere gratitude on behalf of the Liberal Arts Department at the College for Creative Studies, as well as my many History of Modern Design students who visited and toured the Freer House with you this past fall 2016 semester.

Although the Freer House is just a short walk away from the CCS Ford Campus, nearly all of my History of Modern Design students had not even heard of this American treasure. That is something that can change. As a strong believer of direct learning through experience, I was thrilled to be able to teach around the Freer House, from James McNeill Whistler to the Arts and Crafts style, and to directly connect the students with a space that holds immense significance in regards to these subjects. I received such positive feedback from the students that it seems only fitting to build upon this precedent with future classes.

For the city of Detroit to build up a strong community for the arts it is imperative to recognize and appreciate what it already has. The Freer House is surely one of Detroit's most important cultural assets. Thank you, William, for taking the time and effort to help educate and enrich this community.

Sincerely,  
Nicholas Quiring, Instructor, College of Creative Studies

The Freer House is home to MPSI faculty, administrative offices and research, and each year we find time to welcome hundreds of people from across the country and around the globe. Visitors come to view what is considered a masterpiece of American shingle-style architecture and learn about Charles Lang Freer, the art collector who once called it home.

### The Resilient Child:

MPSI's Dr. Julie Wargo Aikins

edited a special edition of *Merrill Palmer Quarterly* due out this year.

The journal investigates children and adolescents exposed to stress, trauma and other adverse life events. These often pose serious risks to development, yet some of these children show competence and optimal psychosocial adjustment despite numerous challenges. A series of papers examine which children might recover, under what circumstances positive development occurs, and how the quality of early parent-child relationships can modify risk.



MERRILL-PALMER  
QUARTERLY

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LA VIDA is part of the Community Health and Social Services (CHASS) center, a one-stop shop of multiple resources for low-income, vulnerable Latinos. Help for sexual assault and domestic violence is one component. The \$348,000 grant is from the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence against women.

### Proudest Legacy

Two research grants, a proposal to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and pro bono work with a Detroit community group, don't quite fill Dr. Resko's days. She also teaches research classes to undergrads and graduate students in the School of Social Work. "This feels like my true legacy," she said. "When students tell me I helped them see research differently and appreciate it, that's meaningful. Even if they plan to be clinicians, research will help them do that job better. Research is important to social work."

### Experience for Yourself

Sunday, June 4, 2017, 2-5 pm

### From Traveler to Aesthete: Charles Lang Freer and Indian Art

by **Brinda Kumar, PhD**, Assistant Curator  
Department of Modern and Contemporary Art  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

Dr. Kumar will situate Charles Lang Freer's seminal and enduring passion for India and Indian art within his larger aesthetic and collecting project that culminated in the creation of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian.

2:00 PM

Lecture at the Detroit Institute of Arts,  
Marvin and Betty Danto Lecture Hall.  
(FREE with DIA admission)

3:30 PM

Reception & Tours at the  
Freer House, 71 East Ferry Street, Detroit  
\$10 General Admission  
\$5 Students and FAAC or Freer House Members  
(please pay at door)



Zayn al-'Abidin, Folio from the Ramayana of Valmiki, vol. 2  
South Asian, Mughal period, late 16th century  
Freer Gallery of Art

For more info contact Rose Foster at: 313-664-2509 or [rmfoster@wayne.edu](mailto:rmfoster@wayne.edu)



## Toddler from page 1

ect to encourage reading to babies as important for development. The other set of information on soothing is drawn from Harvey Karp's classic, *The Happiest Baby on the Block* which outlines five surefire methods to soothe a crying baby: swaddling, shushing, side position, sucking and swinging.

Some of the 200 moms will receive the children's book. Others will get brief information regarding Karp's book plus online videos and resources. All interventions are delivered in a brief, tablet-based format. Over the course of four months, moms will receive tailored booster text messages (for instance, "You told us that your most important goal right now is to ensure that your baby is integrated into your family. Remember that reading is an activity that everyone in the family can enjoy together!). A control group receives standard of care information about infant development.

All families receive a home visit at four months to assess parental mental health, infant bonding, the parents' sense of competence, and child functioning. Information about demographics, stress, and trauma, including experiences with racism, are collected at baseline and the 4-month follow-up.

"We'll also measure the number of words said in the home," Dr. Bocknek said. "Poor children hear many fewer words in their early months and years – the word gap – which may contribute to learning deficiencies in kindergarten." Parents will wear an iPod equipped with Electronically Activated Recorders (EARs) set to automatically record at random intervals over a brief period of time.

## MPSI Interactions Improve Research

Being a part of MPSI has expanded the overall direction of Dr. Bocknek's work in positive ways. "I'm excited about building strengths for families at risk, not just reducing that risk, but truly empowering families." Tailoring interventions and making them conveniently available by smartphone, is a good example of low-cost, high impact research that is pertinent to Detroit. She learned about these strategies through the work of MPSI Deputy Director Steve Ondersma and his team. "Without interdisciplinary teams, you don't get the same depth and range of ideas in how to approach problems," Dr. Bocknek said. "Without that wealth of experience, the trajectory of my career and research successes would be very different."

## Teachings from the TEDY Study (to date)



TEDY STUDY

TODDLERS' EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG FAMILIES



### 1. Routines and rituals matter

Family routines (like regular dinnertime) and rituals (like reading a well-loved book each night) are glue that binds families together. They provide a buffer against the stresses that poverty can impart on a toddler's ability to regulate his or her emotions and behavior. Rituals especially leave an "emotional residue" that can be accessed in times of stress to help cope. "A child shares a book every night with his mom," Dr. Bocknek explained. "Now he's in school with 30 other children in the classroom, trying to learn how to read. The memory of reading books with his mom can help him through hard moments in the class. The ritual is a bond we hold in our heart."

### 2. Dads want to be dads

TEDY recruited biological mothers of toddlers and asked the mothers, "Who co-parents with you?" Dr. Bocknek expected that some of the moms would name the biological fathers, while many others would say other family members, especially grandmothers and aunts. Not so. "The highest percentage of co-parents were the biological fathers," Dr. Bocknek said. "These men are overwhelmingly involved in their children's lives, despite only 16% of them being married to the children's biological mothers. This tells us something important about fathering research where poor, African American men are often thought of as uninvolved."

### 3. Poverty can feel like war

Families were recruited through a partnership with the American Chaldean Council WIC program that provides supplemental nutrition for women, infants and children living in poverty. These parents show overwhelmingly high rates of post-traumatic stress syndrome and depression. They suffer from extreme, persistent trauma that invades their lives. "When we design interventions, we cannot overlook that. A large portion of these parents' mental resources are used to cope with their difficult environments," she said.

### 4. Racism is traumatic

Perceived racism and implicit bias pervade these communities and are an important, if often unmeasured, source of trauma. Unfortunately, TEDY did not include a measure assessing experiences with racism. "Going forward, my research will be mindful of the impact of experiences with racism and bias on mental health as well as on families and parenting processes," she said. Detroit is 83% African American and Black. "Racism may be hard to talk about, but understanding its effects must be an integral part of our work," Dr. Bocknek said.



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The Freer House  
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Detroit, MI 48202  
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## 2017 SPRING NEWSLETTER



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## New Field Trip Delights Children and Parents

The Early Childhood Centers (ECC) started a new tradition in the fall with a trip to Plymouth Orchards and Cider Mill. We brought 94 students, most with a parent along as their buddy, plus the ECC teachers and staff. The weather cooperated on the cool, clear day as the children went on a hayride, picked an apple and a pumpkin, and munched donuts with fresh cider. The trip brackets the school year with the annual May visit to a working farm.

