



## Research and Practice in Youth Development: Forging Stronger Links



### A Youth Development Research Update

*Sponsored by Cornell University's Family Life Development Center and ACT for Youth Center of Excellence*

Funders of human services, including youth services, increasingly call for evidence-based interventions. The underlying assumption is that applying research-based knowledge will inform and improve practice and create positive outcomes. The possible connections between research and practice go beyond research as a source of information. Three terms that are gaining prominence refer to those additional connections: evidence-based practices; evidence-based programs; and translational research. All three come from medicine and are being used increasingly in relation to social and educational organizations and programs.

At this first Youth Development Research Update we would like to engage researchers and practitioners in discussing:

- How can practitioners use research findings for interventions or practices that benefit young people within various social settings?
- Which questions emerge from the field that researchers have not explored and need to address?

### Day 1 - Wednesday, June 1, 2011

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
La Tourelle Inn  
1150 Danby Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850

- Introductory presentation - Stephen F. Hamilton: Linking Research and Practice (30 minutes)
- Research presentation 1 - Dawn E. Schrader: Understanding Adolescent Girls' Relational Aggression (30-minute presentation and 30 minutes Q&A)
- Research presentation 2 - Sahara Byrne: "Is it that you *can't* or is it that you *don't want to*?" (30-minute presentation and 30 minutes Q&A)

### Day 2 - June 2, 2011

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- Research presentation 3 - Janis Whitlock: Non-Suicidal Self-Injury in Adolescents and Young Adults: What it Tells Us about Emotional Health Trends in Today's Teens (30-minute presentation and 30 minutes Q&A)
- Research presentation 4 - William Trochim and Monica Hargraves: Making Youth Development Evaluations Work--and Workable: Insights from the CCE's 4-H Youth Development Evaluation Partnerships (30-minute presentation and 30 minutes Q&A)
- Discussion groups on topics identified throughout the event (30 – 45 minutes)
- Moderated Panel Discussion - Panel of practitioners: application and implementation issues, research questions, and more (60 minutes)

## Registration

Participants are responsible for hotel and travel arrangements and expenses. For the group rate of \$99.00, reserve rooms with La Tourelle Inn by **May 1, 2011**, and reference Youth Development Research Update.

**REGISTRATION FEE IS \$60** (*includes lunch and refreshments*).

**PAYMENT IS DUE WITH REGISTRATION.** We can accept checks made payable to Cornell University.

If you are a Cornell University employee you can contact Amy Breese to arrange for a department charge.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please mail completed registration form with payment to:**

Amy Breese  
ACT for Youth Center of Excellence  
Cornell University  
Family Life Development Center – Beebe Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853

### **If you have any questions, contact Amy at:**

Phone: 607.255.7736

E-mail: [act4youth@cornell.edu](mailto:act4youth@cornell.edu)

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## Workshop Descriptions

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### Introductory Presentation: Linking Research and Practice

Many barriers separate the worlds of youth development practice and research. Both worlds would be richer if those barriers were breached. "Translational research" has emerged as a means of reducing the time between medical discoveries and their incorporation into prevention and treatment. Those of us in youth development need to find our own ways to link research and practice. Practitioners should know about and be able to use research, but researchers should also understand the needs of practitioners. In addition, practitioners and stakeholders should engage in research on their own programs with technical support from researchers.

**Stephen F. Hamilton** is Professor of Human Development and Associate Director of the Family Life Development Center. His research in adolescent development and education investigates the interaction of school, community, and work during the transition to adulthood. He has just concluded an action research project designed to understand and strengthen institutional supports for the transition to adulthood of marginalized youth in Latin America. By assuming a new leadership role with NY State 4-H Youth Development, he hopes to ground programs and practices more firmly in research and to co-generate new research.

### Understanding Adolescent Girls' Relational Aggression

In adolescent girls, aggression is often verbal and emotionally charged. Individual and groups of girls often conspire, observe, acquiesce to, or condone subtle covert and overt acts of aggression. Referred to as relational aggression, this behavior is usually systematic and persistent across time and contexts. Relational aggression is a social enterprise where information is one of the main currencies, and threat of isolation is a weapon used to inflict deep emotional pain to its victims. It erodes trust, confidence in oneself, self-esteem, and current and future relationships. It may lead to personal self-inflicted harm or outward aggression. Our longitudinal research explores the roles girls play in relational aggression situations, their self-reported behavior in the context of aggression, and how girls perceive and react to both real and hypothetical relationally aggressive situations. We address questions of self and moral development, emotional reactions, coping, compassion, and the dynamics of social interaction. We see relational aggression as a multidimensional problem, and our research suggests dynamic new ways of understanding the bullying dynamic and suggests new approaches to working with girls to help them navigate through these social-emotional challenges and mitigate harm to themselves and others.

**Dawn E. Schrader** is Associate Professor of Psychology in Education at Cornell University. She received her doctorate from Harvard University in Human Development where she worked with Lawrence Kohlberg and the Center for Moral Development. Schrader is a member of the Cornell University graduate fields of Education, Human Development, and Cognitive Science., and received the State University of New York's Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and numerous other teaching awards. Schrader is co-founder of the Society for Research in Adult Development, and serves on serves on the Executive Board of the Association for Moral Education, and the Advisory Board of Girls Learn International.

As a research psychologist and educator studying morality and ethical reasoning., Schrader's work addresses the psychological processes moral development, decision-making, reflection, and action. In addition to her current project on adolescent girls social aggression, Schrader has a National Science Foundation grant for researching issues of Privacy and Technology.

## **“Is it that you can’t or is it that you don’t want to?”**

Ever try to persuade a child to do something healthy or pro-social? Kids never seem to respond the way adults would hope! Why do children resist strategic messages? Is it that they don’t have the cognitive capacity to process what you are saying or do they just hate being told what to do and rebel against you? Adults and children alike often resist messages aimed at helping them live healthier, happier lives. This talk will center on explaining and overcoming resistance to pro-social messages, especially efforts to reduce negative effects of the media and mediated health messages.

**Sahara Byrne** is Assistant Professor of Communications at Cornell University. Her overarching communication interest is in message disruption processes, a theoretical construct known as noise. She examines why strategic messages are sometimes ineffective or result in the opposite effect than was intended. Her research aims to explain why the "boomerang effect" is likely to occur in response to many types of strategic messages, especially those that are pro-social such as health campaigns and efforts to prevent negative effects of the media on children. She is currently testing developmental mechanisms for explaining the deliberate disruption of messages.

## **Non-Suicidal Self-Injury in Adolescents and Young Adults: What it Tells Us about Emotional Health Trends in Today’s Teens**

Although relatively rare in prior generations, non-suicidal self-injury is common among today’s youth. Today, between 20% - 25% of all adolescents report some experience with non-suicidal self-injury and new forms, such as “needling,” emerge regularly. Understanding the basic epidemiology as well as the personal and generational purpose of the behavior is not only useful, but also helps to shed light on the unique emotional and social landscape of today’s teens. This presentation will summarize what we know about the prevalence, practice, and purpose of non-suicidal self-injury and will close with a discussion about what it means about and for today’s youth, families, and communities. We will also review promising approaches for preventing non-suicidal self-injury in youth.

**Janis Whitlock** is a research scientist and lecturer at Cornell University. She is also the Director of the Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury in Adolescence and Young Adults as well as the past president of the International Society for the Study of Self-Injury. She is the author of publications on non-suicidal self-injury in adolescence and young adulthood as well as in youth connectedness to schools and communities. She earned a doctorate in Developmental Psychology from Cornell University (2003) and a Masters of Public Health from UNC Chapel Hill (1994). In addition to research, she has worked in adolescent and women’s health in a variety of clinical, administrative, and education-related capacities for over a decade. Her current research focus includes development of early detection and intervention in social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing for youth in college and community settings.

## **Making Youth Development Evaluations Work – and Workable: Insights from CCE’s 4-H Youth Development Evaluation Partnerships**

The Cornell Office for Research on Evaluation (CORE) uses a systems-based approach to program evaluation and planning that is operationalized through the Systems Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The SEP has been developed, tested, and refined through “Evaluation Partnerships” established with over forty youth development and education programs including many in Cornell Cooperative Extension. This approach to evaluation recognizes that programs evolve over time, and are connected to systems of stakeholders, other programs, and relevant research. To evaluate programs well, these elements must be explored and incorporated into evaluation planning. Although high-quality evaluation plans are a primary goal of the Evaluation Partnerships, we have found that participants experience important additional benefits from the stepwise Systems Evaluation Protocol we follow. These additional benefits – in terms of improved relations with key stakeholders, increased ability to “explain” programs to outsiders, improved grant proposals, and greater ability to connect to relevant research – are part of what make evaluation do-able. This session offers

a brief overview of the Evaluation Partnership process and will include presentations from participating 4-H educators in an open discussion of how this works and why it's workable.

**William Trochim** is Professor of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University and Professor of Public Health at the Weill Cornell Medical Center. He is the Director of Evaluation for the Weill Cornell Clinical and Translational Science Center, the Director of Evaluation for Extension and Outreach at Cornell, and the Director of the Cornell Office for Research on Evaluation. Dr. Trochim is currently conducting research with the National Institutes of Health on the evaluation of biomedical clinical and translational research and with the National Science Foundation on evaluating science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programs. He served for four years on the American Evaluation Association's Board of Directors, and was President of AEA in 2008.

**Monica Hargraves** is Manager of Evaluation for Extension and Outreach, and contributes to evaluation research as a member of the Cornell Office for Research on Evaluation (CORE) team. She worked at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County for ten years, in both program and organization-wide positions, before joining CORE in 2008 to lead the Extension side of the evaluation capacity-building effort through the Evaluation Partnerships. Her earlier career, in economics, includes faculty and research positions at Brown University and the International Monetary Fund.