

CHARLES C. SPOONER STUDENT RESEARCH PROGRAM
COVER PAGE

Student Researcher: Emily Perdue, Department: Sociology / Social Work

Telephone #: 906-390-9110 Start Date: 11-01-12 End Date: 05-01-13

Student Address: 328 Chestnut St, Kingstord, MI 49802

Project Title: Poverty, neglect, and child welfare

Project Abstract (250 Words):

This qualitative research will explore the relation between poverty and client involvement in child protective service (CPS) cases of alleged or substantiated physical neglect. The primary data used to examine how poverty impacts cases of this type will be collected by way of semi-structured interviews with both workers for, and clients of, child welfare agencies in Marquette, Dickinson, and Delta counties. Audio recordings of the interviews will be analyzed and coded with NVivo computer software, and a grounded theory approach will be taken, allowing concepts and themes (that help answer questions raised during the research process) to emerge from the data themselves. Products of the research will include a publishable article, and presentations during at least one professional academic conference; at least one local panel or event attended by social service workers or other interested community members; and the 2013 CSRCW, or Celebration of Student Research and Creative Works here at NMU.

SIGNATURES:

Emily Perdue 9/12/12 Graduate Undergraduate
Student Researcher Date

Timothy A. Iwan 9/12/12 Alan M. Long 9-12-12
Faculty Advisor Date Department Head Date

Departmental Rating of Proposal: (Additional comments can be attached)

Excellent Very Good Good Fair

The study I have undertaken with my faculty advisor, Dr. Timothy Hilton of the Sociology and Social Work Department, was approved by the Institutional Review Board here at Northern in March of this year. Our study addresses the relationship between poverty and client involvement with child protective service, or CPS, agencies; particularly with regard to cases of alleged or substantiated physical neglect.

We know that there is a relationship between poverty and client involvement in America's child welfare system; it's long been documented that the overwhelming majority of families involved with child protective service agencies are impoverished (Pelton, 1989, pp. 38-42; Pelton, 1994; Pelton, 2008). There is also an established correlation between poverty and neglect (Sedlak and Broadhurst, 1996).

Whether and how poverty is recognized and responded to within the child protective service system in the U.S. remains an open question (Gustavsson and MacEachron, 2010). At present, the *inability* of parents to provide for their children's basic needs is a standard definition of parental neglect, and severe or chronic neglect, regardless of intent, is grounds for the involuntary termination of parental rights (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

This does not bode well for some families, given the rate of child poverty in the U.S., which is higher than in most or all industrialized nations (Koch, 2000). Given the profound effects on a family that involvement with the child welfare system can have, together with the large number

of families living in poverty,* it is of great concern, to citizens and social researchers alike, what impact poverty has on involvement with CPS agencies.

If poverty plays a significant role in client involvement, then how is poverty recognized or perceived by caseworkers to be a contributing factor in these cases? How is poverty recognized or perceived by parents, or clients, to play a role in such cases? We are asking what individuals and groups have to say about whether and how poverty impacts client involvement in the child welfare system, especially in cases of alleged or substantiated physical neglect, and in doing so, we are gaining a better understanding of the ways in which poverty can sometimes influence the client involvement process.

The data collection phase of our project began in early June of this year, and was slated to end in late August; however, client recruitment processes (relying mostly on fliers and word-of-mouth) have not resulted in the number of interviews necessary to bring the data gathering to a close. Audio recordings of interviews with up to two additional child welfare workers for, and up to 26 more clients of, child welfare service agencies in Marquette, Delta, and Dickinson counties, will serve as the remainder of this study's primary data.

After completing appropriate recruiting and consenting processes, semi-structured interviews are conducted, covering several subtopics but revolving mainly around two themes; financial situations and agency services. A digital audio recording device is usually used to preserve subjects' responses, which are then analyzed and coded using a grounded-theory approach, allowing the themes or concepts used for organizing and reporting the data to emerge *from* the data. NVivo8 computer software is utilized to help store, organize, transcribe, analyze, and code

* Currently, around 15% of the population is categorized by the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) as being below the official poverty line.

the data. No stage of the research, including the dissemination of its findings, will extend beyond September of 2013.

There will be several products of the research. Directed Study credits will be earned, for the remaining efforts required by the project, over the course of this semester (the process of approval for this is under way). A full report will be submitted to the McNair Scholars Program (here at Northern) by late November of this year. Then, the report will be revised, until it meets the standards of a publishable article. Next, we'd like to present the research at a few different venues: At least one professional academic conference; at least one local panel or event attended by social service workers or other interested community members; and the 2013 CSRCW, or Celebration of Student Research and Creative Works here at NMU. Each of these outcomes will further the purpose of helping service providers and/or concerned citizens better understand not only how clients perceive services, but also how poverty and service provision interact, and what effects this interaction has on families and communities in Marquette, Delta, and Dickinson counties.

In order for this project to reach its conclusion, additional interviews with clients of child welfare agencies must be conducted. Rigorous recruitment processes will be enacted to further this end, including the informing of both clients and social service providers[†] in the area about our project, and the offering of financial incentives (that are already in place).

The funds presently requested are essential to realizing these interviews. Because our study spans the Marquette, Iron Mountain, and Escanaba areas, I must travel to acquire the information

[†] Please note that while social service providers will be informed about our research, no worker or agency will be involved in arranging our interviews with clients. In alignment with our original, IRB-approved study design, clients will contact us directly.

needed to successfully finalize this project. When clients make themselves available for our study, the interviews we conduct take place at a time—and a location—of their choosing. This serves the dual functions of promoting trust between us and our study's participants, and contributing to their greater comfort level, which, in turn, allows us to increase our confidence in acquiring honest (and therefore useful) responses. The entirety of funds received will be used for travel to and from scheduled interviews. The amount needed for transportation will at no point exceed \$500.00. Any additional costs of the research that are not associated with travel can be covered by the McNair Scholars Program.

We thank you kindly for your time and consideration.

References

- Gustavsson, N. & MacEachron, A. E. (July 2010). *Poverty and Child Welfare, 101 Years Later. SocialWork, 55* (3), 279-280.
- Koch, K. (2000). Child poverty. *CQ Researcher, 10* (13), 283-303.
- Pelton, L. H. (1989). *For reasons of poverty: A critical analysis of the public child welfare system in the United States*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
- Pelton, L. (1994). The role of material factors in child abuse and neglect. In G. M. Melton & F. D. Barry (Eds.), *Protecting children from abuse and neglect* (pp. 131-181). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Pelton, L. (2008). An examination of the reasons for child removal in Clark County, Nevada. *Children and Youth Services Review, 30*, 787-799
- Sedlak, A. J., & Broadhurst, D. D. (1996). *The Third National Incidence Study on Child Abuse and Neglect* (NIS-3). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway (April 2008). What is child abuse and neglect? Retrieved August 31, 2012, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.pdf>.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway (n.d.). Grounds for involuntary termination of parental rights. Retrieved August 31, 2012, from http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/groundtermin.pdf.

Emily Perdue

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Iron Mountain, MI 49801
(906) 396-5110
eperdue@nmu.edu

Education

Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI
Bachelor of Science Degree, Political Science and Sociology
Political Science GPA 3.98/4.00
Sociology GPA 3.95/4.00
Overall GPA 3.84/4.00
Dean's List of Academic Achievement, every semester
Expect to graduate May 2013

Bay de Noc Community College, West Campus, Iron Mountain, MI
Associate Degree, Liberal Arts
GPA 3.76/4.00
Dean's List of Academic Achievement, two semesters
Graduated with Honors May 2009

Forthcoming

- ❖ "Democracy's demigods: A look at contemporary leadership curricula"; October 30, (Fall 2012 issue, Vol. 6), in *The Dialectics: Journal of Leadership, Politics, and Society*.

For the past few decades, political leadership programs and institutes have been added to universities and communities across the U.S. Using social and political theory (relevant to the tension between leadership and democracy) as a framework, this study uses available data to look at the context and content of contemporary leadership curricula.

Working Papers

- ❖ "Poverty and the child welfare system: A report on client involvement"

In participation with the McNair Scholars Program for a second time, this qualitative research explores the relationship between poverty and client involvement in cases of alleged or substantiated physical neglect, with primary data deriving from interviews with caseworkers and clients of child welfare agencies.

- ❖ "Leadership and punishment: A cross-cultural analysis"
- ❖ "Another response to Durkheim's *Division of Labor*"

Academic Research and Teaching Experience

- ❖ Referred and hired as Introduction to Sociology tutor, Fall 2011, Fall 2012
- ❖ "Poverty and child protective services: An exploratory study of client involvement"
McNair Scholars Program faculty-directed study, January–August 2012, 8 credits/\$4,100.00
- ❖ "Looking at leadership curricula through a democratic lens"
McNair Scholars Program faculty-directed study, May–August 2010, 4 credits/\$4,100.00
- ❖ "Pay by sex at NMU," Fall 2009

This statistical analysis of the male/female wage gap among faculty at Northern Michigan University was a collaborative effort. Using PASW (SPSS) software, we used secondary salary data on over 1,000 NMU faculty for analysis, finding a statistically significant \$11,111.09 difference between mean salaries of males (\$51,977.53, N=571) and females (\$40,866.44, N=491).

- ❖ Familiar with PASW, or SPSS
- ❖ Familiar with NVivo(8)

Presentations

- ❖ "Studying sociology and inequality," June 2012
Guest Speaker in an Introduction to Sociology course at Bay de Noc Community College, West Campus
Led discussion: Sociology's importance to everyday life; Encompassing themes of prior and current research
- ❖ "Leadership institutes and the promotion of personalistic leadership," April 2011
Celebration of Student Research and Creative Works, Northern Michigan University
Oral presentation with poster
- ❖ "A politics of self: U.S. leadership curricula," March 2011
Annual Meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society
Faculty/graduate student paper roundtable; Issues in Social Theory
- ❖ "Political leadership institutes and curricula," November 2010
National McNair Scholars Research Conference
Poster session
- ❖ "The male/female wage gap at NMU," April 2010
Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems courses, Bay de Noc Community College, West Campus
Oral presentations with poster, class discussions, question and answer periods
- ❖ "Pay by sex at NMU," April 2010
Celebration of Student Research and Creative Works, Northern Michigan University
Oral presentation with poster

Academic Awards and Honors

- ❖ Reinitiated into McNair Scholars Program, for second study as McNair Scholar, December 2011
- ❖ Teaching, Learning, and Communication Notebook Initiative Award, April 2010, \$300.00
- ❖ Nominated and accepted into McNair Scholars Program, February 2010
- ❖ NMU Transfer Merit Award, 2011–2012, 2010–2011 and 2009–2010 Academic Years, \$1000.00 per year
- ❖ NMU Transfer PTK Award, 2011–2012, 2010–2011 and 2009–2010 Academic Years, \$500.00 per year
- ❖ Bay College Foundation Oliver Felton Award, 2008–2009 Academic Year, \$200.00
- ❖ Bay College Foundation Annual Scholarship Award, 2008–2009 Academic Year, \$200.00
- ❖ Bay College Foundation Frank & Bertha Hartwig Award, 2008–2009 Academic Year, \$150.00
- ❖ Invited and accepted to Phi Theta Kappa, February 2008

Professional Affiliations

- ❖ American Sociological Association
- ❖ Midwest Political Science Association
- ❖ Midwest Sociological Society

Campus Involvement

- ❖ Named Transfer Student Ambassador, NMU, Fall 2009
- ❖ Elected and served as President of Student Government/Community Board, Bay College West, 2008–2009
- ❖ Nominated Vice President of Student Government/Community Board, Bay College West, January 2008
- ❖ Cofounded Student Government/Community Board, Bay College West, January 2008

From: "Crupi, LuAnne J" <lcrupi@nmu.edu>
Subject: RE: IRB Number
Date: Tue, July 3, 2012 9:48 am
To: "eperdue" <eperdue@nmu.edu>
Cc: "dereande@nmu.edu" <dereande@nmu.edu>

Hi Emily,

Your IRB number for "Poverty and Child Welfare: A Qualitative Study on Client Involvement" approved on 3/26/12 is HS12-457.

Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Sincerely,

LuAnne

LuAnne Crupi

Principal Secretary II | Office of Graduate Education & Research

Northern Michigan University

1401 Presque Isle Ave | Marquette, MI 49855 | 800-682-9797 | 906-227-2300 | Fax

906-227-2315

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-----Original Message-----

From: Derek L. Anderson [<mailto:dereande@nmu.edu>]

Sent: Tuesday, July 03, 2012 8:08 AM

To: 'eperdue'

Cc: 'Crupi, LuAnne J'

Subject: RE: IRB Number

I have copied LuAnne Crupi, the IRB administrative assistant. She keeps the records and will be able to help you.

Best,

Derek

-----Original Message-----

From: eperdue [<mailto:eperdue@nmu.edu>]

Sent: Tuesday, July 03, 2012 6:22 AM

To: dereande@nmu.edu

Subject: IRB Number

Hi, Dr. Anderson. :)

My name is Emily, and I was approved for a study on poverty and child welfare by the IRB.

I'm using a payment receipt form (that subjects sign so that the university comptroller has a name for the gift cards we're giving for our interviews), and I've attached it here-

except that it doesn't have the right IRB number. This is Dr. Hilton's template, and I can't find an IRB number for my study.

Does the board have that?

I appreciate your time,