Summer 2012 Project L/EARN Mentor Bios

**Dr. Scott Bilder** (M.S., Rutgers; Ph.D. in progress, Rutgers University) is a Senior Research Project Manager at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research. His research interests include psychological measurement and the application of advanced statistical methods to problems in health services research. He is particularly interested in studying adherence to prescription drugs using medical claims data, patterns of prescription for medications used in the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and in measuring quality of care for persons treated with antipsychotic medications.

**Dr. Susan Brownlee** (Ph.D., Rutgers University) is a Survey Research Analyst at the Center for State Health Policy at Rutgers University, where she coordinates survey design and data collection efforts and is involved in statistical analysis of survey data. Past projects include the NJ Health Care Reform Opinion Poll, an assessment of physician workforce supply in New Jersey, and evaluating the Medicaid managed care enrollment experiences of developmentally disabled NJ residents. Recent projects involve analyzing social and demographic characteristics associated with differences in access to health care using data from the 2009 New Jersey Family Health Survey, and analysis of factors associated with childhood obesity using survey data from the 2009 New Jersey Childhood Obesity Study. Another project seeks to inform strategies to address the acute shortage of faculty in nursing by identifying factors in their work-lives associated with recruitment and retention.

**Dr. Stephanie Curenton** (Ph.D., University of Virginia) is a developmental and community psychologist. She is an Assistant Professor at the Rutgers University School of Planning and Public Policy and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in the Institute for the Study of Child Development. Dr. Curenton focuses on preschoolers’ education, health, and their access to public services. She is currently directing two studies. One study uses a large national database to examine how speech/hearing, language, and cognitive disabilities are related to children’s school achievement and access to education and health services. The second study uses data from a long-term investigation of African American high risk urban families to investigate how maternal depression and substance abuse is associated with mother-child interactions and children’s receipt of social services.

**Dr. Karen D’Alonzo** (Ph.D., Rutgers University) is a nurse researcher and nurse practitioner. She is an Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing, Rutgers University. Using a framework of community based participatory research (CBPR), Dr. D’Alonzo’s research focuses on the role of acculturation stress in promotion of physical activity and bio-behavioral approaches to the prevention and management of obesity and diseases that cause obesity among diverse groups of women. Recent research projects have involved the use of lay community health workers/promotoras de salud in the delivery of health promotion interventions in the immigrant Latino community in New Brunswick. Dr. D’Alonzo is also interested in how socioeconomic and demographic factors and parents perceptions of their children's weight are associated with eating and exercise habits.

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**Dr. Ayorkor Gaba** (Psy.D. Rutgers GSAPP) is the Clinical Coordinator and Project Manager at the Women’s Treatment Project (WTP), Center of Alcohol Studies, where she focuses on treatment integrity and treatment outcomes. WTP is a 5 year National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) funded treatment study evaluating female-specific cognitive behavioral treatment for women who are alcohol dependent. Her other research involves development and testing of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) models and mechanisms of change for substance use disorders using approaches such as alcohol behavioral couple therapy, cognitive behavioral couple drug therapy, and individual or group female specific CBT. Dr. Gaba also provides assessment and treatment services to women at WTP. Prior to coming to WTP, she was clinician and supervisor at the Family Functional Therapy program at University Behavioral Healthcare, where she provided in-home evidence based family therapy to mandated (e.g. DYFS, Juvenile Justice) and non-mandated families and provided clinical supervision to masters level clinicians.

**Dr. Dorothy Gaboda** (Ph.D., Rutgers University School of Social Work), is a social worker and Associate Director for Data Analysis at the Center for State Health Policy. She studies healthcare policy issues, including health insurance coverage and health care for poor children, the needs of people with disabilities, and healthcare for the elderly in the community and in nursing homes. She works with survey data gathered from New Jersey households to understand disparities in healthcare for the state’s diverse population. She is also interested in how health data is gathered and used by state and local governments, particularly in the areas of racial and ethnic identification. Current projects include state policy to support individuals with autism, insurance coverage for poor children and their parents in New Jersey families, and barriers to receiving health care for people who are vulnerable because of poverty, race/ethnicity, immigration status, age or illness.

**Dr. Emily Greenfield** (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin), is an Assistant Professor of Social Work. She received her graduate training in Human Development and Family Studies with a focus on adult development and social gerontology. Dr. Greenfield studies how social relationships influence adults’ psychological well-being and physical health—for better and for worse. She is particularly interested in childhood abuse as a risk factor for adult health problems, such as functional impairment, poor sleep quality, and obesity. She also conducts research on how relationships with neighbors and friends can optimize well-being in later life. She currently is leading a national study of innovative community initiatives to support older adults living in their own homes and neighborhoods.

**Dr. Shawna Hudson** (Ph.D., Rutgers University), a medical sociologist, is an Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health at the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and a resident member of The Cancer Institute of New Jersey. She conducts mixed methods research in cancer screening, cancer treatment and cancer survivorship. Her qualitative research studies have focused on exploring cancer disparities in treatment and screening settings. Her quantitative, survey based research examines preventive cancer screening and organizational factors in primary care practices that increase use of evidence based care practices. Her current research funded by the National Cancer Institute explores new and long-term adult cancer survivors’ extended follow-up care seeking patterns. Specifically, it examines survivors' motivation and decision making in regards to seeking cancer follow-up care and explores their preferences for care delivery from cancer and cancer-related specialists versus primary care physicians.

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Dr. Howard Leventhal (Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is a Board of Governors Professor of Health Psychology at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research. He is the Director of the Network for the Study of Health Beliefs and Behavior, a group of faculty and students from psychology, sociology, medicine, nursing, and public health who conduct theoretically grounded research in clinical settings. Dr. Leventhal’s research builds upon the Common-Sense Model of Self-Regulation and focuses on how patients process information involved in self-management of chronic illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, and asthma. The Common-Sense Model describes the psychological mechanisms involved both in the management of these conditions and the content and process of communication among patients and practitioners. A goal of future work is linking these psychological mechanisms to mechanisms identified in cognitive science and cognitive neuroscience. Dr. Leventhal’s interests also involve models of mental illness, particularly depression and its treatments, and how depression is elicited by and affects the management of physical illness. One current project examines how cognitive-affective factors affect communication among patients, practitioners and families. A second project investigates how effective sharing of illness models between patients and practitioners affects communication, treatment adherence, health outcomes, and end of life planning such as living wills.

Dr. Judith A. Lucas (Ed.D. Rutgers University; APN) is an advance practice nurse and Assistant Research Professor at Rutgers University in the Division on Aging, and the Mental Health Center for Education and Research on Therapeutics (CERTS) at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy & Aging Research. Dr. Lucas has a special focus on the most vulnerable elderly in long-term care, with an emphasis on quality of care and quality improvement in community-based and residential long-term care settings. Recent research includes: studies of the effects of treatment for mental illness among frail elders; and studies that aim to understand patterns of use, guideline consistency, and behavioral symptoms and functional outcomes of antipsychotic drug use in the nursing home setting. She is particularly interested in understanding drug and non-drug treatments for behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia, associations with staffing, caregiver and care practices in long-term care, and state policies that affect facility patterns of care practices.

Dr. Dawne Mouzon (Ph.D., Rutgers University) is a sociologist and Assistant Professor at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. With an overarching focus on race differences in mental health status, she is currently working on two projects. In one project, she uses data from the National Midlife Development in the U.S. to examine how race and gender jointly moderate the association between marital status and mental health, extending past research that assumes that marriage is universally positive for mental health. In another project, she uses data from the National Survey of American Life to explore causal mechanisms to explain the race paradox in mental health. She specifically focuses on whether the quantity and quality of three different social relationships (families, friends, and church members) can explain the unexpected finding that African Americans have better mental health outcomes than Whites. Dr. Mouzon’s most recent projects examine the role of chronic and goal-striving stress to explain mental health paradoxes among the Black middle class in America.

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**Dr. Diana Sanchez** (Ph.D., Social Psychology and Women’s Studies, University of Michigan) is a social psychologist and Associate Professor in the Psychology Department at Rutgers-New Brunswick. Her current research focuses on two themes. The first theme addresses how masculinity serves as a barrier to health promotion and a risk factor for problem behavior (e.g., sexual risk taking, extreme sports, alcohol and drug use). For example, she examines whether masculinity threatens increase interest in risk behaviors and reduce interest in health promotion behaviors. Moreover, she examines the types of masculinity beliefs (e.g., basing self-esteem on self-sufficiency and bravery) that may operate to stifle health promotion. The second theme of her research is to identify the conditions under which confronting prejudice is associated with positive health outcomes and why. Specifically, she gathers self-reported frequency of confronting prejudice and reasons for confronting and assesses their association with physical illness symptoms and positive well-being.

**Dr. Edward Selby** (Ph.D., The Florida State University) is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and a clinical psychologist who specializes in the research and treatment of suicidal and self-injurious behavior, personality disorders, and eating disorders. A major focus of his research on these disorders involves emotion dysregulation and the use of self-sabotaging behaviors, such as binging and purging, self-injury, alcohol and substance use, fighting or reckless driving, to distract from upsetting emotions. Dr. Selby and colleagues have authored the Emotional Cascade Model, a model that suggests that prior to engaging in these behaviors, people repetitively and intensely think or ruminate about an upsetting situation to the point that they work themselves into an extremely painful state called an emotional cascade. The Emotional Cascade Model has also been used to explain the development of Borderline Personality Disorder, a disorder of emotional extremes, stormy interpersonal relationships, and impulsive and self-sabotaging behavior. Dr. Selby’s treatment research focuses on novel ways to implement treatment through the use of portable digital devices as well as combined mindfulness meditation and exercise as interventions for psychopathology.