2009 Project L/EARN Faculty Mentors

Dr. Robert (Bob) Atkins (B.A., Political Science, Brown; B.S.N., Pennsylvania; M.S.N., Rutgers University; Ph.D., Temple) is an assistant professor at the Rutgers College of Nursing. His research addresses theory and practice for improving the life chances of children and youth living in high-poverty, urban neighborhoods. This interest grows from his experiences in Camden—one of America’s poorest cities—as a school nurse, the director of a public health initiative, and as the founder of a youth development program. His research with nationally representative longitudinal survey data illuminates the effects of urban poverty on child and adolescent development. Dr. Atkins’ current work explores four questions about the development of youth living in high-poverty neighborhoods: 1) What social and institutional processes mediate the relationship of high-poverty neighborhoods to the health and well-being of youth living in those neighborhoods? 2) How does stress influence personality development in childhood? 3) How does childhood personality influence the emergence of risky and health-damaging behaviors in adolescence and young adulthood? 4) What do youth in high-poverty neighborhoods do to promote, maintain, or restore their own health? He recently received a Nurse Faculty Scholars award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Dr. Scott M. Bilder (M.S., Rutgers, 1991; Ph.D. in progress) is a Senior Research Project Manager at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research. His research interests include factors that lead patients to disregard physicians' instructions about taking their prescribed medications regularly, especially psychiatric and HIV/AIDS drugs. He is beginning a new project examining patterns of nonmedical use of ADHD medications, such as Ritalin, Focalin, etc. in children and adolescents. Other research interests include access to mental health services for older adolescents and young adults, use of antipsychotic drugs in youth and in the elderly, and treatment of persons diagnosed with both serious mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Deborah Carr (Ph.D., Wisconsin, 1997) is a life course sociologist with interests in aging, gender, and health. She is Associate Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University. Her current work focuses on the psychological and social consequences of obesity; the psychological consequences of family transitions, especially widowhood; and the ways that older men and women prepare for end-of-life health concerns. She is the editor-in-chief of the Encyclopedia of the Life Course and Human Development (2009). She recently collected data on the specific plans and preferences that older adults make for their end-of-life health care. Her studies focus on two populations: white, healthy older adults in Wisconsin; and terminally ill black, Latino and white older persons in New Brunswick and Newark, NJ. She is particularly interested in how one’s family relationships, attitudes towards life and death, and general values affect older adults’ decision to continue or stop life-sustaining treatments in the case of terminal illness.
Dr. Karen D’Alonzo (Ph.D., Rutgers University, 2002) is a nurse researcher and nurse practitioner. She is an Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing, Rutgers University. Her research focuses on promotion of physical activity in women across the lifespan, with a particular emphasis on minority women and the role of acculturation in the adoption of health promotion behaviors. Dr. D’Alonzo’s most recent project is an NIH-funded study to develop a physical activity intervention for Latina immigrants in New Brunswick. A unique feature of this community based participation research (CBPR) study is that the physical activity classes are taught by *promotoras*, Hispanic women from the community who have been trained as community health workers.

Dr. Antoinette Y. Farmer (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh) is Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the School of Social Work. Her current research focuses on examining the effects of religion/spirituality and parenting practices on adolescent high risk behaviors, such as delinquency, sexual activity, and substance use. She is also interested in looking at what factors (i.e., parenting stress, maternal mental health) affect parenting practices. Currently, she is undertaking research looking at the effects of parenting stress on parenting behavior, mothers and fathers’ parenting practices on adolescent high risk behaviors, and parenting stress and depression on fathers’ disciplinary strategies.

Dr. Dorothy Gaboda (Ph.D., Rutgers) is trained as a social worker and is Associate Director for Data Analysis at the Center for State Health Policy. She works on projects related to health insurance coverage and health care for poor children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. 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. She works on several projects, including an examination of the needs of individuals with traumatic brain injury, insurance coverage of 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, age or illness.

Dr. Howard Leventhal (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, 1956) is Board of Governors Professor of Health Psychology and the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research. His current research focuses upon health self-management processes with chronic illnesses such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes. Issues include how patients self-assess their health and how their perceptions of illness and treatment affect how they manage their illnesses. Dr. Leventhal is the Director for the Center for the Study of Health Beliefs and Behavior, funded by the National Institute of Aging. The primary goal of the Center is to develop models describing the processes by which patients, practitioners, and family members come to understand one another’s perception of disease and treatment, and how these understandings affect communication, treatment adherence, health outcomes and end of life planning.
**Dr. Judith A. Lucas** (Ed.D, Rutgers University, 1991) is an advance practice nurse and Assistant Research Professor at Rutgers University in the Division on Aging and the Mental Health CERTs at the Institute. Her research concern quality of care and life and quality improvement in long-term care settings. Her current research is on the effects of treatment for mental illness among frail elders including nutrition status, behavioral symptoms and functional outcomes. She is directing a multi-state study that aims to understand patterns and guideline consistency of antipsychotic drug use in the nursing home setting. She is particularly interested in understanding disparities in drug use, drug and non-drug treatments for behavioral symptoms, association with physical restraint and staffing practices, and state policies that affect facility patterns of drug use, with a special focus on the most vulnerable elderly in long term care.

**Dr. Jane Miller** (Ph.D., Pennsylvania, 1989) is a Professor in the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, and a Research Professor at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research. Much of her research focuses on relationships between poverty, child health, health insurance, and access to health care. Collaborating with colleagues at the Center for State Health Policy and New Jersey's Department of Human Services, she has conducted several studies of New Jersey's State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) which covers children from low- to moderate-income families. Other research interests include children’s nutrition and chronic children’s health conditions such as asthma.

**Dr. Julie Phillips** (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1998) is a sociologist and demographer. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research. Her research interests include the causes and consequences of various forms of social inequality in the United States, focusing on outcomes such as violent crime, suicide, marital disruption, migration, and health-related outcomes. In collaboration with colleagues, Dr. Phillips is embarking on a new project exploring suicide - a major mental health problem within the U.S. population. Among the research questions being explored are how and why patterns of suicide rates vary across place and time, and explanations for differing rates of suicide across age, sex and race groups. One recent study, for example, aims to understand the surge since the late 1990s in suicide rates among Baby Boomers.

**Dr. Kathleen Pottick** (Ph.D., Michigan, 1982) is a social psychologist and social worker. She is a Professor at the Rutgers University School of Social Work. Her current work focuses on adolescents with mental health problems. Her co-authored book, *The Parents' Perspective: Delinquency, Aggression, and Mental Health* (1995), is an analysis of disadvantaged inner-city adolescents receiving outpatient mental health services in Newark, New Jersey. She is directing several research studies that aim to understand the patterns of mental health services to children and adolescents, and youths with conduct disorders in the United States. She is particularly interested in understanding disparities in how mental health services are delivered to our nation's youth. Dr. Pottick has a special focus on the most vulnerable youths--poor, minority, and most seriously ill.
Dr. Yana Rodgers (Ph.D., Harvard, 1993) is an economist and an Associate Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers University. Her research examines issues in the fields of feminist economics and development economics, with a focus on the links between economic development and women’s well-being. Her work has also examined policies to improve the well-being of children in the United States, including reforms to states’ child support schedules and innovations in food assistance programs. She is currently undertaking several new research projects that examine the links between mother’s education and the nutritional status of their children, using readily available survey data from Cambodia and Bangladesh. These projects examine the various channels (including socioeconomic status, fertility patterns, and environmental contaminants) through which maternal education affects the birth outcomes and growth of their young children.

Dr. Marsha Rosenthal (M.P.A., New York University; Ph.D., Rutgers University) is a medical sociologist who has also worked extensively on federal and state health care policy. As an Assistant Research Professor at the Center for State Health Policy, she is developing research in areas of current health policy concerns including long-term care, immigrant health, and chronic care for the underserved. Dr. Rosenthal’s work on long-term care looks at the organizational culture of nursing homes, physician practices in nursing homes and the health beliefs of residents and staff in assisted living communities.

Dr. Charlotte Thomas-Hawkins (BSN, Thomas Jefferson University; MSN, PhD, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing) is an associate professor in the College of Nursing at Rutgers University. Her research interests include physical activity in individuals with chronic kidney disease; illness representations in individuals with chronic kidney disease, and the relationship between dialysis work environment and patient outcomes.