THE MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION, STATISTICS, AND ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

Invites you to Attend the Final, Public Dissertation Defense for:

Avery Newton

Titled:

EXPLORING THE SCHOOL- AND STUDENT-LEVEL PREDICTORS OF DECENT WORK ATTAINMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The defense will be held on

Thursday, March 21st at 2 PM

in

Campion Hall 306

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Laura O'Dwyer (Chair), Dr. David Blustein (Reader),
Dr. Henry Braun (Reader)

Abstract:

As the nature of work continues to evolve and diversify in the 21st century, issues related to the attainment of high-quality work are paramount. Initially defined by the International Labour Organisation [ILO], Decent Work exists as a standard for the expected quality of work to which all should have access in modern society. Central to the definition of Decent Work is the guarantee that “women and men enjoy working experiences that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values, provide for adequate compensation in case of lost or reduced income, and permit access to adequate healthcare” (ILO, n.d.).

While issues of work quality are relevant to all members of the workforce, young adults are at heightened risk of not securing work that is Decent, if they are able to secure work at all. Using nationally representative data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002
[ELS:02], this study investigates Decent Work attainment among young adults through the lens of their experiences as high school students ten years prior. The Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016) guides this investigation, explicitly accounting for both individual (student-level) and contextual (school-level) characteristics in the prediction of future Decent Work attainment and overall employment status.

Results from a series of multilevel analyses indicate that most of the variability in Decent Work attainment and employment status exists at the individual level, as opposed to the high school level. Structurally, this suggests that schools are not the primary drivers of students’ contextual influences when it comes to their work outcomes. Furthermore, the collection of school- and student-level predictors found to be significantly associated with the various facets of Decent Work and employment status varies widely from model to model. This suggests that the Psychology of Working Theory is far from a one-size-fits-all theory, and that the predictors of work attainment are highly complex. Implications for education policy and future research are discussed throughout the dissertation.