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OUR PLACE
AT THE TABLE

BY DEAN ALBERTO GÖDENZI

As leaders in social work education, we recognize that we are part of a larger academic system built with many other disciplines in mind. We are late arrivals to the party; the first schools of social work were established at the turn of the 20th century.

The good news is, we are at the table. And while we may not reconstruct the ivory tower in three days, our place here affords us the opportunity to build our own reputation. Moreover, it compels us to go outside our campus walls and effect change at tables and in spaces across the globe.

At the Boston College School of Social Work, we see ourselves as changemakers who are willing to challenge existing conditions. We are forward-looking, refusing to waste time on what we can’t change, but instead, innovating on what we can do. Already, we are active collaborators on some of the most pressing social issues of our day, willing to serve as partners at every level of discussion, as long as we are creating positive change in the world. And more than that, in doing what comes naturally to social workers, that is, stepping up to contribute to solutions to society’s problems, we also serve to further our own field.

I’m optimistic that, more and more, social work higher education is in the vanguard, designing solutions to truly make a difference. The recently identified Grand Challenges for Social Work provide a unique opportunity to mobilize the field toward reaching ambitious, shared goals that could have major positive outcomes. We are proud that our own Jim Lubben is a leader in this groundbreaking initiative spearheaded by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

The fact that the Grand Challenges are a borrowed construct originated by the fields of communication and computing research marks a positive step forward in how we think about our own work. At BC, we actively seek to collaborate with professionals not traditionally considered to be partners, because we believe that an interdisciplinary approach to social work higher education is essential to making inroads in academia and beyond. Many of our junior faculty members have adopted this perspective: Jessica Black is hard at work to forge a new space between neuroscience and social work; Summer Hawkins is a social epidemiologist who applies public health data to building actionable policy-driven solutions; Erika Sabbath delves deeply into the role that environmental toxins play in occupational environments; and Rocío Calvo explores how immersion in Spanish language and Latino cultures enables social workers to see Latino communities from within.

While cross-disciplinary research is vital to succeeding in academia, we also seek to build bridges across spaces—connecting the academy with the practitioner and policymaker. Macro Practice
THE GOOD NEWS IS, WE ARE AT THE TABLE. AND WHILE WE MAY NOT RECONSTRUCT THE IVORY TOWER IN THREE DAYS, OUR PLACE HERE AFFORDS US THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD OUR OWN REPUTATION. AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT COMPELS US TO GO OUTSIDE OUR CAMPUS WALLS AND EFFECT CHANGE AT TABLES AND IN SPACES ACROSS THE GLOBE.

Chair Tiziana Dearing is a former CEO and president of Catholic Charities; her executive opinion offers a profound and pragmatic voice on what it takes to mold policy regarding poverty. Immigrant Integration Lab Director Westy Egmont, who has been an advisor to each of the past five governors of Massachusetts, offers a similarly valuable perspective on migration.

Dearing and Egmont have long been at tables that matter; that they’re able to share this experience reminds our students and faculty that we can continue to occupy these spaces into the future. In January, we witnessed a proof point first hand, when Associate Professor Marylou Sudders was named Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services for Massachusetts, where she oversees a $19.4 billion annual budget and more than 22,000 employees. We are excited to follow Sudders in her drive to solve some of the Commonwealth’s biggest social ills.

In many ways, Sudders is an exemplar for how I believe we should be thinking about our profession. It’s not that the mental health counselor or the child welfare advocate working on the margins isn’t just as critically important; they most certainly are. But we needn’t limit ourselves to a definition of a social world that has developed over what social science giant Pierre Bourdieu called “accumulated history”; we can be so much more than what the narrative leading up to today says we should be.

In Bourdieu’s famous work *The State Nobility*, he examines how the *Grandes Écoles*, and the “work of consecration” carried out by these elite universities, serves to justify their own existences, and by extension, their weighted and perhaps unwarranted respective influences on society. There are always offices that will be occupied by individuals of certain pedigrees, with backgrounds in better respected disciplines. Most evidently in our nation, the road to the White House is paved in Ivy-covered brick.

But this doesn’t mean we can’t compassionately confront the stakeholders who seek to maintain this status quo, and, in so doing, establish ourselves as leaders who transcend existing spheres of influence. While we may have to wait a hundred years to see a social worker in the Oval Office, the time is now for us to overrun executive offices, in public and private sectors across the country. Just ask Sudders.

“I would expect that in 10 years, there won’t just be a Marylou Sudders who is a cabinet secretary,” she said at a recent event at the Massachusetts State House, “but there will be a host of social workers who are cabinet secretaries across the United States and beyond.”

I’m hopeful that Sudders’ prediction can come true. Let’s go out and populate all kinds of innovative spaces. Let’s contribute to our own “accumulated history,” and begin to redefine our field, today.
In poor rural communities with big hearts and strong faith, McRoy studies a way out of foster care for urban children who are caught in the vicious grip of parentlessness.

As an architect of the Grand Challenges for Social Work, Lubben makes his mark on what promises to be an exciting new agenda for 21st century social innovators.

Takeuchi investigates why pumping iron has come to mean something far more than building muscles in a Boston gym, where vulnerable youth are given tools to attain socio-economic mobility.
ADOPTING
A NEW SENSE OF PLACE

Ruth McRoy’s research into two rural initiatives reveals a model that could reform adoption policies and practices

In America, the zip code in which you live can say a lot about the opportunities afforded to you. Imaginary lines form zones defined by demographic clusters, often as racially and ethnically segregated neighborhoods, that vary greatly from city to city, town to town, even block to block. Inherent in these variances are severe inequities in income, access to education and healthcare, and prospects for social mobility.

Perhaps more than anything, race- and place-based inequality affects our nation’s children, as adoption expert Professor Ruth McRoy is well aware. Many are born under nearly insurmountable odds, even when they have a strong family support system; for those without parents, the window of opportunity very rarely opens, and when it does, only ever so slightly.

In nearly every state across the country, these odds are more heavily stacked against children of color, who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, while African American children represent 13.8 percent of those under 18 nationwide, 24 percent of all youth in foster care are black. The numbers are similarly skewed in regard to Latinos (17 percent and 22 percent).
“IT’S IN PLACES LIKE POSSUM TROT AND SPARTANBURG WHERE I BELIEVE WE WILL CONTINUE TO FIND FAMILIES TO PROVIDE A SENSE OF PERMANENCY FOR THE MORE THAN 24,000 AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN CURRENTLY AWAITING ADOPTION.”

– RUTH MCROY

Over the past few years, McRoy, long a leader in the field of adoption advocacy, has focused her attention on a new rural model that she believes could have a major positive impact on reducing the number of children of color in foster care who are awaiting stable homes. It’s an idea based in the work of two leaders in two small Southern towns more than 800 miles apart, whose very different zip codes actually say something very similar about the potential for a new kind of adoptive society.

Bishop W.C. Martin from Possum Trot, Texas, and Joe Haynes, from Spartanburg, South Carolina, have both established compassionate communities devoted to providing families to children without permanent homes: Martin, in his role as pastor of Bennett Chapel Baptist Church, and Haynes, as founder of the agency Adoption Advocacy of South Carolina.

A ‘biblical imperative’
For the people of Bennett Chapel, the project began in 1997, as Martin’s wife Donna grieved following the death of her mother. According to the bishop, the Lord spoke to Donna and encouraged her to give to a child in need in the way that her mother had given to her. A year later, after taking classes in how to provide adoptive care, the Martins brought Tyler and Mercedes into their home.

It soon became clear to Bishop Martin that there was a “biblical imperative” to adopt children without families, and he shared this message with his congregants. Remarkably, many followed suit: In total, 23 African American families at Bennett Chapel have adopted 77 African American children, ranging from newborn to 11 years old at the time of adoption. They’re now all between the ages of 10 and 26. A dozen are in college. It has been, by all accounts, a great success for this faith community.

Of course, when it all began in 1997, it was by no means a given that the foster care system would even give the Bennett Chapel congregation an opportunity to adopt children, many of whom were living in large cities across Texas. Possum Trot is remote—a tiny unincorporated rural and working class community without an official population, a sort of “suburb” to Shelbyville, itself an unincorporated town of just over 3,000 people. Little Nacogdoches is the nearest city. Houston is nearly 200 miles away. Possum Trot is poor, medically underserved, and lacks basic amenities that many of us take for granted, such as Internet and cell phone coverage.

“Social workers had their doubts if the rough and tough kids from the foster system could make it in this tiny community,” remembers Bishop Martin. “Could the people here really pull this off?”

After a strong response to adoption training requests impressed a child welfare worker named Susan Ramsey, who would soon become an honorary member of their community and an advocate for Bennett Chapel’s role in adopting Texas’ youth, Possum Trot got its chance. And the town has never looked back.

Starting with just one family
The people of Spartanburg and its surrounding towns have pulled off a similar success story, thanks largely to the guidance of Haynes, himself an adoptive father who decided to establish Adoption Advocacy, a licensed nonprofit organization, in 1999 to fill what he saw as a critical need. Since its inception, Adoption Advocacy has placed 700 children from 24 states in families living within a 30- to 40-square mile area in South Carolina. About 80 percent of the children placed with families through his network are African American, says Haynes.

Adoption Advocacy does no advertising. Families come to Haynes based on word of mouth, usually through the network of the dozens of churches dotting the small towns located in the area. As in the case of Bennett Chapel, it all started with one family, and grew.

This opportunity for growth is a major reason that McRoy has devoted so much of her time getting to know these remarkable communities. If Possum Trot and Spartanburg could become
Bishop W.C. Martin stands with some of the 77 children adopted by Bennett Chapel’s congregation.  (Photo by O. Rufus Lovett)

havens for so many children needing homes, she wondered, could other rural enclaves adopt similar models to find homes for the more than 100,000 children who are awaiting adoption nationwide?

**Advocating for a new model**

In collaboration with Martin, Haynes, and Professor Kathleen Belanger of Stephen F. Austin State University, McRoy is currently conducting a research project analyzing the strengths of these rural adoption models, towards finding ways to bring similar models to places and spaces throughout the country. Much of the research surrounds the network of social supports that exists in these small, close-knit towns, and how these supports help to build self-esteem in African American youth, promote positive racial identity, and help to maintain and develop relationships that the children will be able to build on as they move forward in life.

“We’re sharing the stories of Bennett Chapel and Adoption Advocacy in order to encourage social workers to think outside the box when looking for adoptive families,” explains McRoy. “It’s in places like Possum Trot and Spartansburg where I believe we will continue to find families to provide a sense of permanency for the more than 24,000 African American children currently awaiting adoption.”

By all accounts, McRoy has been a major force for ensuring that this message is heard, loud and clear.

“Ruth constantly amazes me,” says Haynes. “She’s just as comfortable speaking in front of a thousand people as she is spending time in the homes of my relatively poor families, singing along with their three adopted teens. Wherever she is, she fits in and makes everything work so well.”

“Ruth has taken our work to the next level to let people know what a church in the woods can do,” adds Bishop Martin. “I’m excited to see her present this study to other states and other communities, even to other churches, to let them know they can duplicate what we’ve done here.”
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<th>Ensure healthy development for all youth</th>
<th>Stop family violence</th>
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These 12 Grand Challenges are current working titles. The formal rollout of the final Grand Challenges will be made at SSWR in January 2016.
In the 1980s, according to the National Science Foundation, American policymakers first established “Grand Challenges” in the fields of communication and computing research, essentially setting performance goals meant to respond to international competition within these disciplines.

Since then, similar Challenges have been set more broadly across scientific disciplines in order to, as the White House Office of Science and Technology states, “harness science, technology, and innovation to solve important national or global problems” while having the potential to capture the public’s imagination. Recently, practitioners and academics from engineering and global health and development have used this rubric to establish how they can best work together, for example, to limit drug resistance and cure infection, or provide access to clean water.

Now, the social work research community is announcing its own Grand Challenges designed to “chart an agenda for social innovation in the 21st century” and engage a next generation of best and brightest in the task of solving some of society’s most pressing social ills. An important contributor to the launch of this innovative initiative, devised by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW), is BC School of Social Work Professor James Lubben.
“BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATIVE, COMPLEX EFFORT, SUCH AS THE GRAND CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE, THERE MUST BE MULTI-TALENTED INDIVIDUALS ABLE TO CLEARLY IMAGINE BOTH THE BLUE-SKY VISION AND THE EARTH THAT MUST BE TILLED AND TRAVERSED TO REACH THAT VISION.”

– EDWINA UEHARA, DEAN,
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Since the AASWSW charged the executive committee to define the Grand Challenges two and a half years ago, Lubben has been involved in “all aspects of the initiative,” says fellow committee member and the Ballmer Endowed Dean in Social Work at the University of Washington, Edwina Uehara. This includes: working to develop the overall plan for the national initiative, while devising strategies to engage social work stakeholders. Lubben has also carefully reviewed and assessed dozens of Grand Challenge concept papers and ideas submitted from across the field. Over the coming months, he will continue to get the word out about the Challenges, which were formally proposed in January 2015 at the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) annual meeting. And if all that isn’t enough, he’s part of a team that’s submitted a concept paper to address the challenge of building stronger social connections.

“Behind every successful transformative, complex effort, such as the Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative, there must be multi-talented individuals able to clearly imagine both the blue-sky vision and the earth that must be tilled and traversed to reach that vision,” says Uehara. “Individuals who put shoulder to wheel, who are willing and able to tackle obstacles, big and small, who inspire and support others to keep focused on the big picture while slogging through the inevitable conundrums and stumbling blocks that are a part of any important project. Jim was such an individual for the Grand Challenge Initiative.”

Members from the BC Social Work community have contributed widely to the Grand Challenges, including to the following concept papers.

Eradicate Social Isolation


**ABSTRACT**: Solid epidemiological evidence links social isolation to health. Both the World Health Organization and the U.S. National Institutes of Health have affirmed the importance of addressing social isolation. The AARP also has recently adopted social isolation as one of its top five new initiatives. Working in tandem with other key professions, social work possesses the expertise to greatly reduce the risk and consequences of social isolation. The “social” element of social work is the key for solving the grand challenge of reducing the risk of social isolation and strengthening social ties among all populations.
Harness Technology for Social Good

**Harnessing the Digital Age: Practice Innovation through Technology a Grand Challenge for Social Work, from Stephanie Berzin, Jonathan Singer, and Chitat Chan (under consideration).**

**DRAFT ABSTRACT:** Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is transformational. . . . While the possibility for practice innovation using digital technologies has been documented (see Barak & Grohol, 2011), social work practitioners and scholars remain hesitant to drive this movement . . . . The grand challenge for social work becomes to harness technological advancements and leverage digital advances for social good. Accepting this challenge will result in more accurate, timely, and targeted services. Traditional consumers of social services will benefit from improved assessment, intervention, and real-time feedback. Social services will be available to people who have traditionally been excluded due to functional barriers such as geography, transportation, and scheduling. Society will benefit from having the broad reach of social work enhanced by innovative integration of technology.

Promote Equal Opportunity and Justice for All

**Leveraging Latino Immigrant Assets, from Rocio Calvo, Larry Ortiz, Westy Egmont, Robert Rosales, Victor Figuereo, Manuel Cano, and Patricia Villa (under consideration).**

**DRAFT ABSTRACT:** Now an integral part of the American fabric, Latinos represent the fastest growing population in the United States. While the Latino immigrant community constitutes a vibrant and enriching presence, it also faces significant challenges that preclude its full participation in American society.

Traditional approaches to the incorporation of Latino immigrants have often focused on what Latinos lack, relative to the prevailing non-Latino white majoritarian culture.

We instead focus on what Latinos bring with them, namely their cultural capital, and we examine how social workers can leverage these assets to assist Latinos in leading their own positive integration into American life.

Increasing Success for African American Children and Youth, from Martell Teasley, Ruth McRoy, Mit Joyner, Marilyn Armour, Ruby Gourdine, Sandra Crewe, Michael Kelly, Cynthia Franklin, Macheo Payne, John L. Jackson, Jr., and Rowena Fong (under consideration).

**DRAFT ABSTRACT:** African American students’ disproportionately low high school graduation rate is a major barrier to their personal and professional success. Suspensions (too often caused by over-strict policies combined with racial bias or cultural misunderstandings) remove too many African American students from school and increase their chances of falling behind, dropping out, and even going to jail. Evidence-based approaches to reducing the harshness of school discipline can create safer educational environments for all children and ensure African American students achieve at higher levels.

Advance Long and Productive Lives

**Increasing Productive Engagement in Later Life, from Nancy Morrow-Howell, Ernest Gonzales, Christina Matz-Costa, and Emily A. Greenfield.**

**ABSTRACT:** Population aging is among the most profound transformations in all of human history. Life expectancy has more than tripled, with most of that extension coming in the last century (Finch, 2010). This demographic shift is very rapid—indeed, a demographic revolution. In the United States, the number of people over the age of 65 will double between 2000 and 2030, with the number of people over 85 growing the fastest (Administration on Aging, 2013). This demographic revolution presents many grand challenges. This paper highlights the challenge of reshaping social expectations, institutions, policies, and programs to engage the growing human capital of the older population to meet the demands posed by an aging society.

* Authors in bold are from Boston College.
FROM AN URBAN GYM COMES A NOVEL IDEA
ABOUT HOW TO EMPOWER STRUGGLING YOUTH.

DAVID TAKEUCHI INVESTIGATES WHY IT IS WORKING.
At Inner City Weightlifting (ICW), a nonprofit organization in Boston’s underserved neighborhood of Dorchester, it’s critical to “measure success differently,” explains its founder, Jon Feinman. This is because, for many of the men who come to work out and train at ICW, success is defined simply as living to see another day.

ICW’s mission is to use fitness training as a tool to reduce violence, while also promoting professional, personal, and academic achievement among urban youth. Many of its students are former gang members and have served time in prison. Most lack the kinds of positive support networks that those from different backgrounds might take for granted.

‘I fell through the cracks’
For Mackenzie “Big G” Guillaume, who has been working out at ICW since 2010 following a two-and-a-half-year stint locked up for illegal possession of a firearm, this was absolutely the case. His father left his family when he was only nine years old, and his mom struggled to take care of him and his four sisters on her own. He took to the streets between Mattapan and Dorchester to try to make it as best he could.

“Being the youngest, you could say that I fell through the cracks,” he says. “I had to jump in the water on my own and try to figure out whether I was going to sink or swim.”

Now 26, Guillaume is most definitely swimming, thanks largely to ICW. He works out there, mentors younger youth with stories similar to his own, and has attended entrepreneurship workshops set up by ICW with Reebok’s branding team and a licensing company within the music industry. He’s also a paid personal trainer, and offers his services as part of ICW’s innovative Olympic weightlifting training program designed to give its students a chance at socioeconomic mobility.

ICW’s training program pairs its students with clients from very different backgrounds—Guillaume’s first client was a banker and former rugby player—to encourage new opportunities for what Feinman calls “social inclusion.”

“Our students face a subtle form of segregation and isolation that’s based in the fact that they have no network to access opportunities,” he says. “Our hope is that, on the most basic level, the
clients we train will be more likely to cross the street to say hello to our students, instead of seeking to walk quickly by in order to avoid them. We seek to build a more equal playing field, not just in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, but in terms of access to the same kinds of opportunities that other men the same age have because of who they know."

Feinman believes that, while “money is certainly a factor,” socio-economic background doesn’t trump access to networks. He also believes that while solving the problem of youth violence in America is an incredibly complex endeavor, the solution begins with a simple step—learning to better understand each other.

To date, Feinman’s belief is based more in anecdotal evidence than it is in hard research. ICW has struggled with how to “measure success differently” in a world where merely coming to the gym to work out on a given day can be a significant victory. Perfect attendance doesn’t exactly sell donors and partners and policymakers on why they should get involved but how do you quantify success?

**Defining success scientifically**

To answer this question, Feinman has turned to David Takeuchi, BC Social Work’s associate dean for research.

In a recent meeting on BC’s Chestnut Hill campus, Feinman asked Takeuchi if he would be willing to conduct a study to define more exactly the unique cycle taking place at ICW, whereby vulnerable youth emerge with new power as trainers to higher income clients and, ultimately, find themselves with access to social networks they could never have foreseen accessing in the past. “It’s been difficult to get people to understand where our success is coming from,” says Feinman. “Our hope is that a research collaboration with BC could help us to more clearly define this success.”

Takeuchi and his team are currently in the planning stages of an ethnographic, observational, and interview-based project to address how changing perceptions, on opposite ends of the socio-economic continuum, can have a major impact on improving opportunities for the young people who frequent ICW. Takeuchi’s model proposes that the cognitive elements of mindset, perseverance, and sense of control are directly shaped by social networks and processes, and it seeks to measure the impact that expanding these networks can have on ICW’s students.

Takeuchi also hopes to gain insight into what happens when there is a change in dynamics, and black, impoverished youth become the teachers of their mostly white middle- and upper-class clients. This upside-down world provides the setting for his primary research question, namely: What social processes maintain, exacerbate, or reduce the effects of inequality for poor ICW students in their interactions with relatively wealthy clients and program staff?

“Ex gang members have extremely high rates of recidivism, and are more likely than not to end up back in jail,” says Takeuchi. “But ICW offers these young men a possibility for how things can be reversed. There’s no doubt that ICW instills hope in its students; we aim to find out if hopes also alter expectations that lead to meaningful change, and then define, scientifically, the processes that are most effective in improving the trajectories of at-risk youth.”

This, in a nutshell, is how Takeuchi defines his brand of social work—melding science with the real life ex-
‘DESTROY ANYTHING NEGATIVE’

Former star high school football player Reggie Talbert’s dream of making it big was cut short when he was shot and paralyzed from the neck down at the age of 18. Though he would eventually walk again, Talbert struggled with stints in prison until he adopted the mantra, “Destroy anything negative.” Now, he is in charge of maintaining the positive culture and community of Inner City Weightlifting (ICW).

By happy coincidence, one of Reggie’s personal training clients is BC Social Work Assistant Dean of Admissions Bill Howard, an ultra-marathoner who has run 100-mile races on trails across the country.

But while Howard is an expert when it comes to lacing up the running shoes, when he wants to turn to the weight room, he summons the expertise of Talbert, who is ICW’s Dorchester site director.

“Reggie is an exceptionally knowledgeable, creative, and motivating trainer,” says Howard. “More importantly, he is a truly inspirational person whose constant mission is ‘sharing the love.’”

Experiences of people in different communities to produce better outcomes. Takeuchi is hopeful that, in addition to helping Feinman and his team better measure success, this project can more broadly expand the conversation vis-à-vis the intersection of race, place, and poverty on the whole. An important component of his proposed project with ICW is to build an environment where policymakers, staff, researchers, and students come together to provide insights on Takeuchi’s initial research, and suggest ways that these findings can inform policy and practice throughout Boston and beyond.

Expanding new perspectives

This makes perfect sense to Feinman, who is hoping to expand ICW’s influence, first to several locations across Boston in pockets between areas of wealth and areas of violence, and then, to similar locations across the United States.

“We hope to create inclusive networks in areas where people are living within blocks of each other, but who may not ever have reason to interact,” he says. “Most fundamentally, we want to change the way people think about each other. We believe this can go a long way in helping to improve the outlooks for at-risk youth in America.”

For Guillaume, the kind of new perspectives Feinman talks about are now deeply entrenched in his mindset. He remembers the first time Feinman approached him, while he was playing basketball with a group of friends on a public court in Dorchester. “We thought he was crazy,” he says. “Like, who is this Caucasian guy coming up to us? It freaked us out. We weren’t used to having a positive image of white men coming into our neighborhood.”

But Feinman gave him his hard, bold sell about why ICW was an opportunity worth looking into, and five years after that first meeting on the basketball court, Guillaume has goals that extend well beyond living to see tomorrow. He’s planning to go back to college this coming semester and aiming to be financially stable by the time he hits 30.

“When I started this program, I was skeptical, I didn’t really get how weightlifting could make much of a difference in my life on the streets,” Guillaume says. “But there’s no doubt, ICW has opened me up and made me a better person.”
By turn thoughtful, bold, provocative, and unusual, the work of Rocío Calvo, Jessica Black, Summer Hawkins, and Erika Sabbath is leading to interventions that expand the scope of social work.
It’s no secret that today’s social worker will likely work with the largest growing segment of America’s populations, Latinos, during the course of his or her career. It’s also no surprise that, on average, people with Latino backgrounds are disproportionately affected by low educational attainment, fewer financial resources, and higher risk of discrimination. As a consequence, their families and communities often struggle with poverty and access to jobs and basic services.

Rocío Calvo is committed to addressing these realities at BC Social Work, through the power of the Latino Leadership Initiative (LLI), an innovative program designed to better prepare students to work with the increasingly diverse community that is the United States, and to help build solutions to create a more just and equitable society.

The LLI curriculum is addressing the often-challenging realities Latinos in America face, by training social workers to become a part of the communities in which they serve, and, as Calvo says, “do the work from within.” This starts with language proficiency—the LLI is one of the first programs nationwide to offer MSW courses in Spanish—but it is also so much more than this. The LLI is about sharing the Latino experience, and the brave, creative, entrepreneurial spirit that encourages so many to leave their home countries to work in low paying jobs in the hopes of something better. And it is about teaching the cultural traits that serve as protective factors for the many who are forced to deal with the daily hardships of living in a new place.

“It doesn’t matter if you work in a school, in a hospital, or in a clinic, today’s social workers are going to work with Latinos,” says Calvo. “So let’s train the next generation of professionals to use the strengths that these communities bring with them, in order to serve them better.”

The U.S. Hispanic population is estimated to reach 128.8 million by 2060, a number that will represent 31% of the U.S. population by that date.

(U.S. Census Bureau)
If it is up to Jessica Black, the integration of neuroscience research into social work will enrich our understanding of the interplay of nature and culture.

Jessica Black pursued higher education in hopes of preparing a next generation of collegians to make a difference in the world. This is a major reason she redirected her own course of study away from the natural sciences and towards social work, to prepare students to build careers in practice, policy, and research that have the potential to enhance biopsychosocial life course development.

But while her motivation for getting into the field of social work higher education might ring familiar, her point of entry is new: Black is a Stanford-trained educational neuroscientist whose strengths-based approach to research integrates neuroimaging with methods that are more traditional to the social sciences. In one project of note, Black and colleagues are using neuroimaging to better understand the neural underpinnings of humor in children, and the extent to which humor and positive emotion might contribute to their resilience. The hope is that, by better understanding the brain data, researchers can develop improved methodologies for detecting and treating certain psychological behaviors and conditions in children.

For Black, this project is just one example of how the brain can inform cutting-edge social science research and the innovative interventions that come out of creative inquiry. “While we’re not training social workers to be neuroscientists at BC Social Work,” she says, “we can encourage an integrative learning environment to help our students benefit from the natural synergies that exist between these two fields. The possibilities for collaboration are limitless.”

Neuroscience Symposium

This fall, BCSSW will host its inaugural Intersections Symposium, a first-of-its-kind academic meeting bringing together scholars from neuroscience and social work to initiate conversations across fields, and inspire ideas for scholarly collaboration.
UNCOMMON BONDS

Innovative partnerships have led social epidemiologist Summer Hawkins beyond conventional conclusions in a study about smoking during pregnancy.

Health problems—and their potential solutions—often have implications far beyond the communities in which they occur. Problem solvers are smart to engage in novel, interdisciplinary research in order to inspire the most significant influence possible.

Since arriving at BC Social Work, Hawkins has consistently applied this perspective, pursuing unique collaborations with colleagues in nursing and economics, as she establishes herself as a social epidemiologist intent on molding policy to improve lives.

Hawkins’ most recent research, conducted with BC economics professor Christopher Baum and published in the *AJPH* and *JAMA Pediatrics*, employs large-scale epidemiological analyses of the habits of pregnant women and the health of their newborns, in order to determine whether certain state tobacco control policies might mitigate smoking in pregnant women. The team found that states with higher cigarette taxes experienced lower rates of maternal smoking during pregnancy and better birth outcomes, especially in white and black women with less than a high school education.

“When policies are developed at the state level, we don’t always think of the downstream impact they can have on various groups,” explains Hawkins. “In this case, as politicians were drawing up cigarette tax laws, I’m not sure that they foresaw the positive influence these taxes could have on mothers and babies.

“This is a critical lesson to learn, and I’m hopeful that our research can have a positive impact on policy moving forward, as it relates to cigarette laws and their impact on mothers and babies, but also, more broadly in how we think about the role that social science research can play in creating better directed and more socially conscious legislation.”

$1 Tax Increase

For every $1 cigarette tax increase, low-educated white and black mothers decreased smoking by nearly 2 percentage points and smoked between 14 and 22 fewer cigarettes per month. (*Hawkins and Baum Am J Public Health*)
STRESS RELIEF

Erika Sabbath is proving that better outcomes are possible when public health and social work join forces in the study of workplace hazards.

Erika Sabbath holds a Doctor of Science from the Harvard School of Public Health, a background that she says fits in perfectly with BC Social Work’s vision of a new era of social work education, built across disciplines. “Applying social work tools to what have traditionally been seen as public health problems,” she explains, “could make a meaningful impact on both fields, and on the communities we work with.”

This opportunity to effect change is what drives Sabbath’s research. In her case, much of her aspired impact is directed at finding ways to alleviate workplace hazards—such as toxic chemical exposures, ergonomic strain, and stress—that contribute to social disparities in health as people get older.

This past year, Sabbath was awarded a K01 grant to this end from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and its National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Her project seeks to quantify the economic and health impact of work-related stress among hospital employees, including how certain kinds of stress, such as lack of flexibility in work arrangements or bullying by supervisors, disproportionately affects lower income workers.

Sabbath is also interested in working with populations, such as nail salon employees, who may experience adverse exposures at work, and who are traditionally underrepresented in occupational health research. Media outlets across the globe have already covered her research on environmental toxins, including *Time* magazine, which reported on her study linking certain common workplace chemicals to long-term cognitive impairment.

1,200 Times Exposure

The intensity of exposure for manicurists is 1,200 times the level of exposure to toxic chemicals than for average Americans. (*The New York Times*)
EXECUTIVES & POLICYMAKERS

It takes all kinds of thinkers to create a vibrant learning community. The Boston College School of Social Work’s commitment to exposing students to diverse perspectives counts on the inclusion, as faculty, of top level practitioners and policymakers from outside the academy. The contributions of professors like Westy Egmont, Marylou Sudders, and Tiziana Dearing tell the story of the impact that such leaders can have.
A MORE WELCOMING NATION

What we need to do to live up to our country’s history of inclusion

BY WESTY EG MONT

In some ways, Americans are very good at integrating immigrants into daily life. After all, we started off as a nation of immigrants, and we remain one: The current U.S. population of roughly 320 million includes 42 million who are foreign born. More than 50 percent of the world’s resettled refugees live here, and when they cross our borders, many are immediately privy to all kinds of opportunities they might not have dreamt of in their countries of birth. We have also opened our arms to the global citizens who so often provide the foundation for our own successes. Without these entrepreneurs and blue-collar dynamos, from the day laborer to the Nobel-prize winning scientist, America would run the risk of losing its competitive edge.

But we can do better. In my recent role as lead counsel for the U.S. assessment on the European Commission’s Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), I encountered data to support the assumption that we can learn a lot from other nations if we aim to build the most just society that is humanly possible. As a professor of social work, I can’t think of any greater ambition.

Out of 38 countries studied in MIPEX, we ranked twelfth in labor market mobility for immigrants, and fourteenth in how we successfully reunite families. Overall, when all eight categories in the study were tabulated, the U.S. was determined to be the ninth best country at integrating immigrants into society. While ninth isn’t bad, our history and our diversity should inspire us to be the global leaders.
We live in a global community that continues to shrink; more and more, all social workers, whether they have a specific interest in working with immigrants or not, will need to understand how increased migration defines the communities in which they serve. Westy Egmont is addressing this reality in his role as a professor, teaching two courses that immerse students in a world defined by fluid international borders.

During the summer, he convenes an experience in Italy, the gateway to Europe for hundreds of thousands of migrants from Africa. During winter recess, he takes students to the Arizona-Sonora border. The model for the courses: two weeks of intensive on-the-ground inquiry, where students meet with migrants, government officials, and nongovernmental aid workers, while visiting detention centers, border walls, courtrooms, and public offices.

Though the courses place a heavy focus on experiential learning, students are also asked to supplement this work with significant reading, and then engage their classmates in informed conversations on immigration. For the Arizona-Sonora class, they also have the opportunity to consult with another invaluable resource, Research Professor Maryanne Loughry, a Jesuit Refugee Service associate director and an expert on refugee resettlement.

“We’ve been fortunate to have the remarkable experience of encountering a variety of cultures, and sharing our hopes and challenges with each other, in both Italy and Mexico,” says Egmont. “I feel confident that, as these students graduate from BC and go into careers in social work, they will continue to be open to the kind of dialogue needed to make our world a more accepting and welcoming place.”

Clockwise: Egmont’s winter course visited the Kino Border Initiative (KBI), a binational organization including Jesuit Refugee Service/USA that provides direct humanitarian assistance to migrants.

Egmont with KBI’s assistant director of education, the Rev. Peter Neelley, S.J.

An immigrant detention center along the Arizona-Sonora border.
A few years ago, I co-chaired a committee convened by then-Governor of Massachusetts Deval Patrick to put together a New Americans Agenda report on how to best include immigrants and refugees “into the social, civic, and economic life of the Commonwealth.” We developed 131 recommendations offering specific and immediate action-steps in such areas as education, public safety, economic development, health, and refugee assistance. Many of these offer specific opportunities for social workers to play a lead role in serving the increasingly diverse community in which we live and work. Several examples where I believe social workers can have a direct impact:

• By advocating for, and then staffing, better refugee case management programs with knowledgeable employees to organize peer support groups, cultural orientations, and forums for the open sharing of cultural traditions with the communities in which refugees settle.

• By providing work supports and services to immigrants enrolled in job training programs and facilitate access to apprenticeship programs for immigrants.

• By supporting educators to build programs that decrease dropout rates, increase graduation rates, and increase college matriculation rates of immigrant students, thereby better preparing them for success.

These are daunting challenges, and they represent only a few of those that a next generation of social workers will face. The good news is, social workers are smart, adaptable professionals, and schools of social work, like BC, are adding new dimensions to diversity and justice education, while exploring innovative curricula to foster a workforce prepared for the cultural realities of the age. With the right training, I believe our field can demonstrate ways to transform American life, for all who live within our borders. It’s this belief that inspires me to come to work everyday at BC.

I’m lucky—my colleagues here complement my own effort to this end. Rocío Calvo has led one of the nation’s only MSW programs offered in Spanish, as she seeks to build professionals with the knowledge and experience to bridge cross-cultural divides (see page 19). Maryanne Loughry, a foremost expert on migration and refugee resettlement, joins me in teaching an immersion course on immigrant integration along the Sonora/Mexico border (see page 28). At BC Social Work’s Immigrant Integration Lab (III), of which I am director, we seek to identify benchmarks for the integration of America’s newest residents, while addressing inclusion and exclusion, issues that have long resided in the realm of social workers.

I took a lead role in MIPEX because I believe it makes sense for us, as Americans, to understand where we reside when compared with other technologically advanced democracies and use this information to build the most inclusive culture that we can. I’m hopeful that, through innovative social policy and practice, the one in eight foreign-born Americans can be incorporated into cohesive communities, with accessible and appropriate services. It is up to us, as leaders in the field, to make this happen.

Finding solutions to all of the myriad problems of immigration, of course, will be no easy task. In the U.S. alone, they are perhaps too many to count. Who will create, let alone work in, retirement facilities designed to serve 1.2 million Vietnamese Americans? Where might Haitian Americans turn for their children’s needs, and where does the Somali victim of domestic violence find professional help? Can the high incidence of pre-migration trauma in refugees be mitigated through services provided by school adjustment counselors?

Despite the challenges, I’m optimistic. Solving problems to make the world a better place is what social workers do. Our life’s work has always been to build human security and well-being, and to bring about the kind of change that builds more just societies. Our devotion to this end is a given.

But even more than creating change in the individual communities in which we live and work, I foresee a monumental opportunity to define our nation’s lasting vision of the just society we’ve long called America. The foreign-born currently find themselves thrown into the crucible that is contemporary debate on immigration, and the growing public vitriol against new Americans and would-be Americans compels us to reflect on the most basic of questions: What does it mean to be American?

It’s on us to ensure that, somewhere in the answer to that question, is the unalienable right to live in a nation that was, and continues to be, built on compassionate care, for all people.

Westy Egmont is associate professor of macro practice at BC Social Work, and the director of the school’s Immigrant Integration Lab.
ROLE MODEL
As head of the largest government agency in Massachusetts, MARYLOU SUDDERS epitomizes the growing capacity of social workers to influence policy.

This past January, BC School of Social Work Associate Professor Marylou Sudders was named Secretary of Health and Human Services for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, making her one of the highest ranking social workers in the United States. As secretary, Sudders oversees a $19.4 billion budget and more than 22,000 employees.

“I didn’t think picking Marylou Sudders to be secretary was a particularly big deal,” said Governor Charlie Baker at an event at the State House recognizing Sudders’ new position.

“And the reason I say that, is that I couldn’t imagine picking anyone else. It seemed like the only choice that made sense for the people of the Commonwealth... She’s born for this job. And if she wasn’t born for it, she made herself the right person for this job over the course of her career in the public and private sector.”

Professionally trained as a social worker with an MSW from Boston University, Sudders has dedicated her life to public service and to some of our most vulnerable citizens. She has been a public official, provider executive, advocate and, of course, a Boston College faculty member (she remains a visiting professor at BC Social Work).
In this Q&A, Sudders discusses why a background in social work was the perfect preparation for her current position, some of the major issues she’s addressing in her new role, and the privilege of teaching a next generation of social workers.

You have an MSW, and have led a long and esteemed career in social services. What does your background as a social worker mean in your role as secretary?

Social work is, in many ways, the perfect professional bootcamp to become a secretary with such wide-reaching responsibilities. The Executive Office of Health & Human Services touches the lives of one in four residents. Each and every agency must focus on three very important objectives: health, independence, and resilience. In addition to the work that occurs within an individual agency, it is my strong commitment to ensure that the needs of individuals, families, and communities are comprehensively addressed secretariat wide.

My group work skills help bring people to the table to tackle complex challenges, so that we can collaborate on finding creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. One example: My training has helped immeasurably in my understandings of the inter-relationship between the social determinants of health, including poverty and child abuse, and the lack of healthcare. Having this broad, yet practical, perspective is critical for addressing the kind of huge policy-based questions I deal with on a constant basis.

One unique skill of social work is understanding individuals in the context of their communities. This is particularly important as we attempt to decrease the number of families living in homeless shelters and hotels and to provide housing and social services and support. If the goal was shelter, the Commonwealth has met the goal; if the goal is secure housing and social supports, we need a different approach.

What are some of the major issues you’ve tackled since starting on the job?
“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A TYPICAL DAY.”

I am on call to the governor, lieutenant governor, and the cabinet, the secretariat, and 15 EOHHS agency heads, the state legislature, press, and the public. It is 24/7, including weekends. A ‘routine’ day starts around 5 a.m., checking emails and news outlets. If heading into the office rather than traveling to a site visit or speaking engagement, I arrive before 7 a.m. to catch up with staff, mail, press, and review the daily schedule. Meetings occur in either 30- or 45-minute increments and last into the evening. The formal workday is 14 to 16 hours. Depending on the month, I have on average three to four formal public speaking events. It is important for the public and providers to have access to public officials. I am fortunate to have recruited a wonderful group of talented key staff in the secretariat as well as appointed subject matter experts with strong interpersonal skills as commissioners and agency heads. I am proud that the commissioners of the Departments of Children and Families, Mental Health, and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission are social workers.

As you can imagine, there’s a lot on our table. We must contain the double-digit growth of the Medicaid program and provide the strong benefits that meet the diverse health and long-term care needs of 1.7 million Massachusetts residents. We have started a very public and transparent process with our many stakeholders to make certain that the restructuring of Medicaid is cost effective and high quality. MassHealth must be sustainable. Moving away from a fee-for-service model and towards preventive models of healthcare is the goal. Similar to other states, Massachusetts is grappling with an opioid epidemic. Three times more people die from opioid deaths than car accidents. I chaired the governor’s 18-member working group and recently released 65 tangible recommendations that span the public health arc of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery. As part of our work, we held listening sessions across the Commonwealth and heard from more than 1,000 individuals impacted by the crisis. Our recommendations are based on previous reports, academic literature, and the voices of those most impacted by the disease. It’s an epidemic that touches every socioeconomic group.

As I wrote (along with the governor and federal HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell) in a recent Op-Ed for the Boston Globe, putting an end to the opioid epidemic will entail coordinated and comprehensive action from federal, state, and local leaders, and it will require multi-faceted efforts in the area of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery—as well as a dedicated focus on public awareness and education.

Over the next three years, I’m positive that our multi-faceted plan can help to curb addiction and overdoses in our state. The game changer is that we need to view addictions as a chronic medical disease and not as a social failing. We have overused our courts and jails for long-term treatment. This is a public health crisis.
With such a large budget and staff, how do you begin to set priorities and allocate resources? It must be a very different experience from working in a clinic or hospital with clients.

Although the Executive Office of Health and Human Services represents half of state government, the reality is that we cannot solve every social problem. That’s just not feasible for government to do. But it is essential that government partner with community agencies, hospitals, business, philanthropy, academia, elected officials, and the public to bring the best minds together to solve difficult problems.

The good news is that we are blessed in Massachusetts with some of the best and the brightest. We have great trainees from our academic institutions, we have high quality healthcare, and our innovation and technology sectors are particularly strong. It’s going to take all of these resources marshaled to meet the needs of individuals and families who come to us for services and support. I also believe that public employees are incredibly dedicated. Our job, then, is to provide the leadership and the confidence to encourage our line workers to engage in the invaluable work that they do, and help them to treat the individuals who come to the agencies with dignity and respect.

You’ve said that your one regret about taking this job is that it will limit the amount of teaching you’ll be able to do. Talk to us about what teaching has meant to you, and how that experience informs your work going forward.

I have grown to love teaching, and it has been a privilege to be associated with BC Social Work. There is no question in my mind that the caliber of the students here is excellent, that the curriculum that we provide to them is superb, and that the training and field education placements we offer prepare them with the foundational skills and the confidence they’ll need to enter the professional social work community.

My relationship with BC remains strong, and I know it will only continue to grow. As I look to the future, it’s my expectation that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services could be both a training site and an employment site for BC students and alumni. And, just as importantly, it is my hope and belief that I can reach out to the School of Social Work for expertise, support, and guidance as I seek to find solutions to the problems that together we face in the Commonwealth. I know that the door is always open to me and I’m grateful for that.

What advice would you like to impart to the next generation of social workers?

I had been in the private sector for 11 years, which gave me a unique occasion to take stock of what I did as a leader. It gave me the chance to become hopefully a little bit more objective about what the challenges and opportunities inside government are as well.

Even while I was away from government, I continued to serve on public commissions and boards, so that I could really stay attuned to the issues of the day. I have always stepped up to serve because in my heart I am a public servant. I hope that that is one of the messages I was able to instill in my Boston College students—that our mission of service permeates all that we do.

I truly believe that a social work degree can open almost any professional door, and it’s only our inhibitions that prevent us from taking that next step. There’s no greater education to open up a wealth of opportunities.

So, I would expect that, in 10 years, there won’t just be a lone Marylou Sudders who is a cabinet secretary, but there will be a host of social workers who are cabinet secretaries across the United States and beyond. I look forward to that time.
On Wednesday, June 15, the day before Pope Francis was to release Laudato Si, Associate Professor Tiziana Dearing reflected on what the document could mean towards building new bridges between religion and the sciences.

On Thursday, the Vatican will release Laudato Si, or Be Praised, a widely anticipated papal encyclical on environmental justice and the toll of environmental degradation on the world’s poorest people. Even before a draft was leaked to an Italian magazine on Monday, The Guardian newspaper called the document “explosive” and “the most anticipated papal letter for decades.” The New York Times reported that the teaching letter, as encyclicals are known, “is being treated as a milestone that could place the Roman Catholic Church at the forefront of a new coalition of religion and science.”

Catholicism has important things to say about the role of poverty in society, the role of the economy as it relates to the poor, and the role of our species in conjunction with the earth. Despite an historical reputation for clashing with science and a short-term loss of the moral high ground in the wake of the sex abuse crisis, the framework of social ethics outlined by the church has a great deal to offer a secular world struggling with injustice, inequality, and environmental degradation.

We are living in a world without a sufficient common framework for addressing the challenges of poverty, most specifically how it is constructed, the severity of its impact, and the moral obligations of those building it. With regard to this, Pope Francis has been particularly strong, condemning “unbridled consumerism,” and noting, in a 2013 speech to the 38th Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:
“A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness, and respect for every human being. This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor.”

This quote offers a glimpse of a framework that is Catholic in its origins but universal in its potential. At its core is a belief that humans, by their very essence, have dignity and, thus, deserve and command fairness and respect. Along with that is the principle of solidarity, or the belief that we are fundamentally connected, and, therefore, as obligated to the well-being of others as we are to our own.

Add to these fundamental ideals the simple principle of sharing, the idea that all, not just some, deserve to enjoy the fruits and benefits of the earth together. There is no room in these beliefs for maximizing individual good to the exclusion of others. Doing so has created a world of inequality. The time has come to right this imbalance.

Which brings us back to Laudato Si. Poverty compounds and concentrates the impact of climate events, whether droughts, earthquakes, rising sea levels, or severe pollution. Those without resources have the least ability to flee or safeguard against the sheer force of environmental blows. They have fewer, if any, financial and material resources to recover after the fact.

Further, environmental preservation is a necessity when survival is on the line. If you’re cold and you don’t have wood to keep you warm, you’ll burn a tire. Air quality is too high up the hierarchy of needs to merit much consideration. There’s a saying in business: “Culture eats strategy for lunch.” Well, poverty eats environmentalism at all three meals, and environmental disasters eat the poor, blessed though they be.

If reports based on the leaked draft are any indication, Laudato Si will feed weeks of political discussion about everything from global warming and extractive mining to low income countries’ economic development. That’s why it is important to draw attention now to themes of the environment as they relate specifically to the poor and marginalized. While we debate the science of temperatures and ice caps, let us practice solidarity in our solutions and give preference to those who bear the brunt of our environmental sins today.

Pope Francis may be the right man at the right time to bring inherently religious values about poverty, the economy, and the environment to a broader community.

If so, good. Buy the world a copy and let’s start reading.

As a former president of Catholic Charities, the former CEO of an anti-poverty organization in Boston, and a frequent media commentator, Dearing is uniquely qualified to speak to Pope Francis’ ongoing call to serve those living at the margins of society. This past summer, she and Professor Ruth McRoy visited the Vatican, and met with one of the encyclical’s writers, and the American Ambassador to the Vatican Kenneth Hackett (see next page).

This essay was originally published on Cognoscenti, wbur.org’s ideas and opinion page. It was republished with permission.
Tiziana Dearing has done more than just comment on the pope’s encyclical in the press. This summer she joined Ruth McRoy for meetings in Vatican City with a Catholic researcher who worked on Laudato Si, as well as the American Ambassador to the Vatican, Ken Hackett.

With Hackett, Dearing and McRoy discussed perspectives on the encyclical, the role that social and environmental justice play in our changing world, and future issues of importance to the Catholic Church and the U.S. With the researcher, conversation surrounded how to best facilitate open dialogue on Laudato Si, and to do so across diverse populations.

“We have an opportunity to explore a unique relationship with the Catholic Church due to our Jesuit ties, and our shared mission to build social justice across the world,” says Dearing. “I’m hopeful that our position as a faith-based institution of higher education can help to support a partnership to address shared goals—with regards to the encyclical and beyond.”

THOSE WITHOUT RESOURCES HAVE THE LEAST ABILITY TO FLEE OR SAFEGUARD AGAINST THE SHEER FORCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL BLOWS

BC SOCIAL WORK VISITS THE VATICAN

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l-r: Dearing, McRoy, Ambassador Hackett, and the ambassador’s wife Joan Hackett at the Hacketts’ residence in Rome.
Above: Dearing and McRoy walk along the colonnades of St. Peter’s Square.
RACE + JUSTICE
To heighten diversity and justice awareness and achieve the goal of a culturally sensitive student body, BC Social Work has, since 2006, engaged in a continuous process of planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives aimed at building a community that welcomes and supports persons with diverse identities. This year’s theme was Race + Justice.

DIVERSITY CONFERENCE
‘Policy Is Power’

“Programs are progress but policy is power,” said keynote speaker John Jackson at BC Social Work’s 2015 Diversity Conference in January. “If we want to change the culture, we must institutionalize policies to change the trajectory.” The school addressed the themes of race and justice head-on at the event, exploring the intersections of diversity and social work practice for a better understanding of the people and communities served.

Jackson, the president and CEO of the Schott Foundation for Public Education and a former member of President Obama’s Education Policy Transition Work Group, engaged the topic by calling for a “fair and substantive opportunity to learn” for all, regardless of socio-economic background. This is the “lifeline to address many of the social problems that exist in our country today.” Jackson explained that policies are what lead to difference, not biology, and that to truly create change, we are charged as leaders in our field to mold policies to more justly serve diverse communities of Americans. “Our challenge . . . is to identify those social policies and social practices which lead to outcomes that are identifiable by race, ethnicity, or gender and remove them,” he said.

PINDERHUGHES LECTURE
Raheim’s Call to Action

University of Connecticut School of Social Work Dean Salome Raheim presented the ninth annual Pinderhughes Diversity Lecture on April 15 at BC Social Work. Salome’s talk, “Race and Justice: From Analysis to Action,” focused on the current dialogue on police violence against African Americans, as well as on the mass incarceration of blacks in the U.S. prison system. She offered a call to action.

“The first thing that we can do to move from our analysis to action,” she explained, “is to start where we are, wherever we are. . . In schools of social work specifically, we have the power and the privilege of introducing thousands of people who want to make the world a better place or want to make a positive contribution. . . to ways that they might address racial injustice.”

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
A Courageous Fighter for Civil Rights

Civil rights pioneer Claudette Colvin, who was 15 years old when she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus nine months before Rosa Parks’ similar protest, presented a talk on her life story in February at the BC School of Social Work. Colvin’s trailblazing action occurred 60 years ago.

The event celebrating Black History Month was covered by the Boston Globe, which highlighted the three generations of Colvin women who were in attendance that day. Claudette’s granddaughter Jennifer is now a second-year MSW student at BC Social Work, and Jennifer’s mother Cheryl played an important role organizing the 50th anniversary jubilee commemorating the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery.
BCSSW IN THE MEDIA

Over the past year, BC Social Work faculty have lent a passionate voice to coverage of many of the nation’s biggest stories, from the racial tensions in Ferguson, Missouri, to the Pope’s encyclical on the environment. We’ve been featured on national television and radio, written Op-Eds for major international publications, and been cited in newspapers and magazines across the globe. Below are just a few of the impactful stories and media outlets where BC Social Work has provided commentary.

Following Barack Obama’s announcement that he would use executive authority on immigration policy, Associate Professor Westy Egmont went on CNN to discuss what the order meant for the five million immigrants affected by the president’s decision.

Writing for the London School of Economics’ Impact blog, Associate Dean of Research David Takeuchi delineated his argument against the U.S. Congress’ proposed FIRST Act that would limit funding to social science research. Takeuchi also penned an Op-Ed for the Boston Globe on the subject.

In an opinion piece for top Washington politics paper The Hill, Associate Professor Tiziana Dearing outlined “five issues to keep poverty on the agenda” during the impending 2016 presidential election.

Dean Alberto Godenzi proposed a suggestion for how the National Football League (NFL) could take an “unequivocal stance on domestic violence,” in an Op-Ed for the Boston Globe.

El País, Spain’s most read daily newspaper, was one of several publications on three continents to highlight Assistant Professor Rocío Calvo’s work on the Resilience in Survivors of Katrina (RISK) Project, an initiative led by noted Harvard sociologist Mary Waters.

OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS FEATURING BCSSW . . .

FAST COMPANY  WGBH  TIME MAGAZINE  NECN  HUFFINGTON POST  WBUR  NPR  EL MERCURIO

READ MORE ABOUT OUR NEWSMAKERS ON THE BCSSW BLOG ➤ INNOVATE@BCSOCIALWORK
EASTON AWARDED NIA RESEARCH GRANT

The National Institute on Aging has granted Assistant Professor Scott Easton $156,500 to study male survivors of child sexual abuse, a vulnerable, often isolated, and vastly underserved population that is in serious need of practical support and interventions.

Easton’s award is for a “Population Analysis of Male Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse at Mid and Later Life,” and represents one of the first ever studies of male survivors of child abuse using the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS), a massive source of data that followed its participants beginning with their 1957 high school graduation, until many reached their 70s.

Easton is fast becoming a sought after voice on a topic that is in need of advocates. He publishes frequently on this research topic, and because of his experience, Easton was appointed by Cardinal Sean O’Malley to serve on the Archdiocese Review Board for the Catholic Church of Boston. READ MORE ONLINE >>

LOMBE’S NEW RESEARCH SPURS BOOK ON AIDS ORPHANS

Filling a void in AIDS research, Children and AIDS, an edited book from Associate Professor Margaret Lombe, defines vulnerability in African children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS and finds interventions that improve their welfare.

Historically, much of the research on orphans in Africa has been focused on treatment and prevention. But the circumstances and outcomes of those left parentless by the disease are glaring omissions in the research story.

“In Africa, children are assumed to be living in families,” explains Lombe. “… This book asks us to reflect upon what the future of Sub-Saharan Africa will look like, and to imagine a new society built on the backs of a generation of vulnerable children.”

Children and AIDS, which highlights collaborations of academics with service providers, human rights groups, and the children themselves, includes chapters from alumna Chiedza Mufunde, MSW ’14, and current PhD student Aakanksha Sinha. The book is due to be released in October by the Ashgate Publishing Company. READ MORE ONLINE >>

RWJF GRANTS MAHONEY $1 MILLION TO STUDY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Professor Kevin Mahoney, founding director of the National Resource Center for Participant-Directed Services (NRCPDS), has received a $1 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to conduct a large-scale demonstration and evaluation of self-direction in behavioral health. The three-year project consists of a national program office to be housed at the NRCPDS, an independent evaluation, and three to six sites.

The study is an extension of the center’s previous research on participant direction of home and community-based services and supports for people with disabilities, and financing of long-term care. Self-direction holds promise to address many of the challenges that people with serious mental illness endure, including poverty, stigma, and physical illness. The publicly funded behavioral health system is faced with a myriad of challenges to deal effectively with these complex needs. Some evidence suggests that self-direction can improve recovery outcomes while keeping costs similar to those of traditional arrangements. READ MORE ONLINE >>
From prisons to the White House, our students and alumni are making headway in the drive to make the world a more just place. In the rapidly changing social work field, where innovation is essential and nimble thinking a must, these members of the BC community are on the cutting edge.

ALUMNA SHAPES POLICY AT WHITE HOUSE

2014 PhD graduate Patricia Yu was selected to be a Health and Aging Policy Fellow, a competitive fellowship for health professionals working to make a positive contribution to policies that affect older adults. Her placement was at the 2015 White House Conference on Aging, a once-per-decade conference designed to “assist the public and private sectors to be responsive to the needs of a diverse aging population and to promote the dignity and independence of . . . future generations of older persons and their families.” Yu’s responsibilities included writing briefs and finding ways to disseminate policy ideas.

GLOBAL FIELD ED PLACEMENT: GUATEMALA

Kelsey Komich, a recent MSW Global Practice graduate, spent her field education placement at Safe Passage/Camino Seguro, an NGO in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Safe Passage serves the impoverished community that surrounds the city’s garbage dump. Creamos (which means both “let’s create” and “we believe” in Spanish) is a social entrepreneurship association within Safe Passage that works with women from the community to build opportunity through shared business endeavors.

BCSSW STUDENT NAMED HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL RAPPAPORT FELLOW

Alexandra Rabasco became the first BC Social Work student to win a prestigious Rappaport Institute Public Policy Fellowship. The award provided a 10-week summer internship working directly with Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders.

STUDENTS REACH FINALS OF CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE COMPETITION

The next generation of social workers will need to be able to think differently about how to solve the world’s problems. Many will work to build sustainable social innovations that enhance social justice, precisely the mission of the Boston College School of Social Work’s Center for Social Innovation. Virtually all will find themselves in collaborative environments, working hand in hand with like-minded professionals from all sorts of backgrounds, who are dedicated to having an impact across a multitude of fields.

Last March, a trio of BC School of Social Work MSW students showed that they’re already innovating, and flexing enough collective muscle to be recognized by two of the world’s leading organizations dedicated to social innovation: the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) and the Hult Prize Foundation. Dana Loatman, Greg Cassoli, and Stephanie Brueck, along with colleagues from the Lynch School of Education and the Carroll School of Management, were named regional finalists in the annual Hult Prize Foundation $1 Million Social Enterprise Competition. This was a prestigious commendation; out of 20,000 entrants worldwide, only 300 made the regionals.

'Serving 25 to Life' as San Quentin State Prison Chaplain

George Williams, SJ, MSW ’97, is lucky enough to have found his dream job. His day-to-day, though, might not exactly correspond with the average person’s, or even the average social worker’s, vision of the sublime. Williams spends his days counseling some of the 700 hardened men on California’s Death Row, a place he calls “the darkest place I’ve worked,” and going cell to cell to visit with many of the 4,000 men in the general prison population, many of whom are convicted of violent crimes, such as murder, rape, or armed robbery. As a Jesuit priest, Williams also offers religious services for the men on Death Row.
Goodbye BCGSSW, Hello BCSSW

On November 11, 2014, we returned to our roots by dropping the “Graduate” from our school’s name to reclaim the “Boston College School of Social Work,” the original name bestowed by its founders in 1936. The name change offered the opportunity to celebrate the school’s history, its people, and its mission. The title of the event was “Social Work Is BC.”

Participants from more than 20 BCSSW programs and initiatives joined in a dynamic “flash mob style” presentation that included singing, dancing, inspiring remarks, and loud cheers.

READ MORE ONLINE >>

INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM AT BCSSW

At BC Social Work’s first Social Innovation Symposium on May 1, speakers and workshops focused on economic justice. Participants at the event, which was planned and run by student organizers, examined innovative practices in using assets, the built environment, and social capital to develop and improve access to economic resources in marginalized communities. Symposium speakers included: Jesus Gerena, director at the Family Independence Initiative, Boston, on access to assets; Steve Poftak, executive director of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard University, on the built environment; and Talia Rivera, member relations director at the Council on Foundations, on social capital.

“As all of you go out and innovate,” urged panel moderator and Northeast Ashoka Director Fernande Raine, “first of all, be aware of the unintended consequences. Second of all, be inclusive of the community you work with, engage the community in your process, and respect the user in designing solutions . . . and finally, recognize a city as an essential platform and community to do your work.”

VISIT THE BCSSW BLOG TO READ THESE STORIES ▶ INNOVATE@BCSOCIALWORK

3 Questions for an Innovation Leader

Worcester Program Graduate

Loughry on Global Social Work

BC Student’s Art ‘Bridges Gaps’
Takeuchi Elected Secretary of the American Sociological Association

The already long list of important roles played by BCSSW Associate Dean of Research David Takeuchi continues to grow: This spring he was elected secretary of the world’s largest professional association of sociologists, the American Sociological Association (ASA).

Throughout his career, Takeuchi has served in important capacities across the fields of social sciences. He is, or has been, a member of the Board of Scientific Counselors for the National Center for Health Statistics, the Integration of Immigrants into American Society Committee for the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Advisory Committee for the Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Program, to name just a few.

Takeuchi will serve as the ASA secretary-elect in 2015-2016, and as secretary from 2016-2019. His responsibilities will include chairing the Committee on the Executive Office and Budget, and he will be a voting member of both the Publications and Programming Committees.

During its history, ASA has elected giants in sociology to serve in the role of secretary, including: Ernest Burgess, who wrote *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, long a respected Bible for the field; Herbert Blumer, the father of symbolic interactionism; renowned population demographer Irene Taeuber; Action Theory creator Talcott Parsons; and prominent homelessness theorist Peter Rossi.

Takeuchi is now the latest pioneering sociologist to fill this prestigious office.

ALSO:

PEARLIN AWARD: The ASA also honored Takeuchi with the 2015 Leonard I. Pearlin prize for his distinguished contributions to the sociological study of mental health.

NIH PANEL: Takeuchi participated on a plenary panel at the National Institute of Health’s 7th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation.

HRSA GRANT: Takeuchi became principal investigator on the $664,000 Health Resources and Services Administration’s grant to train health professionals, when co-principal investigator Marylou Sudders left BC to head the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

Berzin Is Change Leader at 2015 Ashoka U Exchange

Associate Professor Stephanie Berzin, the co-chair of the Center for Social Innovation at Boston College, is a designated “Change Leader” by Ashoka, an organization supporting social entrepreneurs around the world.

In February, Berzin presented at the group’s annual Ashoka U Exchange meeting, which this year took place at the University of Maryland. Her talk was entitled “Engaging the Community: The Social Innovation Lab.” She also worked closely with a partner university, the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, México (UPAEP), in a mentoring role.

“One of the principal goals of Ashoka is to find and showcase leaders in innovation in higher education,” says Michele Leaman, the director of the organization’s Changemaker Campus Program. “Stephanie is one of these leaders.”

Berzin directs the Social Innovation Lab at the School of Social Work, a guided, nine-month learning experience designed to help participating agencies develop innovative solutions to social problems. In 2014 she was the program chair of the 25th annual Network for Social Management Conference at Simmons College on “Management in the Age of Innovation.”

Lubben Discusses His Social Network Scale in Singapore

Professor James Lubben gave the keynote address at the Social Isolation Seminar at the National University of Singapore in June. As the author of the Lubben Social Network Scale, which helps to screen for social isolation among older adult populations, he discussed how to use the scale as a measure of social isolation. His remarks also took a broad view of how forging better social connections and creating more supportive communities can improve the psychological and physical health of millions of vulnerable citizens. The seminar was organized by the Next Age Institute, Centre for Social Development Asia, and the Social Service Institute.

Lubben is the founding Director of the Institute of Aging and Director of the Hartford Centre of Excellence in Geriatric Social Work at Boston College.

ALSO:

SSWR ANNUAL MEETING: Lubben, who served as vice president of SSWR, chaired the group’s largest ever gathering, which was held in New Orleans in January 2015.

AGESW AWARD: Lubben was the 2014 recipient of the Association for Gerontology Education in Social Work’s Career Achievement Award.
Some 1,600 people attended this year’s Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting in New Orleans for discussions on the “Social and Behavioral Importance of Increased Longevity.”

The opening keynote address was given by BC Social Work’s Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes and Nancy Morrow-Howell of Washington University in St. Louis. The two scholars did not disappoint, wowing the audience. “It was truly one of the strongest presentations I’ve ever witnessed at any conference,” said Dean Alberto Godenzi.

Entitled “Taking Advantage of Increased Longevity: Work and Productive Engagement,” their talk explored current trends for productive engagement in the later years of life. Among their points: 1) early-in-life activities affect quality of life in later years; 2) because people are living longer, healthier lives, getting older has a greater impact on society; and 3) there is a growing structural lag between the needs of contemporary older adults and existing institutional resources.

**ALSO:**

**DOCTORAL PROGRAM:** Pitt-Catsouphes assumed the position of doctoral chair of BC’s PhD in Social Work program.

This summer, BC Social Work convened a summer colloquium on “Social, Economic, and Environmental Equity” for PhD students across the country. The event, co-directed by professors Ruth McRoy and David Takeuchi, was initiated in order to provide advanced social work graduate students from different institutions with a space to engage in discussions about different forms of inequality, especially race and ethnicity. “Graduate students don’t often have the opportunity to share their work with other students at different institutions,” explains Takeuchi. “This colloquium provided students with a forum to exchange ideas, learn from each other, and, perhaps, forge professional and personal relationships that will endure. The colloquium also established a meaningful setting for encouraging, critiquing, and fortifying the research on inequality for the next generation of social work scholars.”
THE POWER OF PLACE

Innovation flourishes in spaces where the mind is encouraged to run and jump and play, where collaborators become catalysts, and where serious research breaks new ground. At BC Social Work all that is happening, and more—in three stimulating environments.

BY STEPHANIE BERZIN AND THOMAS CREA

Throughout the course of this magazine, you've heard from innovators who inhabit new arenas in social work, finding novel ways, as Dean Godenzi wrote, “to effect change at tables and in spaces across the globe.” At BC Social Work, our points of entry may differ—we are social workers, neuroscientists, public health scholars, social entrepreneurs, sociologists, managers, clinicians and executives, practitioners and researchers—but our motivation is the same: to build a more just world.

In order for us to be successful, we recognize that, more than dwelling only in metaphorical space, geographic place matters deeply; social science research demonstrates that where someone lives and works can have an impact on educational and health outcomes, even imagination and hope.

By drawing on this power of place, our school has built a set of partnerships to put place-based collaboration at the center of our work. Beginning this past summer, we are exploring and building spaces that bridge research and practice on our Chestnut Hill campus, and off campus, with Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston (CCAB) and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimac Valley.

At home, we’re imagining a shared “Google-like” ideas accelerator space designed to bring internal talent together to spark new thinking and collaborations. We’ll also invite practitioners and community members with whom we work to enter this space to add their unique, informed voices to our conversations. Their perspectives can only broaden our own.

The second space will be at the Yawkey Center in Dorchester, a resilient, passionate Boston neighborhood in constant battle with the realities of holding one of the city’s highest rates of poverty, unemployment, and crime. Here, BC Social Work will conduct research rooted in the needs of local residents, while seeking to improve upon our own cultural competence and practice.
By drawing on this power of place, our school has built a set of partnerships to put place-based collaboration at the center of our work.

We are both serving in leadership roles at the third space in Boston’s coveted Innovation District, home to the city’s best in technology, design, and biotech. From these offices, BC Social Work will work with the vast United Way portfolio and other Boston nonprofits to inspire innovation from within these organizations, with the end goal of maximizing positive impact in some of the most vulnerable communities in Boston and beyond.

This collaboration with the United Way provides particular value from our perspectives as practitioner and researcher. We envision real opportunities to actively bridge the divide between these two worlds that so often seem to exist on separate planets, and to do so over the course of a long-term relationship with a distinguished and well-respected organization. By combining innovation with evaluation, we hope to shape new relationships between social scientist and practitioner. Instead of “research informing practice,” we hope that “research will become integrated with practice,” as social service agencies come together with the United Way, with Boston College, and with professionals in innovation to find solutions to the city’s social issues.

The fact that this novel forum exists in the Innovation District provides us with the opportunity to take advantage of a space not often considered in circles of social work education and inquiry, and to mine the technology and business sectors for their knowledge, skill sets, and, in particular, for their ideas on social entrepreneurship. We also have the chance to gain a foothold in their place, and remind them that, as citizen innovators of our world, we all have a responsibility to care for those who may be less fortunate. There’s no doubt that having cutting-edge enterprise on your side is a significant asset for making things happen.

Ultimately, though, innovation won’t matter unless we can find a way to empower communities to address their most pressing challenges from within. Already, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimac Valley works day in and day out to do just this, through its oversight of more than 200 independent health and human service agencies. We look forward to offering our resources to enhance and expand their already significant influence.

Of course, when we dream about how we might define ultimate success for this project, we think broadly about our potential to shape our field: How can we become a symbol for future work between the academy and the world outside? If we can inspire other partners to replicate a truly integrative and collaborative model in future contexts, and apply it to serving those living at the margins in the spaces and places where they reside, that would be a game changer.

Stephanie Berzin is the co-director of the Center for Social Innovation at BC Social Work, and a designated “Change Leader” by Ashoka. Thomas Crea is the chair of BC Social Work’s Global Practice program. Together, they are leading the school’s collaboration with the United Way.
THE UNITED WAY
BOSTON INNOVATION DISTRICT

“The United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley very much looks forward to collaborating with BC Social Work. Our organizations share the mission to increase the capacity of people and communities to thrive. Our combined strengths will allow us to tackle complex challenges such as homelessness and poverty through innovative and effective interventions and create change that lasts.”

MIKE DURKIN, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
UNITED WAY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY AND MERRIMACK VALLEY

CATHOLIC CHARITIES
YAWKEY CENTER

“Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Boston (CCAB) and BCSSW have enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership for years. To take the alliance to the next level and to deepen our collaboration directly with the people we both seek to serve, BCSSW will have research space in one of our key centers in Dorchester, hereby expanding opportunities for joint efforts with CCAB staff.”

DEBORAH KINCADE RAMBO, PRESIDENT,
CATHOLIC CHARITIES ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON, AND BCSSW ALUMNA ‘78

BCSSW MAKERSPACE
MCGUINN HALL

“The University and the School of Social Work are working on a plan to create a ‘makerspace’ in McGuinn Hall. The space would be designed to bring research and practice together, furthering collaboration between faculty, students, and staff from various disciplines and agency/community partners. We would like to build an open space that promotes learning, facilitates ‘collisions’, and sparks new ideas and collaborations. It will also house the School’s research centers, labs, and clinics.”

ALBERTO GODENZI, DEAN,
BOSTON COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
THE UNITED WAY

BOSTON

CATHOLIC CHARITIES
Yawkey Center

DORCHESTER

BCSSW MAKERSPACE
McGuinn Hall

CHESTNUT HILL
Hosted by BC and the School of Social Work as part of the university’s sesquicentennial celebration, ninety-four immigrants living in Massachusetts took the oath of allegiance to become citizens of the United States at a naturalization ceremony held at Robsham Theater.

Speakers touched on BC’s legacy as a school founded to serve the children of Boston’s immigrant populations, as well as its continuing interest in social and humanitarian issues related to voluntary and forced migration.