



# CEURA REPORTER



## Boomers at Work and in Transition

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- Making Capital Funding Decisions More Equitable in St. Paul: A Story of Policy Change through Community-Based Research



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Printed with agribased ink on  
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post-consumer fiber.

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# Boomers at Work and in Transition

By Phyllis Moen, Erik Kojola, and Kate Schaefers

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the experience and expectations of Minnesota Boomers as well as innovative organizations in the Twin Cities area that are recognizing and responding to their aging workforces. We find Boomers no longer expect a one-way, one-time simultaneous exit from both their career jobs and the labor force. Rather, they are following a variety of paths. Organizations leading in recognizing population and workforce aging are adopting less age-graded policies—providing flexible and reduced work options as well as training to all workers, regardless of their ages or career stages. Policies and practices are needed supporting a range of flexible paid and unpaid opportunities to tap the tremendous talent of this large Boomer cohort. The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA's Faculty Interactive Research Program.

A host of demographic, economic, cultural, and labor market forces are upending conventional linear career paths and one-way retirements as the large Boomer cohort (b. 1946–1964) moves through the traditional retirement years facing circumstances far different from those of their parents' generation.<sup>1</sup> Public and corporate policies and practices presuming a standardized career path and a one-way, one-time irreversible retirement exit are out of date; many workers are being upended by the dismantling of retirement protections and savings, longer

life expectancy, new technologies leading to changing physical demands and intensity of work, the weakening power of unions, and shifting cultural norms.<sup>2</sup>

Both employment security and retirement security are increasingly precarious given the erosion of the social contract based on employer-provided healthcare, pensions and lifelong employment, an aging population, and the restructuring of corporations (including automation, mergers, and downsizing) in light of rapidly changing technologies, a competitive global information economy, and the

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<sup>1</sup> D.F. Warner, M.D. Hayward, and M.A. Hardy, "The Retirement Life Course in America at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century," *Population Research and Policy Review* 29,6 (2010):893-919; P. Moen, *Encore Adulthood: Boomers on the Edge of Risk, Renewal, and Purpose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> L.D. Sargent, M.D. Lee, B. Martin, and J. Zikic, "Reinventing Retirement: New Pathways, New Arrangements, New Meanings," *Human Relations* 66,1 (2013):3-21.

Great Recession.<sup>3</sup> Thus, retirement timing is increasingly uncertain, often precipitated by unexpected “early” retirements through buyouts, layoffs, or a sudden illness, or else the opposite—continued but unwilling work past typical retirement ages to make ends meet. Others are leaving early or working longer voluntarily, or else they are seeking second acts in the form of part-time and contract work, often for nonprofits or agencies aimed at promoting the greater good.<sup>4</sup>

Employers also face challenges in adapting to the emerging 21st-century later-life course and the aging of the U.S. workforce, fostering both outdated age-graded stereotypes and few opportunities for engaging Boomer workers. These changes have created a fundamental mismatch between what many Boomers want or need in this new “encore” adult stage and the outdated policies and practices shaping the conventional life course.<sup>5</sup> Boomers consistently report expectations of working in some capacity past traditional retirement age, but most want more flexible, not so big, jobs that provide them a sense of purpose and meaning.<sup>6</sup> Such jobs—paid or unpaid—are not easy to find. Moreover, older workers also encounter age discrimination and many struggle to retain their jobs or recover from job loss.<sup>7</sup>

These uneven social transformations in combination with the large and increasingly “retirement-eligible” Boomer cohort underscore the outdateness of existing work and retirement policies that are lagging behind changes in both work and the workforce, including how Boomers want to

organize their work and personal lives.<sup>8</sup> Yet, some pioneering organizations have begun to proactively address the challenge of their aging workforces, particularly through work-time flexibility, late career development, and ways to scale back.<sup>9</sup>

### The Study: A Look at Boomers and the Organizations that Innovate Around Employing Them

To capture the changing dynamics of work and retirement, we focused on individuals and organizations in the Twin Cities region of Minnesota, a forward-looking state with vibrant corporate and nonprofit sectors. The state also has a large Boomer population: its 1.3 million Boomers represented 26% of the state’s population in 2012, and the percent of 65 and older is expected to grow at accelerating rates.<sup>10</sup> Organizations in the Twin Cities are known for innovation, and we sought out those leading in responding to the new demography of the workforce and the growing “retired” force.

Our study addresses two key questions:

1. What are the work and retirement expectations of Minnesota Boomers as they move through traditional retirement ages?
2. How are cutting-edge organizations in the Twin Cities responding to both the changing demography of the workforce and the retired force?

We sought out pockets of change among innovative organizations in Minnesota that are recognizing and responding to the unprecedented aging of the state’s labor market and population. Identifying and developing effective policies for older workers is a key challenge for private-sector, public-sector, and social-sector (nonprofit) employers.

To address these issues, we interviewed in considerable depth two small samples—individual Boomers and representatives of innovative organizations who are responding to the shifting goals/needs of their older workers. Recruitment occurred from September 2013 to November 2014. We interviewed decision makers and human resources managers from 23 organizations (11 private-sector firms, 4 government agencies, and 8 nonprofits)—all located in the Twin Cities and surrounding areas (including Rochester). We selected firms based on their recognition and reputation as a great place to work (recipients of the *Sloan Award for Excellence in Workplace Effectiveness and Flexibility*, plus from *Forbes’* list of top employers), as well as those recommended by informants. We sought to capture theoretically meaningful variations in industry, ownership structure, size, and workforce. We asked questions about formal policies and informal practices and accommodations for older workers. Several interviews included site visits and a tour of the organizations’ facilities. We reviewed company websites and documents, including employee handbooks, written policies, and other workforce reports. Table 1 outlines details on organizations in our study.

We also conducted 27 interviews with white-collar Boomers in Minnesota who were working, semiretired, or retired to examine both their current circumstances and their plans and expectations for work and retirement. We sought participants working for different types of employers with variation in industry and size. Four Boomers who participated in an internship program for older workers sponsored by the nonprofit organization SHIFT were also recruited. Several of the individuals worked for the organizations we studied. Table 2 lists the demographics of our participants.

### Findings

#### *What Do Minnesota Boomers Want?*

We found that expectations around work and retirement are in flux among our sample of white-collar Boomers in Minnesota. Our interviews reveal that traditional one-way paths to retirement are no longer the norm—at least for this small sample—as these Boomers move into and out of work in ways shaped by their preferences, finances, and family responsibilities, as well as by workplace and government policies

<sup>3</sup> S.E. Rix, “Recovering from the Great Recession: A Long Struggle for Older Americans,” AARP Public Policy Institute. Washington, DC, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> J. Reynolds and J.B. Wenger, “Prelude to a RIF: Older Workers, Part-Time Hours, and Unemployment,” *Journal of Aging & Social Policy* 22,2 (2010):99-116; M. Freedman, *The Big Shift: Navigating the New Stage beyond Midlife* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> P. Moen, *Encore Adulthood: Boomers on the Edge of Risk, Renewal, and Purpose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> AARP, *Staying Ahead of the Curve 2013: The AARP Work and Career Study* (Washington, DC, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> G.C. Gee, E.K. Pavalko, and J.S. Long, “Age, Cohort and Perceived Age Discrimination: Using the Life Course to Assess Self-reported Age Discrimination,” *Social Forces* 86,1 (2007):265-290; P. Moen, “Not So Big Jobs and Retirements: What Workers (and Retirees) Really Want,” *Generations* 3,1 (2007):31-36.

<sup>8</sup> E. Kojola and P. Moen, “No More Lock-Step Retirement: Boomers’ Shifting Meanings of Work and Retirement,” *Journal of Aging Studies* 36 (2016):59-70.

<sup>9</sup> K. Dychtwald, T.J. Erickson, and R. Morison, *Workforce Crisis: How to Beat the Coming Shortage of Skills and Talent* (Harvard Business Press, 2013); P. Moen, E. Kojola, and K. Schaefer, “Organizational Change around an Older Workforce,” *The Gerontologist*, in press.

<sup>10</sup> C. Helmstetter and J. Tigan, “6 Surprising Trends about Minnesota’s Millennials,” *Minnesota Compass*, 2014. Accessed March 20, 2014, at [www.mncompass.org/trends/ask-a-researcher](http://www.mncompass.org/trends/ask-a-researcher); P. Moen, E. Kojola, and K. Schaefer, “Organizational Change around an Older Workforce,” *The Gerontologist*, in press.

**Table 1. Informal and Formal Organizational Policies in Twin Cities Sample of Organizations Innovating Given Changing Workforce Demography**

Sector	N	Flexible Work Policies	Part-time Core Jobs	Phased Retirement	Rehire Retirees	Pension
For-Profit	11	6	6	1	7	3
Nonprofit	8	6	8	2	8	0
Public	4	4	4	2	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 2. Sample Demographics of Boomers Interviewed in Twin Cities Region**

	N	Women	Men	Total
Demographics		14	13	27
	<b>Mean age</b>	58	61	61
	<b>Age range</b>	50–68	52–68	52–68
	<b>Married or live with partner</b>	10	12	22
	<b>Single</b>	4	1	5
Employment Status				
	<b>Fully retired</b>	0	1	1
	<b>Partially retired</b>	2	3	5
	<b>Full-time work</b>	10	8	18
	<b>Unemployed</b>	2	1	3
	<b>Encore job</b>	3	2	5
Employer Industry (current or retired from)				
	<b>For-profit employer</b>	6	8	14
	<b>Nonprofit employer</b>	5	2	7
	<b>Public employer</b>	2	1	3
	<b>Self-employed</b>	1	2	3

Notes: Individuals can be partially retired and say they have an encore job.

and societal norms. A key theme across the interviews is the blurred boundaries around these Minnesotans' retirement transitions. Most do not envision the sharp divide between paid work and retirement experienced by previous generations. Instead, many want to scale back or seek second acts, rather than opt out of the workforce altogether. Participants voiced a degree of uncertainty about their retirement plans, with many wanting to work more flexibly and in less demanding jobs—whether in paid occupations or stipend/volunteer options—that provide a sense of purpose and meaning. Of the 27 participants, about half were either working past the standard retirement ages of 65 or 66 (the age of eligibility for full Social Security benefits for this group is 66) or else planning to work into their late 60s

and 70s, at least in a part-time capacity. In our interviews, we found that participants who are healthy and enjoying their work were typically reluctant to voice a specific expected retirement age, pushing it off to sometime in the future.

Taken as a whole, the Boomers we interviewed tend to reject a view of retirement as a period of leisure and withdrawal; they instead express a desire to remain active and engaged either through paid work, often in encore jobs, or unpaid activities. Most talked about their ideal futures, whether retired from their career jobs or not, as being active and socially connected. For some this means paid work, while for others it involves volunteering, traveling, or spending more time with family. Many of the Boomers expressed a desire to work more flexibly and often in less

demanding roles as they get older. Boomers in our study want to have more control over their time, schedules, and the type of work they do.

Having control over when and where they work (or not) is a consideration in whether participants keep working or retire, often seeking part-time opportunities. However, employer policies shape their ability to scale back. Flexible work-time policies entice older employees to continue working, even as extreme job demands push them out of their jobs. Flexible employers support people working longer by offering ways to navigate work and life goals, interests, and responsibilities. People with inflexible employers and highly demanding jobs report wanting to retire or leave their jobs for more flexible work. The stress of highly demanding and inflexible



work pushes Minnesota Boomers toward retirement and either enhanced family roles, active leisure, or postretirement jobs with more flexibility and meaning.

*How Are Innovative Minnesota Organizations Responding to the Aging Workforce?*

Among the innovative organizations in Minnesota we studied, we detected identifiable and patterned organizational strategies to retain and attract the state's large population of Boomers (see Table 2).<sup>11</sup> We find these pockets of innovation in large-, small-, and medium-size organizations and in the private, public, and social sectors. However, the policies and practices are not yet institutionalized, taken-for-granted practices across all employing organizations in the Twin Cities area, even though they are the new norms in the innovators we studied.

Flexibility and Part-time Work

Most surprising is that the innovative policies reported for older workers are,

in fact, designed for opening up options for workers of *all* ages, not just older workers. Most of the organizations in our study (16 out of 23; 70%) offer some form of flexibility in which employees are able to schedule when and sometimes where they work, although this is not always a formal policy. Some Minnesota employers have embraced flexibility and telework as ways of reimagining workspaces and work processes. Employers in our study describe how flexible work strategies benefit the organization as well as are attractive to employees, especially older workers who are able to navigate changing family care obligations, health conditions, and life expectations. While the organizations offering flexibility make it available to all workers—older workers are not specifically targeted—it became clear that Boomers benefit from this access.

Representatives describe their organizations as using new technologies to make work less physically demanding and less dependent on being in the office. For several organizations, remote work is a way to reduce real estate costs while creating a more dynamic and effective work environment. For example, a large retail organization

redesigned the physical workspace of its headquarters to promote mobile working and allows telecommuting two days a week—a popular option among workers of all ages and at all life stages, including Boomers in their 50s and 60s.

Phased Retirement Strategies

The traditional path to retirement is declining among the Minnesota Boomers and organizations we studied. Phasing into retirement over a period of years is an appealing trajectory for many participants with some already working part-time in encore jobs following their “career” jobs. The innovative organizations in our study are also moving beyond the standard lock-step path of full-time work leading to full-time retirement, instead encouraging Boomers to scale back but remain engaged (often in not-so-big jobs<sup>12</sup>) while passing on their knowledge to younger workers. Most of the organizations in our study do not have formal phased retirement policies; in fact, only 5 have such programs. Nevertheless, 16 (70%) offer

<sup>11</sup> E. Kojola and P. Moen, “No More Lock-Step Retirement: Boomers’ Shifting Meanings of Work and Retirement,” *Journal of Aging Studies* 36 (2016):59-70.

<sup>12</sup> P. Moen, “Not So Big Jobs and Retirements: What Workers (and Retirees) Really Want,” *Generations* 3,1 (2007):31-36.

diverse pathways for their employees as they move to and through the conventional retirement years. At 18 (78%) of the organizations, it is possible for employees in core positions to shift down to part-time hours if they wish to do so. And 8 (35%) organizations in our study have very low minimum hours for receiving benefits. These progressive policies provide full (or prorated) benefits to employees working less than 40 hours a week, permitting older employees to scale back without giving up much-needed health insurance and retirement savings plans. However, at some organizations, the ability to change jobs and reduce hours varies by

about age discrimination and not following regulations tied to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. Such reluctance can limit the ability of both workgroups and older employees to proactively plan for the future. Once employees do broach the subject, however, organizational representatives report helping employees craft transitions out of their current positions, if not necessarily out of the workforce. Openness to discussing retirement allows employees and managers to develop plans for replacing older workers, diminishing disruptions to the organization, and allowing workers to shift job responsibilities.

able to earn additional income without committing to full-time work.

We also observed the importance of temp agencies and similar types of organizations that seek to facilitate links between Boomers and employers. For the employer, these third-party organizations provide access to a vetted, temporary talent pool. For the Boomer job seeker, these brokers alleviate the stress of finding and coordinating contracts and projects. The employment brokers expand access to employment for segments of the population that face challenges in gaining employment. A representative of a midsize staffing company discussed how the company helps prepare people for job applications and job interviews, especially Boomer homemakers who have been out of the job market for most of their adult lives and are uncertain about how to articulate their skills and navigate job networks that are changing with new technologies.

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*Openness to discussing retirement allows employees and managers to develop plans for replacing older workers, diminishing disruptions to the organization, and allowing workers to shift job responsibilities.*

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department and occupation as well as by type of job, with higher-level employees and managers having the most options.

The organizations we studied, especially in the nonprofit and healthcare sectors, recognize the rising proportion of their retirement-eligible workers and seek to retain these key people and their knowledge by allowing them to shift their hours and scale back. These organizations are seeking to retain Boomers, even if doing so means these employees transfer out of some jobs and into others. Scaling back work allows employees to transfer their knowledge while also adjusting to impending retirement. For example, one nonprofit has no formal policy for phased retirement but regularly moves older workers who no longer wish to continue in demanding leadership positions into other types of jobs, such as becoming “internal consultants” who mentor the next generation of workers. Several public organizations are assisting older employees in shifting to less physically demanding work, regular (day) hours, and shorter shifts. One state agency we studied moves employees to less physically demanding jobs to retain their value to the organization and help them avoid injury or physical stress.

However, we found managers are wary about bringing up the topic of retirement, reflecting their concerns

(Re)Hiring Older Workers/Retirees

Organizations are also facilitating alternative pathways by hiring retirees—either their own retirees or retirees from other organizations. These practices allow Boomers to remain engaged in some paid work, even as the hiring organizations benefit from skilled and experienced workers. At 19 (80%) of the organizations we investigated, retirees are eligible to be rehired and are often brought back on a contract or project basis. For example, one higher education institution crafts engaging work assignments specifically designed to appeal to retirees. However, a number of organizations also mentioned the difficulties of rehiring their own retirees, especially for organizations with pensions that must navigate Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) regulations.

We also interviewed representatives from several organizations that regularly hire their retirees or other retired professionals to work as contractors and consultants. These organizations are able to tap into the talent of older workers and pass on knowledge while providing them both meaningful and flexible work. The flexibility goes both ways: rehiring retirees allows employers to respond to shifting workforce demands by temporarily bringing on skilled workers, while Boomers are

Training Older Workers

Many conventional organizations fail to train or develop their older workforce, assuming that those who are retirement eligible are either slow learners or will soon exit the company. However, most of the leading organizations in our study (80%) engage workers of all ages—including older workers—in training and professional development. Professional development and education reimbursement programs allow older workers to continue building their skills and even move up within the organization. A representative of an environmental nonprofit described Boomer workers as an asset, noting that continually helping them develop and find engaging work is part of the institutional culture of investing in employees. While none of the organizations we studied regularly offers special training specifically for older workers, nearly all organizational representatives emphasized that training opportunities are open to all workers, and that encouraging older workers to participate not only benefits the individuals but also the organization.

Human resources personnel or other informants we interviewed report that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the older workers in their organizations are receptive to new technologies. Initial training as well as continuing support and assistance help older workers adjust to new work systems and technologies. Several older workers at a retail



company reported needing time to become accustomed to telework technologies, especially those in positions that require use of complex software, but that they are able to adapt and enjoy the newfound flexibility.

Several employers combine workforce analytics, succession planning, and employee training and development to proactively build talent pipelines to meet emerging needs. Drawing on data analytics to anticipate retirement clusters, a utility company strategically intervened by focusing on knowledge transfer and training. This company worked collaboratively with a technical college to craft a training curriculum that prepared graduates of all ages for jobs in their industry.

### Conclusions

Our interviews with both individuals and organizational representatives in

the Twin Cities area reveal how traditional retirement has been upended for this group of white-collar Minnesota Boomers due to changing social norms and declining social protections, as well as the financial implications of economic uncertainty from dwindling pensions, debt, age discrimination, and poor job prospects. What we find is not one dominant pattern of contemporary retirement but, rather, a diversity of experiences, expectations, and trajectories. The innovative organizations in our study are responding to these changing circumstances, including the aging of their own workforces and the corollary loss of skills and knowledge, as well as the uncertainties of a competitive global economy. We find these organizations are leading change by designing new policies and approaches to work and retirement, pioneering formal and informal ways of addressing

21st-century challenges related to the changing demography of Minnesota's workforce. Boomer workers represent an important talent pool for employers because of their unprecedented numbers as well as their skills, talent, and knowledge about organizations, customers, and occupational and sector history and culture.

What we find are policies and practices reflecting that retirement from a full-time career job is not absolute and does not necessarily occur when people are retirement eligible according to organizational and public policies and outdated assumptions about the clocks and calendars of work and retirement. The employers in our study are distinctive in their willingness to experiment with new approaches and proactively adapt to the changing needs of workers. We find that some employers are adapting to the pressures of their

aging workforces and the potential loss of important knowledge by developing new strategies. Most “get it”—that they must understand the preferences and circumstances of their Boomer workers and retirees; the potential implications of an aging workforce for their work processes and work environments; and the shifting technological and social aspects of contemporary work together with outdated age-graded policies and practices that limit Boomers’ options for working more flexibly, moving into and out of employment, or taking on encore careers<sup>13</sup> that promote the greater good. We see evidence of increasing concern about the possibility of knowledge and skill loss as Boomers exit their jobs. In the organizations we studied, there is clear recognition of this looming problem and the need for both retaining experienced workers and transferring knowledge via cross-training, mentoring, and other activities.

We find that both large and small innovative organizations are developing and implementing imaginative strategies, but these approaches vary by organizational size. Larger organizations in the Twin Cities often have more institutionalized policies and more formal programs, made possible because of their size. Many of the large nonprofits and businesses we studied regularly use part-time employees and have more options for people to phase down or switch to less demanding roles. Smaller organizations tend to be more adaptive and responsive to the particular needs of specific Boomer employees. Several smaller employers discussed addressing the needs of individuals, rather than one-size-fits-all policies, which allows them to accommodate older workers as well as the needs and preferences of employees of all ages. Yet there is a potential problem when policies are not formalized, especially if accommodations are provided only for those workers who are deemed “valuable” or have positive relationships with management.

Our study suggests and finds supportive evidence that retaining and attracting talented and experienced older workers—and passing on knowledge—are key 21st-century business challenges requiring 21st-century solutions. Rigid, standardized work practices

seem to push Boomers out of the workforce; this underscores the importance of organizations establishing a range of flexible options around the time and timing of work. We know from prior research<sup>14</sup> that offering employees great control over when and where they work reduces stress and promotes well-being. What we find in this study is that traditional policies and practices offering two choices—full-time work *or* full-time retirement—are obsolete, and some leading organizations are recognizing this new reality.

Federal, state, and local government departments and agencies could lead change by becoming optimal employers for older workers—offering flexible work arrangements, training along with a sense of purpose, and paths to paid and unpaid civic engagement, seriously considering older job applicants for all jobs. Governmental and nonprofit sectors in the state can also lead by showcasing updated policies that are less age-stereotypical and more age-integrative rather than age-graded.

We also conclude that policies around “retirement planning” need to be subsumed under the concept of “career development,” even as “career development” needs to be rethought to be responsive to the preferences, uncertainties, and needs of Minnesotans of all ages, including the growing numbers of older workers and younger retirees. Outdated assumptions about the clocks and calendars of work and retirement that were institutionalized in the middle of the last century can no longer be the underpinnings of the ways Minnesotans and Minnesota organizations work.

**Phyllis Moen holds a McKnight Presidential Chair and is Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota. She has published numerous books and articles on careers, retirement, health, gender policy, and families as they are institutionalized, intersecting, and transforming in light of a disrupted life course. Just out is her 2016 book, *Encore Adulthood*:**

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<sup>14</sup> E.L. Kelly, P. Moen, W. Fan, J.M. Oakes, C. Okechukwu, K.D. Davis, L. Hammer, E. Kossek, R. Berkowitz King, G. Hanson, F. Mierzwa, and L. Casper, “Changing Work and Work-Family Conflict in an Information Technology Workplace: Evidence from a Group-Randomized Trial,” *American Sociological Review* 79,3 (2014):1-32; P. Moen, E.L. Kelly, W. Fan, S-R. Lee, D. Almeida, E.E. Kossek, and O. Buxton, “Does a Flexibility/Support Organizational Initiative Improve High Tech Employee’s Well-Being? Evidence from the Work, Family and Health Network,” *American Sociological Review* 81,1 (2016):134-164.

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<sup>13</sup> M. Freedman, *Encore: Finding Work that Matters in the Second Half of Life* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); M. Freedman, *The Big Shift: Navigating the New Stage beyond Midlife* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

*Boomers on the Edge of Risk, Renewal, and Purpose* (Oxford University Press).

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The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program. The program was created to encourage University faculty to conduct research with community organizations and collaborators on issues of public policy importance for the state and community. These grants are available to regular faculty at the University of Minnesota and are awarded annually on a competitive basis.

This project was also made possible through funding and support from the Minnesota Population Center and from funds associated with the McKnight Presidential Chair awarded to the first author. We would also like to thank all the participants and organizations involved in the study who were willing to give their time and share their experiences, as well as SHIFT, a Twin Cities nonprofit that assisted in locating older workers and retirees. We appreciate Jane Peterson for her help with the many administrative details. This report is drawn from the two published articles resulting from this study, “No More Lock-Step Retirement: Boomers’ Shifting Meanings of Work and Retirement” in the *Journal of Aging Studies* and “Organizational Change Around an Older Workforce” in *The Gerontologist*, as well as part of a book by the lead author, *Encore Adulthood: Boomers on the Edge of Risk, Renewal, and Purpose*.

# Understanding Youth Resilience by Leveraging the Youth Development Study Archive

By Jeylan T. Mortimer, Dominique J. Rolando, and Carol Zierman



**Abstract:** Key formative experiences have the potential to influence the movement of young people through the transition to adulthood. Positive experiences promote resilience and success among at-risk youth; negative experiences can derail youth who are doing well at the outset of this transition. Taking a holistic and person-centered approach, we leverage data from the Youth Development Study, which followed 1,139 St. Paul youth from the ninth grade to age 38 (with 19 surveys).

First, we identify youth who exhibit constellations of attributes indicating greater or lesser age-specific “success” in middle adolescence (ages 14–15), late adolescence (ages 17–18), and early adulthood (ages 26–27). In middle and late adolescence, more successful youth had higher grades, educational aspirations, and intrinsic school motivation; they avoided smoking and alcohol use. The more successful young adults were employed, economically self-sufficient, making progress toward their career goals, and satisfied with their jobs, and they lacked physical and emotional problems.

Second, we trace shifts between the more and less successful classes as respondents moved from middle to late adolescence and from late adolescence to adulthood. Though the majority of youth were “stable,” considerable movement occurred between classes.

Finally, we describe key formative experiences and characteristics that distinguished adolescents who moved from the less to the more successful class (showing “resilience”), from middle to late adolescence, from those who stayed in the less successful class. These experiences included positive parent and teacher relationships and conscientiousness in school. Positive experiences during adolescence also predicted resilience during early adulthood. Key protective factors emerged in early adulthood: a teacher/professor who influenced the youth’s career goals and delayed childbearing.

We conclude that the quality of family and peer relationships, and specific experiences in school and work settings, differentiate youth exhibiting more and less positive trajectories. Because the quality of adolescent experiences continues to influence trajectories during the transition to adulthood, it is especially important to address deficiencies in adolescent contexts. The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA’s Faculty Interactive Research Program.

Transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood involves multiple decisions and challenges for young adults. A large body of literature examines adolescent and young adult attributes, as well as features of experiences that are linked to indicators of success,

such as educational achievement and attainment, career establishment, economic self-sufficiency, and health. Characteristics of the family (e.g., parental education, income, parent-child relationships, parental expectations, encouragement, and monitoring), school (e.g., curriculum, extracurricular resources, teacher-student relationships), and peers (support, prosocial and antisocial influences) emerge as correlates of success. Most studies are “siloed,” focusing on single success indicators (e.g., educational attainment, juvenile justice involvement) or single domains of potential influence (e.g., family). Most use cross-sectional data, collected at a single point in time, and report aggregate trends. Longitudinal studies, which follow the same individuals over time, emphasize stability, that is, youth who are doing poorly relative to their peers in adolescence are likely to be in a similar position in young adulthood.

The present research takes a more holistic approach and looks for sources of change over time within persons. We identify adolescents and early adults who, based on a constellation of attributes signifying age-specific indicators of adjustment, are considered to be faring well or poorly. We assess movements between these constellations over a critically important period of the early

life course (middle adolescence to early adulthood).

We are particularly interested in identifying experiences associated with movement from a less successful to a more successful configuration of circumstances. For those youth with a less promising start, what experiences differentiate those who enter a path toward employment, career achievement, job satisfaction, economic self-sufficiency, and a healthy life from those who remain “at risk” throughout adolescence and early adulthood? Answers to this question are crucial for policy makers as they could suggest evidence-based policy interventions to direct as many young people as possible toward a successful life path.

Our motivation for this study stems from a series of meetings in the fall of 2015 with stakeholders affiliated with the Ramsey County Policy Unit. Each stakeholder focused on a specific domain of adolescent or young adult experience, through their work in the public schools, vocational guidance, skill development and employment, foster care, welfare program administration, and juvenile corrections. While primarily concerned with a particular domain of adolescent or young adult adjustment, it was apparent that the problems the stakeholders address are interrelated. That is, various difficulties and elements of success in adolescence and early adulthood tend to occur together. The information we aimed to provide would address not just single domains of success but would, more holistically, identify features of adolescents’ and young adults’ lives with implications for multiple domains of functioning.

## Methods

Since this series of meetings, we have identified youth who exhibited more or less promising pathways to adulthood using data from the Youth Development Study. This longitudinal study followed (with annual or biannual surveys) a panel of 1,139 ninth graders in St. Paul, Minnesota, public schools to their late 30s. The data archive is rich in information about school, family relationships, mental health, and socioeconomic status. We examined youth adaptation in three phases:

1. middle adolescence (9th grade; ages 14–15, 1988)
2. late adolescence (12th grade; ages 17–18, 1991)

3. early adulthood (ages 26–27, 2000)

By the 12th wave of the study (2000), about three-quarters of the original sample remained.

First, we selected variables indicative of “success” at each developmental phase. Second, we used latent class analysis to identify configurations of these variables. Finally, drawing on data during the intervening periods (between the 9th and 12th grades; between the 12th grade and mid-20s), we identified experiences and characteristics associated with distinct patterns of movement across success categories.

### *Measures of Success in Middle and Late Adolescence and in Early Adulthood*

The adolescent indicators reflect success in the school domain, an absence of problematic behaviors, and positive outlooks toward the future. We include school achievement (grades), educational aspirations, certainty about occupational plans, substance use (smoking, alcohol), school problem behavior, intrinsic motivation toward school, and expectations about the likelihood of success in key life domains (work, family, health, community, etc.).

Indicators of early adult success include employment status, job satisfaction, career establishment, level of certainty about achieving one’s occupational goals, and economic self-sufficiency, the latter being a central concern of policy makers. A categorical variable gauged whether respondents’ living expenses came entirely from their own (or a partner’s) salary, 25% or more from relatives or the government, or mostly from other sources. Additional variables indicated whether deficits in physical or mental health interfered with respondents’ daily lives.

### **Identifying Success Categories**

In each phase, we employ latent class analysis (LCA), which groups individuals into classes depending on the similarity in their responses across variables. The fit of models to data is gauged by the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) statistic, with the model with the lowest BIC being the better model. In our case, the best model specification involved four classes at wave 1 and three classes at waves 4 and 12.

Table 1 shows the proportion of respondents assigned to each class, based on the probability distributions of responses for each variable. In the ninth grade, 64% of respondents are in

a latent class we call “more successful”; 32% are in the “less successful” class. Because members of third and fourth latent classes (about 4% of respondents) had a very high probability of missing data on all indicators, we delete these cases from further analysis. Respondents in the first, *more successful* class:

- ▶ drink alcohol infrequently (0.92) and are unlikely to smoke (0.92)
- ▶ have high certainty about achieving their career goals (0.84)
- ▶ have high intrinsic motivation toward school (0.87)
- ▶ have high grades (0.85)
- ▶ have good behavior in school (0.84)
- ▶ expect to obtain 4 or more years of college (0.71)
- ▶ have relatively high expectations for the future (0.82)

The *less successful* class, in contrast, is distinguished by its relatively high frequency of drinking (0.49) and smoking (0.61). Sixty-one percent report a grade point average of C or lower. More than half of those assigned to this less successful class reports problematic school behaviors (0.54) and expects to obtain less than 4 years of college (0.54). They also tend to have lower expectations for the future (just 65% have high expectations).

Clear differences between the successful and unsuccessful classes are likewise observed in late adolescence, the senior year of high school. At this time, 57% may be considered successful; 33% unsuccessful. Again, a third class with about 9% of respondents with a high probability of missing values on all items was deleted from subsequent analyses. The more successful late adolescents:

- ▶ drink alcohol infrequently (0.88 vs. 0.55 among the less successful)
- ▶ are more likely to be nonsmokers (0.89 vs. 0.48)
- ▶ aspire to obtain 4-year college degrees (0.74 vs. 0.41)
- ▶ get grades of C+ or better in school (0.98 vs. 0.53)
- ▶ are intrinsically motivated toward school (0.91 vs. 0.53)
- ▶ have good conduct in school (0.85 vs. 0.49)
- ▶ have higher expectations about their futures in general (0.87 vs. 0.69)

Given the differences in their motivation, behavior, and future outlooks, one might expect that successful respondents at the end of high school would be more likely to be successful as young

**Table 1. Estimated Prevalence and Conditional Probabilities of Responses for the Latent Classes in Three Phases from Middle Adolescence to Early Adulthood**

	Age: 14–15		Age: 17–18	
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Successful	Unsuccessful
<b>Prevalence</b>	<b>64.1%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>56.7%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>
Had 2 or less drinks in the past 30 days	0.92	0.50	0.88	0.55
More than 2 drinks in the past 30 days	0.08	0.49	0.12	0.45
Has not smoked in the past 30 days	0.92	0.39	0.89	0.48
Has smoked in the past 30 days	0.07	0.61	0.10	0.52
High career certainty	0.84	0.75	0.90	0.85
Low career certainty	0.14	0.21	0.10	0.14
Expects to complete less than 4 years of college	0.19	0.54	0.20	0.52
Expects 4 years of college or more	0.71	0.33	0.74	0.41
Does not know educational expectations	0.08	0.12	0.06	0.07
Low future expectations	0.18	0.35	0.11	0.29
High future expectations	0.82	0.65	0.87	0.69
GPA of C+ or better	0.85	0.34	0.98	0.53
GPA less than C+	0.12	0.61	0.02	0.45
Intrinsic motivation toward school low	0.12	0.52	0.09	0.46
Intrinsic motivation toward school high	0.87	0.47	0.91	0.53
School problem behavior high	0.15	0.54	0.14	0.51
School problem behavior low	0.84	0.41	0.85	0.49

adults than those in the less successful class.

At the ages of 26 to 27 we find 46% of the respondents in a successful class (designated as class 1 in Table 1), and the remainder divided between two less successful categories (classes 2 and 3). Class 2, a relatively small class composed of 12% of respondents, is distinguished by its lack of employment (0.96). Class 3, including 42% of respondents, is 100% employed but, like class 2, indicates numerous difficulties.

On all counts, class 1 has made a more successful adaptation to the challenges of young adulthood. Early adult respondents in class 1 are employed (1.00) and manifest successful adaptation in numerous respects. They have higher educational attainment than respondents in classes 2 and 3 (0.34 with a bachelor's degree or more, vs. 0.16 in class 2 and 0.23 in class 3). Only 18% of class 1 respondents have only a high school education or less (compared to 0.50 in class 2 and 0.31 in class 3).

They are more likely to have achieved or feel very certain that they will achieve their occupational goals (0.78 vs. 0.55 and 0.49, respectively), they are much more likely to be pursuing what they consider a career (0.63 vs. 0.00 and 0.08), and they are much more likely to report satisfaction with their jobs (0.81 vs. 0.00 and 0.23). Class 1 is also characterized by economic self-sufficiency, with 81% reporting that all their living expenses are paid for by their own or their spouse's earnings (vs. 0.46 and 0.68). Finally, class 1 respondents are more likely to report no physical or emotional problems that interfere with activities in their daily lives (0.78 vs. 0.55 and 0.52). We therefore consider class 1 as the more successful, and classes 2 and 3 as less successful.

#### Assessing Movement Between Classes

As found in many longitudinal studies, respondents exhibit a high level of stability in adaptation across phases of the life course. Between middle and

late adolescence, approximately 71% of respondents who were in the more successful class at ages 14 to 15, indicating a high level of adaptation, are found in the same class at ages 17 to 18 (Table 2). Of those who started out in the less successful class at ages 14 to 15, 54% were found in the less successful class at ages 17 to 18.

Still, from ages 14 to 15 to ages 17 to 18 we see considerable movement between classes, signaling that some respondents are becoming more successful than they were before, and vice versa. Indicating resilience despite inauspicious beginnings, approximately 28% of those in the less successful class at ages 14 to 15 moved to the more successful one by the ages 17 to 18. Indicating the reverse “downward slide,” approximately 24% of the more successful respondents at ages 14 to 15 moved to the less successful class by ages 17 to 18. Respondents whose movements indicate increasing adaptation are of particular interest.

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Prevalence	46.4%	11.7%	41.8%
High school education or less	0.18	0.50	0.31
Tech/vocational or associate's	0.25	0.21	0.19
Some college education	0.22	0.14	0.27
Bachelor's degree or more	0.34	0.16	0.23
Not employed	0.00	0.96	0.00
Employed	1.00	0.01	1.00
Achieved occupational goal	0.36	0.16	0.06
Very certain to achieve occupational goal	0.42	0.39	0.43
Somewhat/not very certain to achieve goal	0.19	0.40	0.42
Is not in career of choice	0.05	1.00	0.53
Is in career of choice	0.63	0.00	0.08
Is in a steppingstone job to career	0.33	0.00	0.39
Satisfied with job	0.81	0.00	0.23
Somewhat satisfied with job	0.17	0.00	0.53
Dissatisfied with job	0.01	0.00	0.23
100% income from self and spouse	0.81	0.46	0.68
25% of income from government or relatives	0.13	0.42	0.25
Source of income: other	0.06	0.10	0.06
No physical or emotional interference	0.78	0.55	0.52
Slight physical or emotional interference	0.16	0.26	0.32
Experience physical or emotional interference	0.06	0.19	0.16

In early adulthood, we again observe much stability (Table 3), as 52% of respondents who were in the more successful class 1 at ages 17 to 18 remained in class 1 at ages 26 to 27. Fifty-nine percent of those in the less successful class at ages 17 to 18 were found in the two less successful classes at ages 26 to 27. We again see some upward movement: approximately 41% of those in the less successful class at ages 17 to 18 are found in the

most successful class at ages 26 to 27. Again, we find “downward slide.” In the transition from adolescence to adulthood, 48% of those in class 1 at ages 17 to 18 have moved to classes 2 or 3.

The considerable movement between classes representing different levels of psychological and behavioral adjustment, as individuals age from middle to late adolescence, and from late adolescence to adulthood, provides

the basis for the next step of our analysis: to identify the factors associated with this movement. Those who move from the less successful to more successful classes are of special interest, as they may be considered at high risk, initially, but have managed to overcome earlier difficulties. Understanding the experiences that are associated with such movement, as youth transition across phases, will indicate points of effective intervention.

### Predictors of Resilience

To identify variables associated with movement between classes, we conduct the analysis in two phases:

1. We first predict class movement during middle adolescence, between ages 14 to 15 and 17 to 18.
2. We then examine movement during early adulthood, between ages 17 to 18 and 26 to 27.

Movements may be upward, from the less successful to the more successful class, or downward, from the more successful to the less successful. The remainder of the sample exhibits stability—at relatively successful or unsuccessful levels. Figure 1 illustrates these possibilities.

We regress class movement on a variety of indicators in an attempt to explain mobility during adolescence (from the first to the fourth high school years), known as stage 1, and during early adulthood (from the last year of high school to ages 26–27), known as stage 2. Since the dependent variable, “class movement,” is categorical (with four categories: stably unsuccessful, stably successful, resilience, and becoming at risk), we employ multinomial logistic regression. Independent variables include baseline characteristics (family of origin household income, parental education, race, nativity, gender, and family structure) and several explanatory variables. The analyses gauge the importance of each

Table 2. Movement Between Classes from Ages 14–15 (high school entry) to Ages 17–18 (high school senior year). \*Missing Data Group (removed from analysis)

		Successful	Unsuccessful	Missing Data*	Total
Ages 14–15	Successful	484	160	33	677
		71.49%	23.63%	3.88%	100%
Ages 14–15	Unsuccessful	94	177	59	330
		28.48%	53.64%	17.89%	100%

Table 3. Movement Between Classes from Ages 17–18 (high school senior year) to Ages 26–27 (early adulthood)

		Ages 26–27			Total
		Successful 1	Unsuccessful/ Unemployed 2	Unsuccessful/ Other 3	
Ages 17–18	Successful	217	39	165	421
		51.54%	9.26%	39.19%	100%
Ages 17–18	Unsuccessful	106	28	122	256
		41.41%	10.94%	47.66%	100%

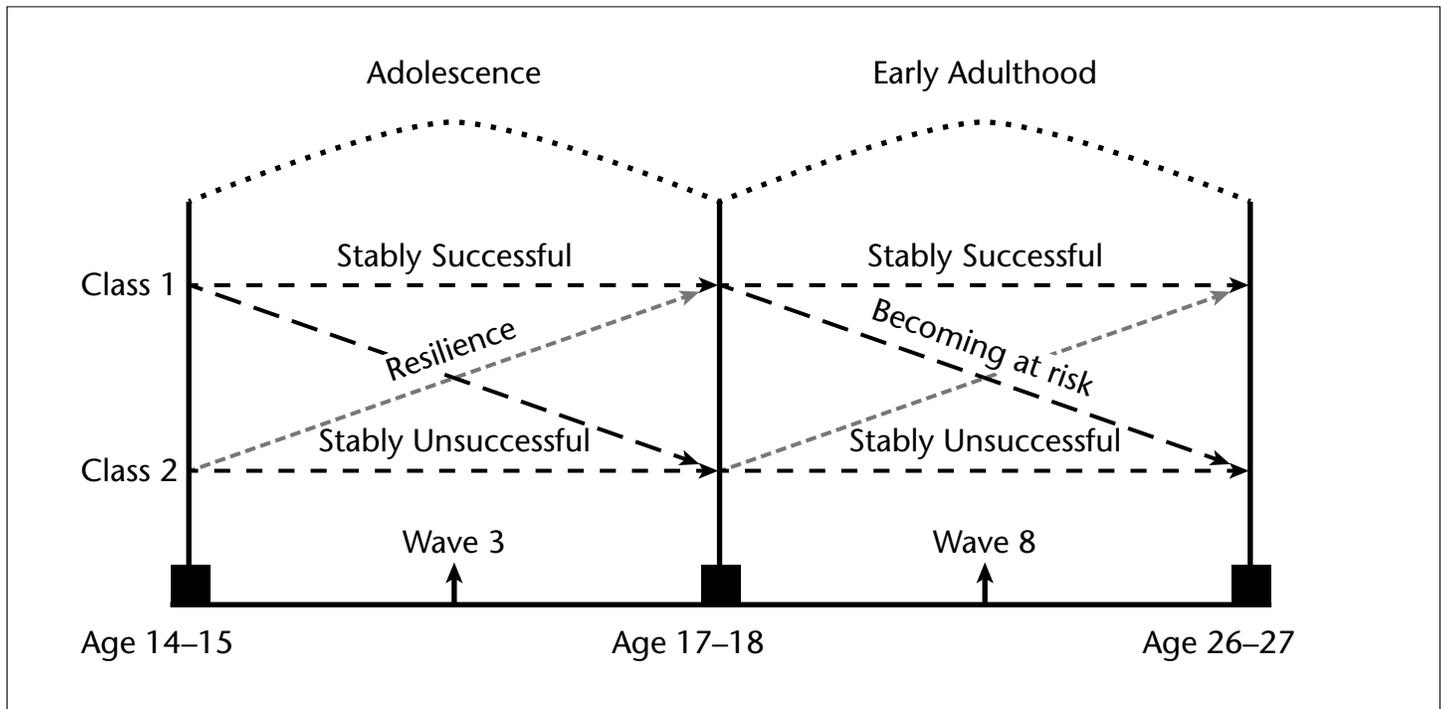
explanatory variable independent of the background characteristics (but not net of other experiential predictors). In the analyses described here, we specify the reference category as *stably unsuccessful*, with special interest in comparing those who move “up” to the *successful*

category, the “resilient youth,” with those who remain *unsuccessful*.

#### Adolescence

The predictors of movement in adolescence were mainly measured in wave 3, 1 year prior to the wave 4 “success”

Figure 1. Class Movement Variable Construction



constellations. Predictors include experiences in the family (e.g., closeness to mother and father), in school (e.g., quality of relationship with teachers, conscientiousness in schoolwork), and at work (e.g., employment, opportunities to learn from the job). Because, for policy purposes, we are mainly concerned with the sources of *change*, we focus here on upward moves from the less successful to the more successful classes (indicating resilience). Youth who exhibited this pattern started off in the unsuccessful class but became successful by the 12th grade. Knowledge about the sources of resilience could inform interventions to reduce risk.

Having a good relationship with one's teacher increased the odds of resilience by about 40% per each unit increase. Figure 2 shows that among the at-risk adolescents who thought that their teachers were "almost always willing to listen to your problems and help find solutions," more than 60% moved into the successful category by the 12th grade. Only about 40% of those who thought this was "never" or "rarely" the case became resilient. Considering it important to do what the teacher says in school, an indicator of the student's conscientiousness, increased the odds of becoming successful, by almost 50%.

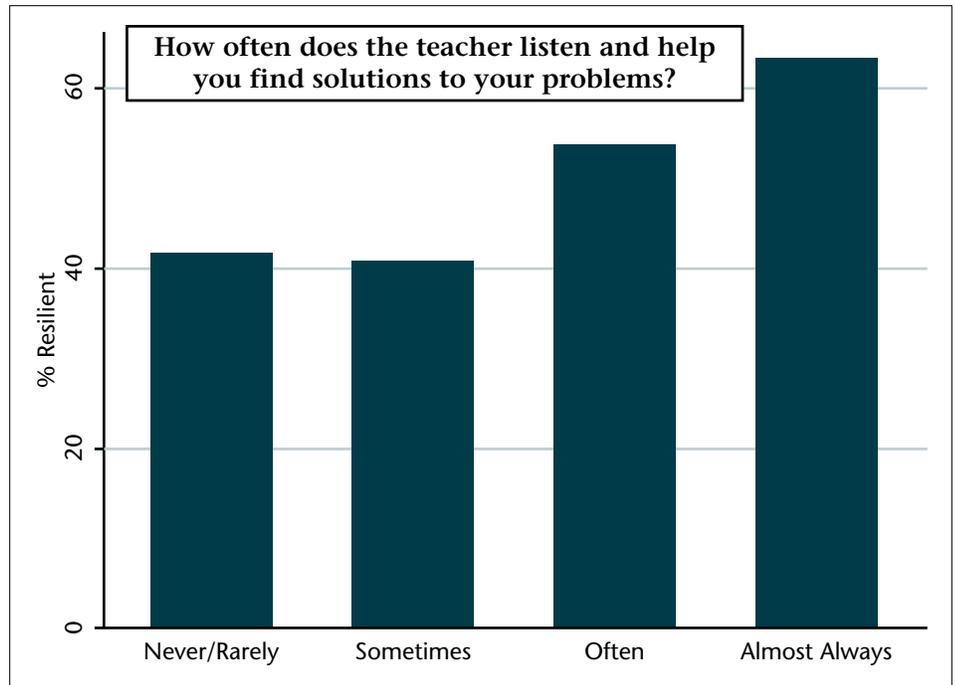
As shown in Figure 3, approximately 70% who thought "doing what the teacher says" was "extremely important" were resilient, but only about 40% of those who thought this was only "fairly" or "not important" moved into the successful class. Finally, at-risk youth who were close to their fathers were significantly more likely to be resilient. Figure 4 shows clear differences in resilience by closeness to father.

#### Early Adulthood

Due to the relatively small size of the nonemployed class 2 at ages 26 to 27 (67 cases), we merge classes 2 and 3. This allows us to identify one successful and one unsuccessful class in each life phase. In predicting movement across classes in early adulthood, we drew on variables measured at ages 21 to 22.

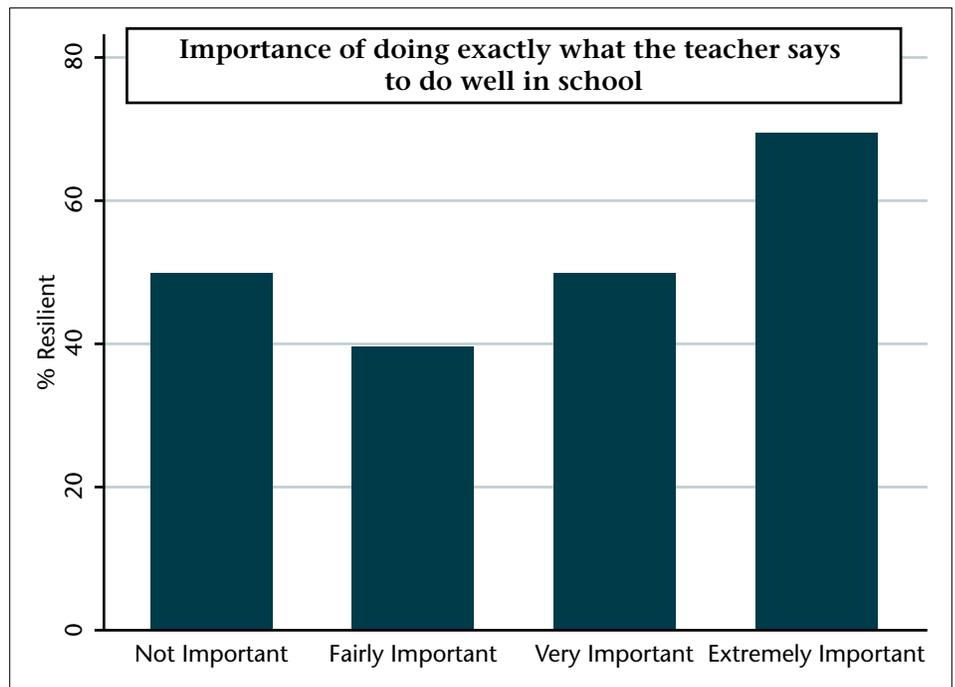
Educational experiences and aspirations were found to predict resilience in early adulthood. For example, being influenced by a teacher or school professional in one's career decision making increased the odds of becoming successful by about 44%. But thinking that the highest level of schooling one will achieve is a tech/vocational degree

Figure 2. Quality of Relationship with Teacher and Resilience During Adolescence (ages 14–17)\*



\*Vertical axis shows % resilient, i.e., those who move from the less successful to the more successful category, as the quality of relationship with teachers increases.

Figure 3. Conscientiousness and Resilience During Adolescence (ages 14–17)\*



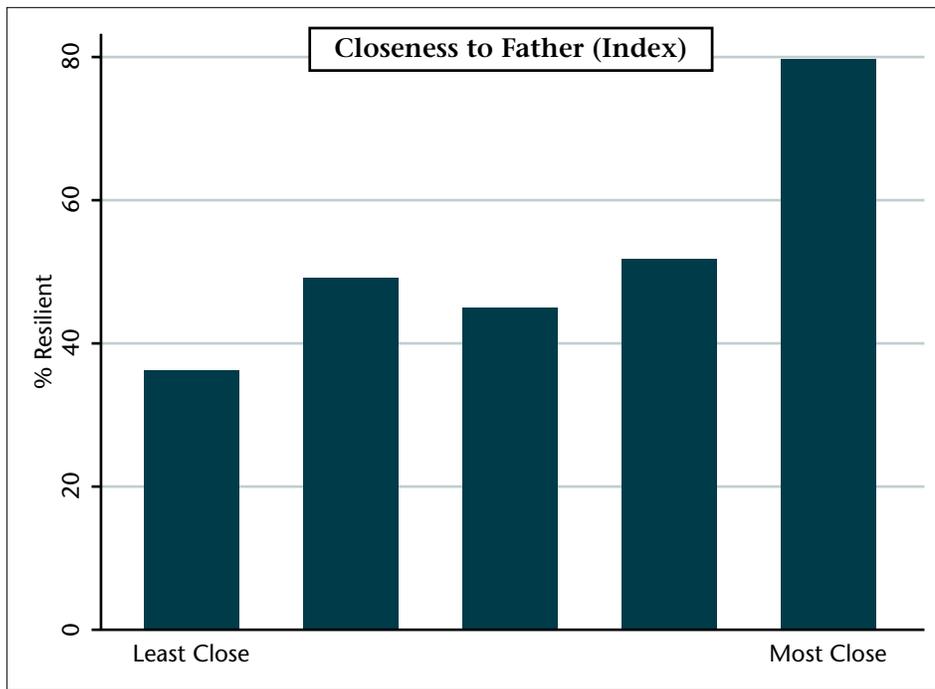
\*Vertical axis shows % resilient, i.e., those who move from the less successful to the more successful category, as the importance of conscientiousness increases.

(instead of a 4-year college degree) reduced the odds of resilience by 60%. In general, having educational expectations lower than a bachelor's degree reduced the likelihood of resilience. Not surprisingly, having children reduced the odds of showing resilience by 60%

(only 40% of young adults who had children were resilient, compared to more than 60% of the child-free).

Next, to assess whether experiences during adolescence are associated with adaptation in early adulthood, we estimated the effects of adolescent

Figure 4. Closeness to Father and Resilience During Adolescence (ages 14–17)\*



\*Vertical axis shows % resilient, i.e., those who move from the less successful to the more successful category, as the quality of relationship with fathers increases.

experiences on resilience between waves 4 and 12, the early adult period. We found that some experiences in adolescence predicted resilience in early adulthood. For example, having been close to one’s high school teachers, as well as close to one’s father during adolescence, were associated with higher odds of upward movement (31% and 8% for each unit increase, respectively). Conversely, working in high-intensity jobs (more than 20 hours per week, irrespective of duration) appeared to decrease the odds of resilience. Those who were employed at both high duration (working 22 or 24 months of observation, on average) and high intensity (more than 20 hours per week on average during high school) were only half as likely to be resilient as those who pursued low-duration and low-intensity employment.

#### Policy Recommendations

Based on the results of our analysis, several patterns could inform the development of interventions. It is especially interesting to note that variables in the adolescent period still have predictive power in the early adult period, indicating the importance of policy intervention during adolescence.

Our findings underline the importance of student conscientiousness in the classroom. The more students perceived that it was important to do

what the teacher says to get a good grade, the more likely they were to be resilient. While conscientiousness is considered a central defining trait of personality, associated with numerous indicators of success, its role in overcoming risk is not well understood. Furthermore, we find a clear positive effect of closeness to teachers. Teachers should try to establish good relationships with their students. Schools could implement activities and programs to enable teachers to get to know their students better—sites where students and teachers can bond with one another. Training programs for teachers could be implemented to help them nurture positive interpersonal relationships with students while fulfilling their pedagogical role. We also find that having been influenced by a teacher or a school professional in developing one’s career goals is important for positive outcomes in early adulthood. School programs in which students are encouraged to discuss their careers and aspirations with educators and counselors may thus have a positive effect. Instilling and maintaining high educational aspirations should also be emphasized, as those who had lower educational aspirations were less likely to show resilience. It is clear that the influence of teachers and classroom practices is formative in multiple ways in the adolescent and early adult period,

indicating that policy should be in place to foster interactions that encourage students to be conscientious, ambitious, and successful.

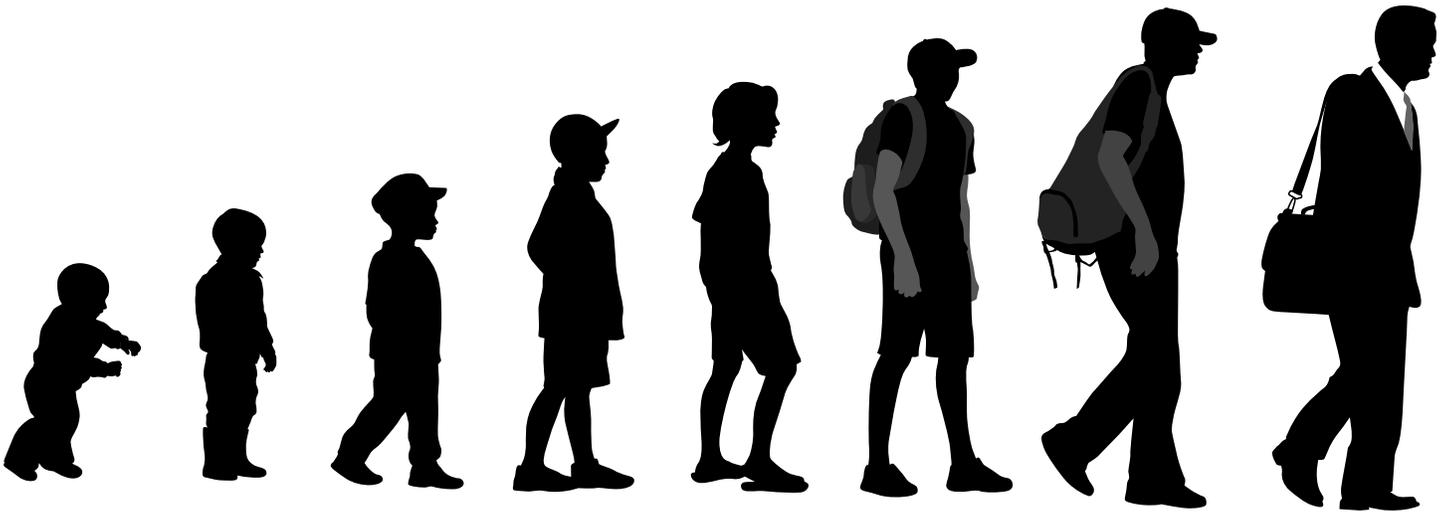
As for family influence, we see that closeness to parents (especially the father) early on has positive outcomes both during adolescence and in early adulthood. Outreach programs for families could be constructed to encourage parents to spend more time playing, talking, and being with their children. Parental training programs can teach parents how to build interpersonal bonds with their children even when parents live apart.

Work during adolescence also predicted positive outcomes in early adulthood for youth who started off with several disadvantages. Pursuing low-intensity work appears to promote resilience in early adulthood among high-risk teenagers. Times have changed, however, and relatively few opportunities for adolescents to do paid work now exist. Internship programs could be provided in which adolescents receive work experience and training. Our findings suggest that these programs should avoid high-intensity work (more than 20 hours per week).

We conclude that experiences in family, school, and work settings appear to help youth who do not indicate high potential for success; that is, those who are less motivated with respect to school have relatively low educational aspirations, report more problem behavior in

## Predictors of Youth Resilience

- ▶ High student conscientiousness in the classroom
- ▶ Close relationship with teachers
- ▶ Close relationship with father
- ▶ Career goals fostered by teacher or professor
- ▶ Desire to attain a 4-year degree
- ▶ Work limited to less than 20 hours a week



school as well as more alcohol use and smoking, and have lower expectations in general for the future. The quality of parent-child and teacher-student relationships, as well as specific experiences in school and work settings, separate those youth who stay in the relatively unsuccessful class throughout adolescence and during the transition to adulthood from those who manage to become successful despite inauspicious beginnings. Because the quality of adolescent experiences continues to influence trajectories during the transition to adulthood, it is especially important to address deficiencies in adolescent contexts.

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The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA's Faculty Interactive Research Program. The program was created to encourage University faculty to conduct research with community organizations and collaborators on issues of public policy importance for the state and community. These grants are available to regular faculty at the University of Minnesota and are awarded annually on a competitive basis. The Youth Development Study was supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (HD044138) and the National Institute of Mental Health (MH42843).

# Making Capital Funding Decisions More Equitable in St. Paul: A Story of Policy Change through Community-Based Research

By Jono Cowgill



John Vaughn

**As funding to upgrade the City Academy went through St. Paul's Capital Improvement Budget process, the East Side Neighborhood Development Center sought CURA's help to investigate disparities in funding across the city.**

John Vaughn has thought for years that the east side of St. Paul has not received as much funding as other parts of the city. "Anecdotally, I've seen the East Side has lost out on city funding to other neighborhoods," said Vaughn recently. "Having the City Academy project funding be so severely cut pushed me to organize around finding some hard evidence of this."

In 2015 Vaughn, who is the executive director of the East Side

Neighborhood Development Center (ESNDC), had put together an application to St. Paul's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) program for the rehabilitation of the rapidly deteriorating City Academy, the nation's first charter school. The combination school and rec center serves mostly low-income students of color living on St. Paul's east side. Vaughn had organized students to show up to committee meetings, gone through presentations,

and finally secured what looked like a favorable result from the citizen-led CIB committee, which awarded the rehab project a few million dollars. But then the recommendations went to the Mayor's office, and the few millions of dollars in funding for a completely rehabbed City Academy turned into \$500,000—barely enough for deferred maintenance.

Again, Vaughn was frustrated, but not surprised. "The East Side has long

suspected that it has not been getting its fair share of resources” said Vaughn. “We intend to continue to research and make public these disparities.” The rehashing of the CIB budget that left City Academy out in the cold was a final impetus to get a basic question answered: when you look at the numbers, do some neighborhoods really get more Capital Improvement Budget funds than others?

To answer this question, the ESNDNC partnered with Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services and the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers to develop a research proposal. “We gathered community organizations together that had seen this themselves and had an interest in seeing what spending actually looks like from a geographic perspective,” Vaughn explained. “So once we had a proposal we approached the Community-Based Research Program at CURA.” The Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) received a proposal to conduct an analysis of the St. Paul Capital Improvement Budget Process. They wanted to learn if what they had

anecdotally seen in their communities was borne out by the data. Which neighborhoods were getting the most CIB spending? How did the spending look when compared to property tax data? Was the CIB process equitable? Were the results fair? These and other questions were the starting place for this research project.

The project was accepted by CURA. Jeff Matson, the head of CURA’s Community GIS program, took on the initial stages of the project work. The first step in the analysis consisted of tracking down and analyzing CIB budget spending to determine if spending really *was* unequal across districts. The city of St. Paul publishes a complete Capital Improvement Budget every year, and this budget provides a breakdown that describes each individual CIB project, how much was spent on it, and which districts the projects impacted.

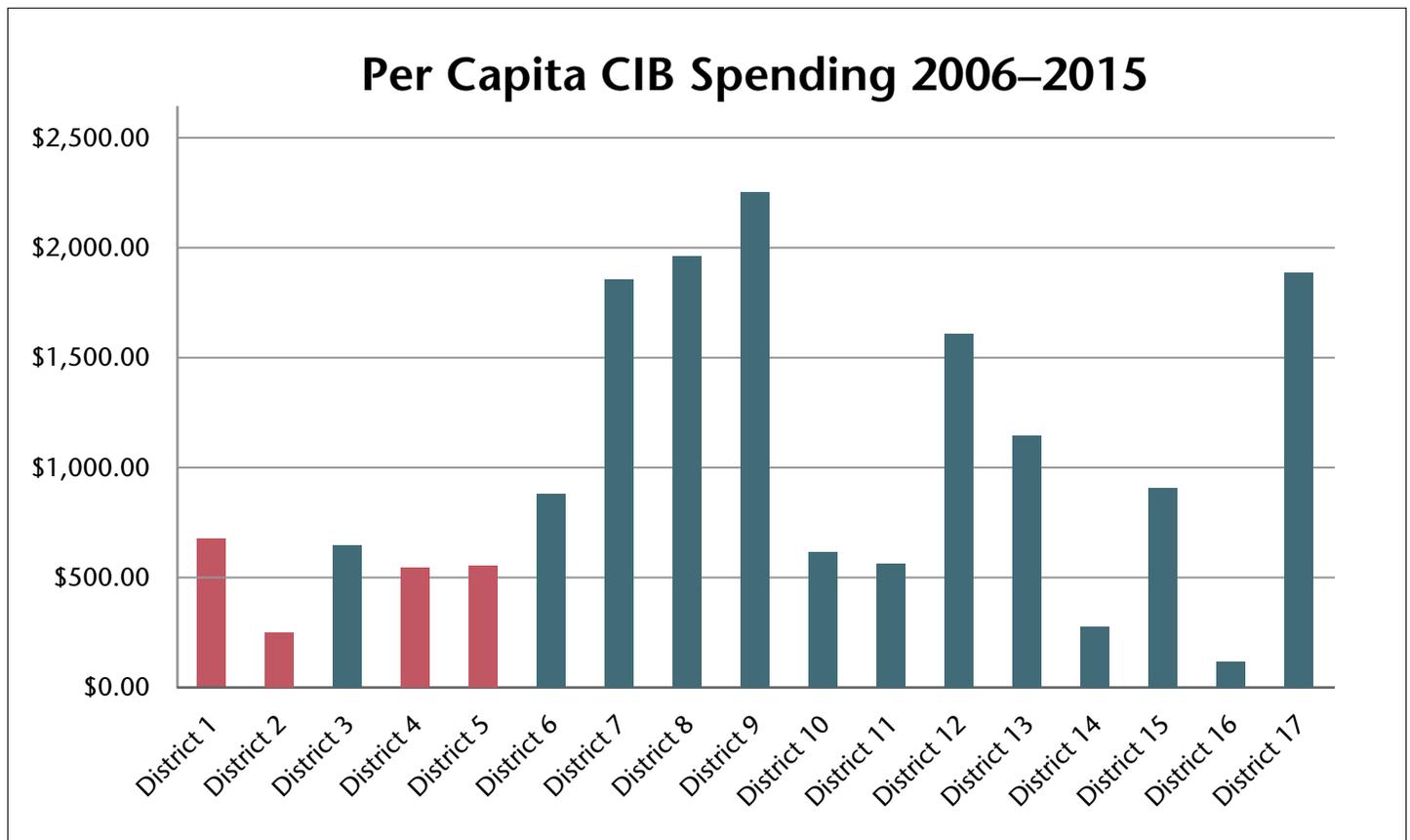
Matson and his team spent around 200 hours combing through the last 10 years of those published CIB budget files (from 2006 to 2015), entering the data and finally analyzing it by district. In the end, the backbone of the report emerged: a graph showing the last

10 years of per capita CIB spending across St. Paul’s 17 planning districts. These results showed the four planning districts that make up the east side of the city as receiving some of the lowest amounts of CIB spending.

With these surprising numbers on hand, CURA and ESNDNC talked with each other about how to best go forward with creating a report. There were still outstanding questions to be answered. Simple questions, like, “Can there be another explanation for these surprising discrepancies?” And more complex questions, like, “What does an equitable CIB process look like?”

To answer some of these questions, the study was expanded. The expanded portion of the study was a qualitative analysis of the CIB process and the initial findings from the data analysis. Two student researchers worked under the direction of Ryan Allen, an Urban and Regional Planning professor at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, to conduct semi-structured interviews with a variety of CIB stakeholders. The interviews were voluntary and all names were withheld. Interviewees included CIB committee members, city officials, city staff, and elected officials. The interviews

Figure 1: Per Capita CIB Spending by District\*



\*East side districts are in red

had two major purposes: to better understand the CIB process, and to receive feedback from CIB experts on the initial data analysis findings. For this portion of the project, institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained, which meant that all interview recordings and notes were withheld from ESND and any other entities.

Finally, a report was developed. The report provides an overview of the CIB process, summarizes the findings of the data analysis, and synthesizes the interview responses from the interview subjects. From this analysis it derives recommendations for potential alterations that could be made to the CIB program in order to make it more equitable.

Soon after the final report was published, local papers picked up on the story, thanks in large part to the advocacy of Vaughn and his

community-based colleagues. The Star Tribune, Pioneer Press, and KSTP Channel 5 news ran stories on the surprising per-capita disparities outlined in the report. This prompted the City of St. Paul to issue rebuttal statements calling the report “misleading and incomplete,” and referring reporters to an analysis of its own. CURA explained its methodology (as it is explained in the report), and was not shown by either the Mayor’s office or the Office of Financial Services to have done anything incorrectly. A comparison of the City and CURA analyses can be found online at [z.umn.edu/1d2i](http://z.umn.edu/1d2i).

“If you look back,” Vaughn notes, “it is amazing how much great community and economic development work in Minneapolis and St. Paul was built on a CURA study.”

All this discussion about the fairness of CIB, considerations of equity, and the

per-capita spending discrepancies across districts found in the CURA analysis, led the St. Paul City Council to pass a resolution to streamline the CIB process for 2018–19, gather community input, and ensure that future funding decisions would be in part dependent on geography, equity, and inclusion.

In the end, this report shows how the CURA Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program can work with local community nonprofit partners to develop research project that lead to meaningful policy change in their communities.

**Jono Cowgill is a writer and urban planner currently working for Community Design Group. His work focuses on equity, civic open spaces, and progressive comprehensive city planning.**

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## Program Assistance

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The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs supports research and technical assistance through a number of individual programs, each with their own deadlines and application procedures.

■ **The Community Assistantship Program (CAP)** matches community-based nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, and government agencies in Greater Minnesota with students who can provide research assistance. Eligible organizations define a research project, submit an application, and, if accepted, are matched with a qualified student to carry out the research. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with applications, contact community programs director Andrew Tran at 612-625-0744 or [tranx764@umn.edu](mailto:tranx764@umn.edu), or visit [www.cura.umn.edu/cap](http://www.cura.umn.edu/cap).

■ **The Community Geographic Information Systems (CGIS)** program provides technical assistance in mapping, data analysis, and GIS to community-based organizations and nonprofits in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Staff at the CGIS program

specialize in parcel-level mapping, demographic analysis, and Internet-based GIS technologies. The CGIS program has no formal application process or deadline to apply. Project requests can be made by phone, e-mail, or online at [z.umn.edu/cgishelp](http://z.umn.edu/cgishelp), and generally can be turned around within two weeks. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with data needs, contact CGIS program coordinator Jeff Matson at 612-625-0081 or [jmatson@umn.edu](mailto:jmatson@umn.edu), or visit [www.cura.umn.edu/cgis](http://www.cura.umn.edu/cgis).

■ **The Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program** (the Nelson Program) provides student research assistance to community and neighborhood-based organizations and suburban government agencies in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area. Priority is given to groups serving diverse communities. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood’s or community’s needs and interests. For more information, contact CURA community programs director Andrew Tran at 612-625-0744 or [tranx764@umn.edu](mailto:tranx764@umn.edu), or visit [www.cura.umn.edu/nelson-program](http://www.cura.umn.edu/nelson-program).

■ **The Neighborhood Leadership and Organizing (NLO) program** supports place-based organizations to successfully take on local issues by developing the skills of community organizers and leaders through organizing training and strategic partnerships to build vital communities that value full participation and embody racial equity and economic justice. For more information about NLO and the training opportunities available, contact Ned Moore at 612-625-5805 or [nedmoore@umn.edu](mailto:nedmoore@umn.edu), or visit [www.cura.umn.edu/nlo](http://www.cura.umn.edu/nlo).

■ **Community Visualization** offers design and visualization assistance to community partners, with the goal of democratizing complex information (such as data, policies and other processes). We typically partner with community-based organizations, community organizers, and other leaders who are working with people on the margins of policy development, including communities of color and low-income communities. For more information, contact Kristen Murray at 612-625-7560 or [kmurray@umn.edu](mailto:kmurray@umn.edu), or visit [www.cura.umn.edu/communityviz](http://www.cura.umn.edu/communityviz).

# CURA:Tech, One Year Later

By Kristen Murray and Kaela Dickens



Photo by Andrew Tran

CURA:Tech included an in-depth workshop on human-centered design techniques, to help teams develop and prototype civic tech tools. Over the course of the two-day workshop, participants practiced a way of identifying issues and solving problems by asking questions, listening and observing, making low-tech prototypes, and trying them out with real people.

In 2014–2015, CURA hosted a civic technology incubator, CURA:Tech. The one-year project supported teams to identify issues in their community that could be addressed with an information-based civic technology, and create a prototype of the tool. In 2016, we checked in with award winners and other participants to see how their work was going.

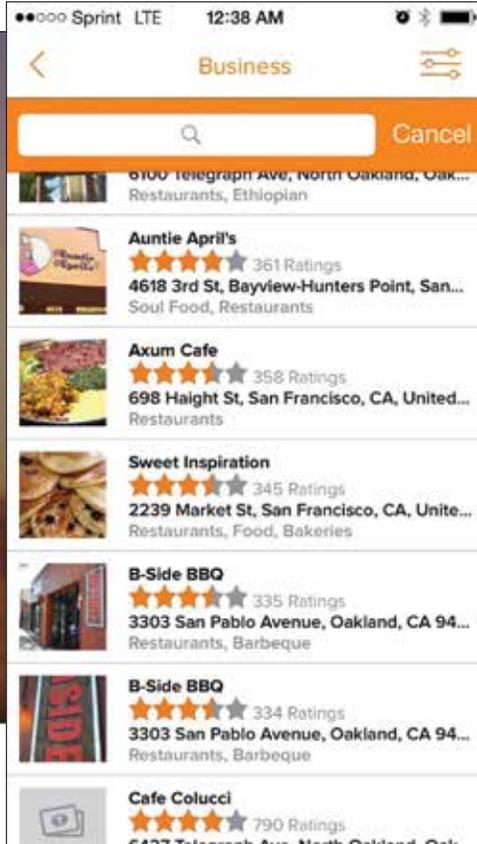
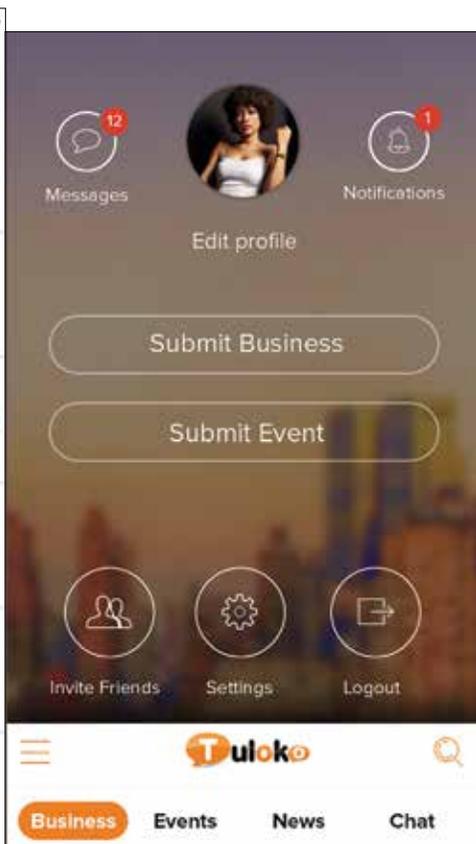
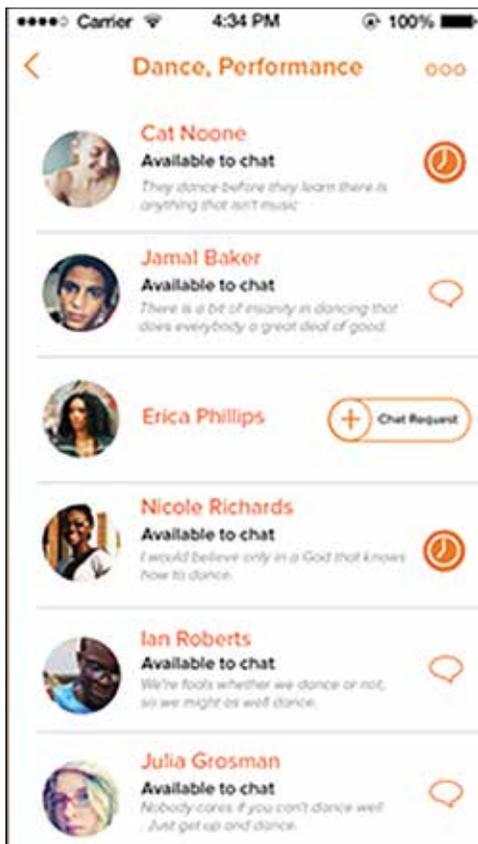
## Tuloko

Tuloko, an Internet-based social enterprise that provides products and services focused on the development, growth,

and employment of small, women-, and minority-owned businesses, did a soft launch of its mobile app. In its first 90 days, it had more than 10,000 downloads between iPhone and Android users. The National Newspaper Publishers Association has expressed an interest in partnering with Tuloko to digitally publish news content on the Tuloko app from newspapers across the country.

## Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy (CEED)

CEED proposed to create an “Activist Dashboard” where individuals can track a given issue and find useful resources such as public hearings, timelines for citizen input, government officials, and relevant public agencies related to that issue. CEED is currently working on their prototype of the Activist Dashboard, and has narrowed the focus of the tool to energy issues. They hope to launch the tool during spring of 2017.



**Tuloko, a CURA:Tech award recipient that focuses on the development of small, women-, and minority-owned businesses, had more than 10,000 downloads within the first 90 days of its app launch.**

**Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center (KAYSC)**

Teen Tech Crew (TTC), a group of teens employed in the Science Museum of Minnesota’s Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center, received an award to create What’sWerk: a web series designed and produced by and for young people to teach important information about getting a job. In the winter of 2016, TTC created their first series about how to get an interview, and screened the episodes at Right Track’s job fair for St. Paul teens last spring. TTC is currently making a second series of five episodes, focused on what to do during an interview, which will be screened at teen job fairs this spring. The videos are available from Teen Tech Crew’s YouTube channel.

KAYSC youth also recently released a mobile app about healthy eating in the Frogtown neighborhood, in partnership with Frogtown Farm. It is available for Android phones through Google Play.

**The Bridge for Youth**

The Bridge for Youth launched their text-based crisis line, 24/7 Txt4Help, in the fall of 2015. Now, in addition

to calling the Bridge’s phone hotline, youth can send a text to 612-400-SAFE to communicate with trained volunteers and staff at the Bridge about a range of sensitive topics, including homelessness, bullying, family conflict, sexual exploitation, depression, and other issues. The textline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



CURA:Tech also included an in-depth workshop on human-centered design techniques, to help teams develop and prototype civic tech tools. This intensive experience, hosted by CURA and led by design firm Azul Seven, brought together people diverse in expertise, skills, background, and lived experience. Over the course of the two-day workshop, participants practiced a way of identifying issues and solving problems by asking questions, listening and observing, making low-tech prototypes, and trying them out with real people. We heard from some participants that learning this process benefited their work in a variety of ways. We reconnected with a few CURA:Tech participants to hear what they are up to now.

**Dr. Lanise Block**

Dr. Lanise Block is the Strategic Projects Administrator at Minneapolis Public Schools and founder and Executive Director of the Digital Empowerment Academy, which offers workshops in social activism via digital creation and youth-focused programs ([www.digitalempowermentacademy.org](http://www.digitalempowermentacademy.org)). Block had incorporated some aspects of human-centered design into her work before CURA:Tech, but she felt the experience gave her a firmer foundation and justification for its practices. “It took small elements that were natural to me and gave me a language and framework for them.”

Block’s favorite aspect of design thinking is the empathy building that requires creators to put themselves in the shoes of the users. She had done empathy work with participants before, but this was the first time she put vocabulary to that concept. Block also said that the prototyping stage of the human-centered design process has made her more action-oriented. “People tend to talk about ideas ad nauseam; [it is much more effective to] make something, see if it works, and change it if it doesn’t.”

Block now uses design thinking in every aspect of her work, from program design to teaching students to utilizing technology. "Leadership looks different for me now. It's more constructivist. For youth, I just frame the idea and then say, 'Alright, you all can do the rest.' That process allows them to grow in leadership....It's not about me, it's not about the agenda. It's about what's coming from them."

### David Kang

David Kang, an independent producer and director from the Twin Cities, had been using elements of human-centered design for years in his career in film and digital media, but the CURA:Tech experience gave him new tools to augment his practices.

One of his first implementations of design thinking following the CURA:Tech experience focused on increasing Hepatitis B education for older Hmong males, who experience higher rates of the infection than other groups in the Twin Cities. Previous efforts to educate them using fliers and written communication were proving ineffective, so Kang and a group of local Hmong artists partnered with Hennepin County to consult on the project. They grounded the work in the practice of oral communication and cultural values of strength and stoicism. Together, they developed a public service announcement for a Hmong radio station that serves as a main information point for many Hmong adults. "By focusing on their needs and communication patterns, we were able to innovate and design a solution that reached people in a way that worked for them."

Kang is continuing the work he started in CURA:Tech through his company The DIAL ([www.thedialgroup.org](http://www.thedialgroup.org)), which builds partnerships between the creative community and public institutions and initiatives to create culturally relevant tools and approaches to engagement. According to Kang, "Too many approaches are created in a top-down way, without thinking about what the community values and will respond to. ... [It is critical] to be very intentional to always keep the community member at the center of the design and approach."

### Sandy Wolfe Wood

Sandy Wolfe Wood is an independent designer with roots in graphic design. She ran Design for Good, a program of the American Institute of Graphic Artists Minnesota, following years of work for design firms and other large organizations. After participating in CURA:Tech, Wood took the step to launch her own venture, Designing Change ([www.designing-change.com](http://www.designing-change.com)), a firm that uses the principles of design to address social problems. She uses an iterative process of listening and observing, defining the problem, generating ideas to address the problem, prototyping solutions, and testing and refining them.

Wood says that it can be hard to start with a question and move towards a solution that may be different from one that's already in your mind: "[The design process is] iterative. ... It's important, though sometimes hard, to keep that in mind when designing."

Wood also highlighted the importance of "jettisoning your assumptions" and listening to and observing the

potential users of the tool or approach you are designing. Building relationships and trust can be critical to getting to a place where you can both have honest conversations about the issues and try out possible solutions to find the ones that will work best.

**Kristen Murray is a Program Developer at CURA. She ran CURA:Tech, and currently manages CURA's Community Visualization program, which offers design and visualization assistance to community partners, with the goal of democratizing complex information about the Twin Cities, such as data, policies, and other processes. She received her master's degree from University of Minnesota in Landscape Architecture, with a graduate minor in Public Policy.**

**Kaela Dickens was a graduate assistant working on community visualization and communications for CURA. She received her master's degree in Public Policy, with a concentration in Administration and Leadership.**

Open Twin Cities, a partner on CURA:Tech, continues to host monthly civic technology meetups and other civic tech events for the Twin Cities region. Get more info at [www.opentwincities.org](http://www.opentwincities.org).

If you participated in CURA:Tech and want to share an update, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Kristen Murray at [kmurray@umn.edu](mailto:kmurray@umn.edu).

# Program and Staff Updates

In October 2016, CURA Community-Based Programs welcomed **Andrew Tran** as the new Program Director of Community-Based Research. Tran has a strong background in community-based research, having worked as a graduate researcher at CURA with community organizations throughout the Twin Cities. Before coming to CURA as Program Director, he worked as an urban planner and designer for

Community Design Group and Program Coordinator for CURA's Neighborhood Leadership and Organizing Program. Tran has a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, with a self-designed specialization on the intersection of design, racial equity, and planning and place-making in immigrant communities.



Jonathan Miller

**Andrew Tran is CURA's new Program Director of Community-Based Research**

**Jeff Matson** and Community GIS have partnered with national and Twin Cities LISC to develop a fully interactive disparity calculator that organizations in LISC cities can use to measure racial disparities among a host of indicators at pre-defined or custom geographies. This Leaflet-based web mapping application uses the Census API and data from the LISC Building Sustainable Communities

initiative to give users an in-depth look at the gaps in home ownership, unemployment, educational attainment, poverty, and more. The primary purpose of this tool is to put actual numbers behind the statistics we hear repeatedly about income and opportunity differences among various racial/ethnic groups. Visit the online disparity calculator at <http://z.umn.edu/1d5e>.

**The Hennepin University Project (HUP)** Management Team, composed of leaders from both Hennepin County and the University, took action to support an ongoing program of **Mixers/Grant Rounds** to catalyze connections between Hennepin County and University of Minnesota staff and faculty. Mixers will be held each spring and fall, with grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 being awarded to the highest rated ideas for collaborations. The first Mixer/Grant Round under this new program was held in September 2016 and hosted by the County's Facility Services Department under the direction of Mike Sable. More than 40 Hennepin County and University staff participated in the Mixer, and as a result of connections made there, more than 10 ideas for collaborative projects were generated, and the County subsequently funded two studies:

- ▶ Use of Building Automation Systems (BAS) to Identify Inefficient Operation (College of Design)
- ▶ Supported Housing Preferences for Transitioning Youth with



Photo by Maria Baca

**The Hennepin-University Partnership (HUP) worked with the Hennepin County Elections Division to design a process for recruiting student volunteers to help the County react to anticipated record-setting number of absentee ballots. More than 300 students volunteered for one or more 4-hour shifts during the week prior to the election (absentee ballots cannot be opened earlier than one week before the actual election day). County staff reported that students did a great job, and were especially good at adapting to frequent changes in the process as the County worked out how best to process the flood of absentee ballots.**

Neuro-diverse Disorders (Center for Sustainable Building Research)

The University's **Community of Scholars Program (COSP)** supports the academic and professional success of graduate and PhD students from diverse backgrounds. In 2016, COSP established a summer internship program with the **Hennepin**

**County Human Resource Department.** This collaboration evolved from connections made at a fall 2015 HUP Mixer. In the summer of 2016, COSP students were hired to contribute to important County projects:

- ▶ Analysis and development of recommendations to simplify applications

to the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP).

- ▶ Analysis of demographic trends to support development of the County's 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- ▶ Work with the County Transportation Department to evaluate the effectiveness of flashing yellow lights at traffic stops.

The **Minnesota Prison Doula Project (MNPDP)** has been awarded funding from the Medica Foundation of Minnesota and the Otto Bremer Trust to expand supportive programming for pregnant and parenting jailed women in outstate Minnesota. Implementation will begin at the St. Louis County Jail in Duluth and the Beltrami County Jail in Bemidji. In 2017, the project aims to work with 250 jailed mothers at these two sites.

MNPDP is also working with the **Ramsey County Correctional Facility (RCCF)** to develop and implement a program of supported visitation for jailed mothers. In the majority of Minnesota counties, jail visitation is done via video conferencing. This can be very challenging and confusing for children, who often come to visiting expecting to see and touch their parents. This may be particularly challenging for very young children who become confused and frustrated with the video screen. As a result, mothers frequently have chosen to not have visits with their children during their incarceration.

With the support and encouragement of the RCCF's Women's Unit Manager, Elizabeth Reetz, we have collaboratively developed opportunities for mothers to have supported contact visits with their children at that location. Each week two families participate and up to three children are allowed to spend one hour with their mother in a newly developed family visiting room. The room was created through donations from MNPDP staff and financial support from Ramsey County. Our shared goal for 2017 is to support 100 contact family visits at this location.

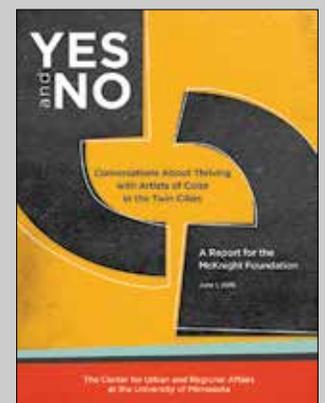


Courtesy of the MNPDP

**Minnesota Prison Doula Project (MNPDP) program staff and participants speak during Reproductive Justice Week 2016 about the experiences of incarcerated pregnant women at Macalester College.**

## Yes and No: Conversations About Thriving with Artists of Color in the Twin Cities

In 2015, the McKnight Arts program commissioned the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to conduct a series of conversations with 25 artists of color in the Twin Cities. The report, entitled *Yes and No: Conversations About Thriving with Artists of Color in the Twin Cities*, documents the learnings and recommendations from these talks. These conversations made clear that the work of many of these artists flowed from their lived experiences and that their artistic practices are often pursued as acts of agency and praxes of liberation intended to catalyze an elevation in social consciousness and the regeneration of community. To read the full report, visit <http://z.umn.edu/1d5d>. – *Arleta Little, McKnight Foundation Program Officer and Director of Artist Fellowships*





**Participants in the fall 2016 *Neighborhoods Now! Issues Organizing & Systems Change* at the graduation celebration in December 2016. Participants learned how to build more powerful communities by organizing to win changes leading to racial and economic justice.**

An **Resilient Communities Project**-sponsored capstone project by students at the University of Minnesota's **Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs** received the Outstanding Student Project Award from the Minnesota Chapter of the **American Planning Association**. For

their Participating in Policy and Planning Capstone, graduate students Chuck Demler, Kaela Dickens, Joseph Hartmann, Laurel Nightingale, and Kalli Perano collaborated with project lead and Carver County Parks and Trails supervisor Sam Pertz and UMN faculty advisor Kathy Quick on a project titled

"Increasing Engagement with Communities of Color: A Toolkit for Carver County Parks and Recreation." Read the project online at <http://z.umn.edu/1djj>. The award was presented at the 2016 Upper Midwest Regional/APA Minnesota State Conference in St. Cloud, MN, September 28–30, 2016.

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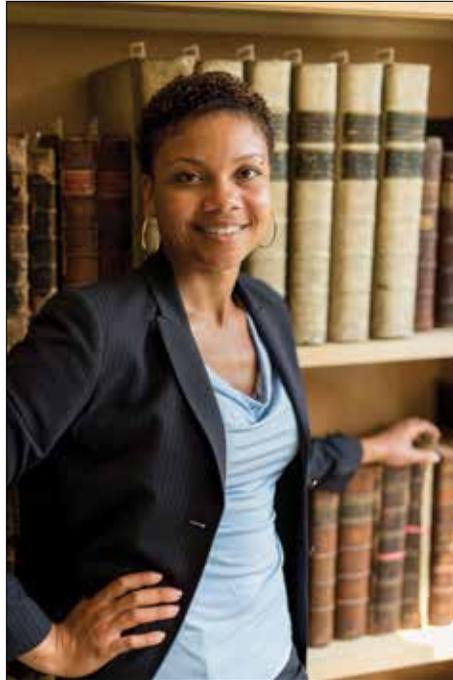
# Questions and Answers with Brittany Lewis, CURA's New Research Associate

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**D**r. Brittany Lewis is CURA's Research Associate with an expertise in community-engaged research, urban housing, community economic development, and critical race and gender studies. A 2015–2016 Postdoctoral Fellow at Bowdoin College and 2014–2015 University of Minnesota Doctoral Dissertation Fellow, Dr. Lewis has established herself as a scholar committed to investigating the ways that local urban communities resist the racialized gendered legacies of housing segregation, redlining, and concentrated poverty. Below is a brief Q&A session with Dr. Lewis.

**When we chatted several months ago, you mentioned that your path as a PhD has been a winding one. Tell us a little bit about your path to CURA.**

I received my doctorate from the University of Minnesota in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies with specialties in urban inequality, critical race and gender studies, affordable housing, and community economic development. Methodologically, I am an engaged urban ethnographer with extensive skills in qualitative methodologies. As an activist scholar who utilizes a community-engaged research approach to do critical race and gender studies work with a focus on urban America, I developed my critical analytic and applied research skills to become a scholar intelligible to both academics and the broader urban community. This provided me opportunities to produce a highly theoretical women of color feminist scholarship as well as tangible products for local nonprofits and their partners seeking to affect community change. I was a University of Minnesota



**Dr. Brittany Lewis is CURA's new Research Associate.**

Doctoral Dissertation Fellow, a Postdoctoral Fellow at Bowdoin College, and produced the first report on the State of Black Women's Economics in Minnesota for the Black Women's Wealth Alliance.

**You mentioned that you have recently published several articles and have others that are forthcoming. Can you tell us a little bit about those?**

I received the Mae C. King Distinguished Paper award on race, gender, and black politics (2012), and later published in *Race and Hegemonic Struggle in the United States* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2014). Additionally, I have recently completed an invited submission to the *National Political Science Review* (in

Courtesy of Dr. Lewis  
press, 2016) on engaged black feminist ethnography, and currently published an article entitled "The Black Shadow of White Sympathy" in *Dangerous Discourses: Gender, Women, and Guns* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2016).

My most recent publication "The Black Shadow of White Sympathy" extended my research agenda by comparing and analyzing the public's reactions to the death of black girls both in real life and in popular media representations. By tracing innocence as a U.S. racial formation, I argued that in death black girls are denied the public sympathy and remorse that markers of innocence grant their white counterparts.

**What projects are you working on in your first several months at CURA? Tell us about your role in the CURA gentrification study.**

I was brought on to develop and implement the qualitative work on CURA's gentrification project as well as lead CURA's efforts in the area of policing. To this end, my work on the gentrification project aims to use residential interviews to assess whether or not our quantitative indexes of gentrification match resident perception. In addition, my work in the area of policing will be investigating the issues of bail reform, police education standards, and the disproportionate impact of low-level fines and fees on people of color.

**Are there any articles or books that you have read recently that you would recommend?**

I would recommend Matthew Desmond's *Evicted*.

# A Profile of Lawrence Karongo, a Graduate Student Doing Community-Based Research

By Kaela Dickens

From big banks to big business, capitalism to socialism, supply and demand, economics can seem big and impersonal. Lawrence Karongo, a master of public policy student at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, has dedicated his studies to how large-scale economic policies and trends play out in local communities and individuals' lives. In 2015 he got the opportunity to work on two community-based research projects through CURA that let him utilize his knowledge to explore new ideas and gain new insights on communities in North Minneapolis.

His first project began even before he started at the Humphrey School. The Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) asked him to study local incubators and co-working spaces, which have exploded in popularity all over the country. NEON, a nonprofit aimed at addressing imbalances in racial and economic equity, was interested in developing a space for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses in North Minneapolis. Karongo's job was to take best practices from around the country, desires and needs from the business community in North Minneapolis, and fuse them together to make recommendations for a model NEON could make into an incubator and co-working space.

For any other 22-year-old fresh out of undergrad, this may have been a challenge. But Karongo dove into the research analyzing economic trends, gathering information from local business registries, visiting local storefronts, and even walking up to hard-working strangers at coffee shops. He wanted to find out people's needs, and what would cause them to be interested in an incubator or co-working space.

Initially, he encountered some apprehension. Many small business owners in North Minneapolis had been told by well-meaning business-centered nonprofits from outside the community to change their way of doing business and were therefore apprehensive about more advice from outsiders. Karongo knew his intentions were different: "I



Photo courtesy of Lawrence Karongo

**Lawrence Karongo has worked on Kris Nelson Community-Based Research projects for the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) and the Minneapolis Urban League (MUL).**

was more there to listen and to hear them. So I told them, 'Talk about whatever *you* want to talk about.'" Through that humble approach he gained priceless, honest insight from the local business owners and entrepreneurs, compared them to best local and national practices, and made actionable recommendations for NEON.

In January 2016 NEON opened its doors to its very own Business Incubator, where entrepreneurs can use incubator services and a variety of co-working space membership options. Marcus Owens, the director of NEON, expressed his gratitude for Karongo's

impact on the product. "Lawrence was a fantastic partner in the development of our strategic plan for the NEON Business Incubator. His ability to connect authentically with our community and conduct valid and insightful research aided in our ability to create and execute our plan." Karongo's hard work will now live on in the businesses NEON supports in North Minneapolis, and you can read his report "West Broadway Business Incubator & Co-working Space Project" at the CURA website (<http://z.umn.edu/1d4z>).

Karongo's second project broke new ground in research on wealth disparities

in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Urban League (MUL) asked him to help investigate causes of race-based, wealth disparities in the metro and give recommendations on how to counteract them.

Karongo discovered early on that wealth is complex, widely misunderstood, and under-addressed in policy. Income, by contrast, is a much simpler concept that is often included in public policy. The MUL believes that the long-term, intergenerational impacts of wealth accumulation beg much more investigation and attention than short-term indicators like income. But much of the information they needed didn't exist yet.

Karongo began by leveraging the expertise of the Urban League's Nick Jaeger and University of Minnesota Professor Dr. Samuel Myers. They teased out the complexities of the concept to make it understandable to the general public: What is wealth, exactly? How is it created? How is it preserved or lost? Using the answers to those questions as a foundation, Karongo created a plan to gather information about people of color's experiences with wealth.

If you're not familiar with racially based wealth disparities, here are a few quick facts about the national disparities from a 2012 study by William Darity, Jr.

and Darrick Hamilton, "Bold policies for economic justice."

- ▶ In 2011, the national median net worth of a white household was \$111,740. The median net worth of an African American household was \$7,113.
- ▶ Liquid asset poverty is high across the board. According to one study, whites have a median liquid asset value of \$23,000, compared to African Americans who have \$200.
- ▶ Education is important to build wealth, but it is not a factor in closing the wealth disparity. Whites who have a college degree have roughly \$180,000 in wealth, compared to African Americans at just \$23,400.

Karongo's 2015 survey found that 63% of African Americans who have lived in Minneapolis for more than 20 years have a bachelor's degree or higher. But only 26% of those who have been in the city for less than 20 years have a bachelor's degree or higher, making it harder for them to accumulate wealth and thereby increasing the wealth disparity.

Over the course of a few months, Karongo orally surveyed nearly 100 people about their experiences with wealth. He combined the survey results

with economic analyses and presented that report to MUL in May 2016. His report "Defining Personal Financial Assets in the African American Community" was recently published and can be viewed on the CURA website (<http://z.umn.edu/1d50>). As the first research of its kind in the Twin Cities, MUL will be working to leverage it to inspire powerful players to demand policy changes and address the stunning wealth inequalities in the state.

Karongo's experience with both projects gave him the foundation to confidently pursue his public policy degree. He gained knowledge and direction, but also trusting and honest relationships with community members and two impactful organizations. "Both projects confirmed what I want to do and what I want from my work...[I want to learn] how policies affect people, for better or for worse. And if it's for worse, I want to learn what changes we can make to turn it into a positive effect."

**Kaela Dickens** was a graduate assistant working on community visualization and communications for CURA. She received her master's degree in Public Policy, with a concentration in Administration and Leadership.

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## 2017 Spring Community-Based Research Summaries

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### Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

#### *East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC)*

#### **Access to and Affordability of St. Paul Rec Centers for Low-income Families** **Alyssa Schmeling, Master of Urban and Regional Planning**

ESNDC's mission is to foster a safe, diverse, and thriving neighborhood by engaging the community to create healthy, affordable housing and commercial development. They are interested in understanding the barriers for families in low-income neighborhoods accessing recreational facilities, their amenities, and activities. This research project will be used to support ESNDC's organizing activities on the accessibility of recreation centers in St. Paul. Specifically, the research will identify the amenities and activities of recreational facilities as it relates to socioeconomic characteristics of five low-income neighborhoods in St. Paul.

#### *SEWA-Asian Indian Family Wellness (AIFW)*

#### **Exploring Domestic Violence and Service Needs Among South-Asian Victims and Survivors** **Meghana Bhimmarao, Master of Science in Biostatistics**

The mission of SEWA-AIFW is to provide total family wellness for underserved and vulnerable populations of South Asians. SEWA-AIFW also trains a corps of volunteer advocates and builds resources to connect to the mainstream in a culturally specific way. This project examines the social service needs, issues, and barriers faced by South Asian women who are survivors of domestic violence. The project also provides an understanding of the extent of service needs so that partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental agencies can be established.

#### *Hmong American Partnership (HAP) Integrating Cultural Competency into the New Little Mekong Community Health Center*

**Joo Kim, Master of Social Work**  
HAP's mission is to empower the community to embrace the strengths of their cultures while achieving their potential. HAP achieves this mission by: improving the lives of individuals and families in their diverse communities through culturally sensitive social services; strengthening neighborhoods through housing, community, and economic development opportunities; and promoting the rich heritage of their ethnic communities. The purpose of this project is to develop a plan to fully integrate cultural competency into all aspects of patient care in a new community health center that will serve Southeast Asians and new immigrants in St. Paul. The research will be used to guide



**A community engagement meeting from the Gary Pines Master Plan CAP project from the fall of 2016. Visit <http://z.umn.edu/1djh> for the full details of this project.**

the planning committee in decision making, planning, and implementing a cultural competency plan for the new clinic. This project will also assist community partners who are involved with the planning or will refer services because they will know that patients are receiving good care.

#### *NeighborWorks Home Partners (NWHP)*

#### **Alternative Building Materials and Strategies for Vacant Lots in St. Paul** **Aaron Hanson, Master of Science in Science, Technology & Environmental Policy**

The mission of NWHP is to revitalize neighborhoods by creating and supporting successful home-ownership. NWHP helps prepare potential home-buyers through financial capabilities education, one-on-one pre-purchase mortgage counseling, and home-buyer education workshops. NWHP also offers down payment assistance to assist low- and moderate-income households in purchasing a home. The goal of this project is to create more affordable housing in neighborhoods with available vacant lots in older and more diverse St. Paul neighborhoods by understanding alternative building options and possibilities for vacant lots.

#### *Nexus Community Partners*

#### **Community Wealth Building** **Samantha Hodges, Master of Public Policy**

Nexus Community Partners is a community-building intermediary whose mission is to “build more engaged and powerful communities

of color by supporting community-building initiatives and foster social and human capital.” Nexus believes that the key to building more engaged and powerful communities lies in the interconnectedness between authorship, leadership, and ownership. The goal of this project is to support the work in building more engaged and powerful communities of color through research of best practices in community wealth-building efforts within communities of color and cultural communities across the region and country. The research will also provide recommendations for developing a formal training curriculum for Technical Assistance Providers of Color.

#### *Artspace Projects, Inc.*

#### **Identifying Best Practices for Inclusive, Equitable Artist Housing in the Twin Cities and across America**

**Hattie Hiler, Master of Public Policy**  
Artspace’s mission is to create, foster, and preserve affordable space for artists and arts organizations. Artspace was founded in 1979 to address a deceptively simple question: how could Minneapolis responsibly relocate artists who were being displaced by the gentrification of its warehouse district? Working at the intersection of the arts, urban planning, and real estate, Artspace pioneered a new approach to an age-old problem. Rather than seeing these artists as barriers to economic growth, they recognized them as unique partners in building better communities: individuals who may be low in income but are rich in creativity, entrepreneurialism, and resilience. Today, Artspace

owns and operates 41 art spaces in cities from coast-to-coast, representing a total investment of nearly \$600 million, and they work with scores of communities on sustainable, place-based strategies to foster their creative sectors. As artist housing becomes an increasingly common tool of community development, this project will help inform a complex field bridging for-profit and nonprofit developers and community development agencies about best practices that help ensure low-income artist housing is inclusive and equitable.

#### *Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH)*

#### **Who Benefits from Housing Advocacy: An Analysis of Legislative Outcomes**

#### **Michelle SanCartier, Master of Public Health & Social Work**

The mission of the MCH is to generate policies, community support, and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. The MCH has helped secure an additional \$193 million in state funding for housing and homeless services in the state budget. The CURA project uses publicly available information to analyze who benefits from this advocacy.

#### *Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP)*

#### **Identifying Housing Issues for People of Color and Immigrant Groups**

**Serena Xiong, PhD Epidemiology**  
MHP convenes, guides, and supports diverse partners working to improve conditions of home and community. Building on decades of experience, they

strengthen development capacity and promote policies that expand opportunity, especially for people at the lowest income levels. Researchers, advocates, and policy makers have long defined the

### Community Assistantship Program

#### *Angechu*

#### **Angechu “Working Together”**

#### **Community Empowerment**

The mission of Angechu is to assist Micronesian people in the Milan, Minnesota area who want to become homeowners and study ways in which they can become professional construction tradespeople. Many rural western Minnesota, communities have lost the value of their housing stock and are looking for ways to rebuild their tax base. Milan is a unique community because it has a very fast growing population. Many of the Micronesian people would like to own their own homes, but the housing stock in Milan will not meet housing standards for SBA or USDA, which are the preferred mortgage companies. Angechu and the City of Milan are interested in identifying the most expedient process to help communities like Milan to provide needed housing for this growing population.

#### *Cass County Farm Bureau*

#### **Community Market Study for Ranch-raised, Locally Processed Beef**

#### **Graham Ambrose, Master of Science in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy**

There is increasing research that sustainable agricultural practices can reverse soil degradation and restore impacted landscapes. Through the use of intensive rotational grazing, crop diversity, minimized tillage, and cover crops, farmers and ranchers can build soil

health, and increase soil carbon, water holding capacity, and productivity. The long-term goal of this program, led by the Cass County Farm Bureau, is to leverage the rejuvenated farmland and watershed health that these production practices foster in the marketing of locally raised meats. Cass County Farm Bureau is interested in conducting a feasibility study and identifying potential marketing strategies that highlight the shared economic and social benefits of a standard of livestock production that builds soil health, improves farmer income, and protects this region’s precious water resources.

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#### *Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL)*

#### **Community Trust-Owned Solar (Solar Commons) Benefiting Low-income Minnesotans: Becoming a Solar Commons Trustee**

#### **Matthew Grimley, Master of Science in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy**

RREAL is dedicated to making the benefits of solar energy accessible to communities of all income levels, and has been pioneering the use of solar energy to reduce poverty in Minnesota. As part of its goal to make solar energy that benefits low-income residents of Minnesota, RREAL will initiate a feasibility study to understand the legal obligations and to guide its decision-making about becoming a trustee of a Solar Commons, a community-trust

represent these communities in defining pressing housing issues and examines best practices for engaging communities of color/immigrant groups around housing issues.

owned solar photovoltaic array whose income stream from solar service sales would be dedicated to a local homeless shelter. Specifically, RREAL is interested in the benefits, disadvantages, opportunities, obstacles, and process of RREAL’s becoming a trustee of a Solar Commons photovoltaic array in Duluth that benefits a local Native American women’s homeless shelter.

#### *Churches United in Ministry (CHUM)*

#### **Building Economic Stability for Women Living in Long-Term Supportive Housing**

#### **Christine Empanger, Bachelor of Social Work**

CHUM is people of faith working together to provide basic necessities, foster stable lives, and organize for a just and compassionate community. More than 40 faith communities in Duluth are part of CHUM. The core mission of the organization is to provide social safety net programs that include emergency food, shelter, advocacy, and outreach to more than 7,000 hungry, homeless, and low-income people each year. The purpose of this research project is to explore micro-entrepreneurship among formerly homeless women who live in long-term supportive housing at Steve O’Neil Apartments (SONA). SONA is CHUM’s newest project in providing permanent supporting housing to families who have experienced long-term or recurrent homelessness.



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