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My research has focuses on understanding the development of problematic adolescent behaviors, including delinquency, substance use, and risky sex, within environmental and natural development contexts. In particular, I focus on underserved, high-risk youth groups, including gang-involved adolescents and those with histories of childhood trauma and adverse experiences. Within a life-course perspective, and informed by social development, stress-proliferative, and criminological theories, my aim is to advance understanding of the predictors and trajectories of these outcomes for the purpose of targeting prevention approaches and promoting positive youth development for underserved populations.

With this goal in mind, I am constructing my dissertation to identify the utility of an existing prevention system in preventing gang-involvement and its associated outcomes. Prior research has primarily focused on targeted prevention and intervention programs that identify the youth as the locus of change. My dissertation instead examines the effects of environmental change across community, family, school, peer and individual domains, and identifies those changes that are most effective for reducing the prevalence of gang association. Using data from the Community Youth Development Study, a randomized-community study of the effects of the universal prevention system Communities That Care, my dissertation examines preventive intervention effects on gang association and outcomes of gang-associated youth, as well as effects on theorized risk factors for gang association. Using advanced quantitative methods, including latent profile analysis, hierarchical linear growth modeling, multiple imputation, and structural equation modeling, the dissertation uses rigorous methodology to build evidence toward a broader set of tools available for prevention and intervention programming for high-risk youth. This dissertation has been submitted for possible funding by the National Institute of Justice's Graduate Research Fellowship Program for the Social and Behavioral Sciences and is currently under review.

Research Experience

This work is informed by my experience working with incarcerated, gang-involved, and runaway youth, as well as etiological research I conducted during my doctoral studies at the University of Washington, where I have been fortunate to be a part of multiple interdisciplinary teams. In addition to my work with the Community Youth Development Study, I have worked with faculty and research scientists with the Evidence2Success and Seattle Social Development Projects at the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group, one of the primary prevention science research groups in the United States. For my general exam, I worked with sociologists, psychologists, and epidemiologists, to author an upcoming article that used latent profile analysis to identify classes of gang-associated youth and examined their longitudinal outcomes in young adulthood. With the Evidence2Success project and partners at

the Annie E. Casey Foundation, I also authored an upcoming article that examines a broad range of predictors for adolescent delinquency and substance use for their efficacy in also predicting risky sexual behavior.

In addition, I have worked with Dr. Paula Nurius and community partners to develop a research focus on childhood trauma as a catalyst for stress proliferation across the lifecourse leading to adulthood physical and mental health impairment. A paper currently being drafted examines the placement of parental incarceration within the context of childhood adversity and their coordinated impact on an individual's subsequent incarceration, adulthood risk and protection, and mental health.

Future Directions

Upon completion of my doctoral studies, I aim to build on the findings of my dissertation by developing broad, evidence-based preventive interventions for implementation in schools, detention centers, shelters, and other facilities serving high-risk youth. In addition, my work with community partners and researchers at the University of Washington has provided long-term opportunities for further collaboration, particularly in the development and evaluation of community-based prevention methods and trauma-informed etiological research. This work aligns strongly with potential funding opportunities offered by the National Institutes of Drug Abuse and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as well as private foundations such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation. My work experience, passion for assisting the underserved, and commitment to rigorous methodology will continue to support my long-term goal of conducting research to effectively produce positive outcomes among the youth most in need.