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CNCS's Office of Research & Evaluation (ORE) is pleased to announce their second cohort of grants to institutions of higher education for 2017. The awards support dissertators conducting their Ph.D. research or scholars, researchers, and postdoctoral researchers with a proven track record and standing in their respective fields. In 2017 the priority areas included:

- 1) Innovative research studies that explore how civic infrastructure and civic engagement, and related concepts such as social cohesion and social capital, are defined, measured, developed, or hindered at the community and neighborhood level.
- 2) Research exploring change in an individual's civic engagement over the course of a lifetime, particularly motivations for becoming engaged, types of civic engagement (informal, formal, or both), and outcomes of civic engagement over the life course.
- 3) Research studying impacts associated with civic engagement, volunteering, or national service for individuals, families, and communities.

From the 79 eligible applications, ORE awarded 13 grants: four in the dissertation category and nine in the scholar category. The proposed research includes local to national level research and a range of qualitative and quantitative methods, such as community-based participatory research. Topics of study include understanding civic engagement of different types of individuals such as youth, seniors, organizations, and communities.

The 13 grantees, and the executive summaries of their proposed research studies, are listed on the following page.

# 2017 National Service and Civic Engagement Competition Research Grant Executive Summaries

## Group 1: Dissertators

### **Clemson University**

**PI and Doctoral Advisor:** Dr. Martie Thompson

**Co-PI and PhD Student:** Matthew Hudson-Flege

**Title of Study:** Getting Things Done for Life: Long-Term Outcomes of AmeriCorps Service for Diverse Groups of Members

**Summary:** Analyses of the 1999-2007 AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study, which tracked a large group of AmeriCorps members, as well as a comparison group of individuals who expressed an interest in AmeriCorps but did not ultimately serve, have demonstrated lasting, positive outcomes for members in the areas of civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills. AmeriCorps members, however, are diverse in terms of demographics, education, and motivation to serve. In addition, outcomes of AmeriCorps service may differ among members who join the program at varying levels of personal and professional development. Early analysis categorizes members into four distinct groups. This proposed dissertation seeks to address the knowledge gap by answering the following research questions through a secondary analysis of the AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study: Aim 1: Within the treatment group of AmeriCorps members, how do civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills outcomes of AmeriCorps service differ between member profiles? Aim 2: How do civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills outcome trajectories differ within each member profile between members of the treatment group who served in AmeriCorps and members of the comparison group? In order to predict if different member profiles (Aim 1) and participation in AmeriCorps (Aim 2) predict levels of civic engagement, education, life skills, and employment outcomes, a series of repeated measures analyses of variance will be conducted.

**Relevance for the field:** Results will demonstrate how outcome trajectories differed between these groups as they completed their year of service and entered the next phases of their lives over a seven-year follow-up period. Findings have potential implications for more targeted recruitment and retention strategies for AmeriCorps.

### **University of Maine**

**PI and Doctoral Advisor:** Dr. Sandra Butler

**Co-PI and PhD Student:** Jennifer Crittenden

**Title of Study:** Juggling Multiple Roles: An Examination of Role Conflict

**Summary:** As the nature of the "retirement years" continues to change in our society, older adults are increasingly occupying productive roles within their families, workplaces, and communities creating the opportunity for conflict for time and energy resources. The volunteer management sector is now faced with a critical task of engaging older adults who are

increasingly giving of their time and talents to multiple life endeavors (roles). Specifically, the proposed project will utilize a national sample of current RSVP volunteers to examine the extent to which older adult volunteers experience role conflict between their volunteer role and other social roles that they occupy. This exploratory study will examine the following research questions: 1) Does role conflict between work, caregiving, and informal helping roles and volunteer roles predict role satisfaction and intention to leave volunteerism among older adults? and 2) What are the compensatory strategies used by older adults to navigate role conflict and what benefits do older adults accrue in their volunteer roles that could effectively counterbalance role conflict?

Relevance for the field: Using the lens of successful aging theory, which suggests that positive aging is brought about by productive activity, and role theory, which posits that multiple social roles can create the opportunity for conflict and enhancement between roles, this project will examine the practical implications for volunteer recruitment and retention in a time when volunteers are juggling multiple responsibilities.

### **University of Michigan**

**PI and Doctoral Advisor:** Dr. Matthew A. Diemer

**Co-PI and PhD Student:** Aixa Marchand

Title of Study: Parental Critical Consciousness: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Links to Parental School Engagement

Summary: Although there are decades of research noting the positive benefits of parent involvement, Black parents are often viewed as uninvolved in their children's education partly due to societal stereotypes. Using Critical Race Theory to understand how race influences Black parents' participation within the public educational system, this mixed-methods study will explore Black parents' critical consciousness (CC), which can be conceptualized as an extension of civic engagement in that it encompasses the activities performed to benefit the academic success of their children and other children within their community. To explore these open questions, qualitative interviews will be conducted with approximately 20 Black parents in Southeastern Michigan. The main research question motivating this study is: how do Black parents' critical analysis of social and educational inequities influence their motivations to interact with their children's school? These data will be analyzed using inductive and iterative approaches. Themes from the qualitative data will be used to develop an instrument to measure parental CC. The proposed scale will be sent to a separate sample of parent participants to perform exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses.

Relevance for the field: Elucidating the ways that Black parents critically view their position within public schools and how they subsequently engage within them would advance current scholarship, inform educational practice, and provide a better understanding of how to strengthen the relationships between public schools and Black parents. Given the role of CNCS in supporting academic engagement the findings may inform agency program development.

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**PI and Doctoral Advisor:** Dr. Jane L. Collins, Department of Community and Environmental Sociology

**Co-PI and PhD Student:** Laura Schlachter, Department of Community & Environmental Sociology and Department of Sociology

Title of Study: Reevaluating the Workplace-Civic Engagement Relationship

Summary: Our proposed research leverages original survey and interview data to address outstanding questions about the relationship between workplace organization and civic engagement over the life course. Previous theoretical and empirical studies have argued that workplaces are central to the civic infrastructure of democratic societies because workers develop civic skills on the job that spill over into the public sphere. According to this "civic spillover hypothesis," workers in firms organized in more participatory ways exhibit higher levels of civic engagement. We revisit the civic spillover hypothesis in the context of worker cooperatives – extremely participatory firms that are owned and democratically governed by workers – using a mixed-methods research design. Our sample includes 1,147 surveys and fifteen interviews of cooperative workers in the United States we collected in partnership with the nonprofit Democracy at Work Institute and a matched sample from the 2015 Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement. Our analysis will ask if participatory forms of workplace organization can be a strategy to increase civic engagement. We will address the following research questions: 1) How do civic engagement levels of non-cooperative and cooperative workers compare? 2) What firm- and individual-level characteristics are associated with cooperative workers' levels of volunteering and voting outside the workplace? 3) How do cooperative workers' trajectories of employment and civic engagement intersect over the life course?

Relevance for the field: Reporting based on our analysis will be a resource to practitioners and policymakers who are reorganizing work to create economic opportunity in disadvantaged communities. It will also contribute to the broader conversation about redesigning civic infrastructure to reinvigorate American democracy.

## **Group 2: Scholars**

**Arizona State University**

**PI:** Dr. Mark Hager, ASU School of Community Resources & Development

**Co-PI:** Dr. Jeffrey Brudney, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Department of Public and International Affairs

Title of Study: Volunteer Management Capacity II: The State of the Art of Nonprofit Volunteer Administration

Summary: In 2003 and 2004, Mark Hager (then at the Urban Institute) spearheaded a CNCS- and UPS Foundation-funded study titled "Survey on the Capacity of the Volunteer Infrastructure of Local Nonprofit Organizations." Jeff Brudney was a key collaborator on that study; he coined the term "volunteer management capacity," which became the operative concept and enduring name of the study. The research question was simple: do nonprofit organizations have policies and procedures in place to maximize the experience and

contributions of their volunteers? We learned that organizations vary in their capacity to effectively recruit and retain their volunteers. "VMC I" is still the only national (U.S.) study of volunteer administration, and practitioners, teachers, and researchers routinely point to it.

However, the world has changed in key ways over the past 14 years. We still regularly hear stories of executive directors and boards who choose not to invest in their volunteer programs, despite volunteer administrators who point to our 2004 highlight message that volunteer management capacity breeds happy and productive volunteers. Our job is not done. Volunteer Management Capacity II will update the 2003 study. We will return to the original nonprofit sample to see how volunteer management capacity has evolved in these organizations over time. We will supplement that sample with organizations that have been founded in the last 14 years, and weight the pooled samples to gain a current picture of the state of volunteer management capacity in nonprofit organizations across the United States. A web survey will provide the core data.

Relevance for the field: As in the original VMC study, our focus will be on the organizational characteristics and practices associated with effective and productive management. The more we understand the dynamics of volunteer administration, the more we can do to strengthen our civic infrastructure. Findings may inform the agency's VGF investments and activities – as well as those of other CNCS programs.

### **California State University San Marcos**

**PI:** Dr. Marisol Clark-Ibanez

**Co-PI:** Dr. Arcela Nunez-Alvarez

Title: TBA

Summary: This project will be one of the largest mixed-methods studies on volunteering and civic engagement among Latino elders. We will examine impacts derived through participation in a 10-week civic engagement class that was specifically created for low-income, and Spanish-speaking Latino elders. The course is called, Cultivando Sabiduría (Cultivating Wisdom) and is a collaboration between the university, community organizations, and elders. The proposed study addresses Funding Priority 2: How does an individual's civic engagement change over the course of a lifetime, and Funding Priority 3: Understanding the impacts associated with civic engagement, volunteering, and national service. Our goal is to develop methodological and theoretical innovations to help us recognize strengths along with understanding the economic, social and health benefits of volunteering and civic engagement for Latino elders. We will use pre- and post-tests, and other metrics to study 150 Latino participants, ages 55+ years old who are primarily low income and have low (formal) educational levels.

Relevance for the field: Dissemination of study results is important to regional and national stakeholders who are committed to facilitating greater opportunities for lifelong volunteering and civic engagement. Findings have the potential to inform more targeted program development.

**Trustees of Indiana University**

**PI:** Dr. Una Osili, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

**Co-PI:** Dr. Sara Konrath, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

Title of Study: Effects of Volunteering on Economic Outcomes: A Longitudinal Study

Summary: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 4.9 million (or 12 percent) of American youth between the ages of 16 and 24 were disconnected (i.e. neither working nor in school) in 2015 (Measure of America, 2017). The racial and geographic gaps in disconnection rates remain substantially large. Without social networks and support provided at school or work, disconnected youth are more vulnerable to social and economic risks and may face greater challenges accessing opportunities in adulthood. This high rate of youth disconnection also has a profound negative impact on larger economic, social, and political systems. It is thus important to identify effective mechanisms to reconnect disconnected youth to career or educational pathways. We posit that for young Americans, volunteering during adolescence can provide access to job opportunities, expand social networks, and improve health, thus playing a role in reducing economic and social inequality later in life. In this study, we will examine whether volunteerism during adolescence (ages 12-17) is associated with an increased likelihood of productive activity (i.e. being employed in the labor market or enrolled in a college/university) later in life during early adulthood (ages 18-25), especially among socially and/or economically disadvantaged youth. Using data from a nationally representative longitudinal dataset, we will develop advanced empirical models to address this question.

Relevance for the field: The study makes a strong contribution to the scholarly literature by addressing an important research gap and combining two theoretical approaches to identify potential psychological and social mechanisms for the benefits of volunteering. Findings from the study will help facilitate nationwide discussions on this important issue and help practitioners and policymakers build programs and practices on volunteerism to reduce youth disconnection. Findings have the potential to provide the most compelling causal evidence of the role volunteering may play in enhancing economic opportunities.

**Trustees of Indiana University**

**PI:** Dr. Matthew Baggetta

**Co-PI:** Dr. Brad Fulton

Title of Study: What Happens in Civil Society Organizations?: The Effects of Internal Dynamics on Organizational Outcomes

Summary: What goes on inside civil society organizations (CSOs)? Despite the widespread presence and prominent role of CSOs in U.S. communities, little is known about their internal workings, or how these internal dynamics affect organizations' outcomes. Our research seeks to introduce a systematic means of measuring how people interact within CSOs and how these interactions can strengthen civic infrastructure in organizations, promote civic engagement by individuals, and improve the quality of life in communities. This project corresponds to funding priority #1: How are civic infrastructure and civic engagement defined, measured, developed, and hindered? Through a pilot study in Indianapolis, Indiana, we will expand, refine, and test a new tool for observing and analyzing the internal dynamics of CSOs. We examine three types of

CSOs - chambers of commerce, community organizing groups, and neighborhood councils - using a multimethod approach that joins key informant surveys and secondary data with an innovative data collection technique known as systematic social observation (SSO). Trained observers will attend meetings, events, and activities of each organization and use the SSO tool to collect comparable, quantitative data from each gathering, examining four dimensions of organizational dynamics: space, interaction, leadership, and deliberation/decision-making. We will then link this data to organizational outcomes measured through key informant surveys and existing data from the U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and local governments.

Relevance for the field: This new approach to measuring what happens in CSOs will provide a means of obtaining critical insight on how civic organizations can conduct their activities in ways that lead to greater engagement, endurance, and effectiveness. In particular, our findings will help civic organizers strengthen their CSOs as schools of democracy, increase local civic engagement, develop leaders, and encourage greater responsiveness from local governments. Findings may guide more strategic investments in organizations and inform agency strategies for strengthening community-based organizations.

### **University of California, Los-Angeles**

**PI:** Dr. Laura Wray-Lake

**Co-PI:** Dr. Laura Abrams

Title of Study: A Multimethod Examination of Urban Youth Civic Engagement

Summary: Youth in low-income urban neighborhoods face numerous risks, yet some research documents notable community service and activism among urban youth. This two-year study will advance theory and research by generating new understanding of what youth civic engagement looks like in low-income urban contexts and how risks and assets shape urban youth civic engagement. Aim 1 will contextualize urban youth's civic engagement by analyzing qualitative data to describe various ways that urban youth define community and engage in civic life. Aim 2 will use inductive grounded theory techniques to generate a conceptual model illustrating how individual, family, and neighborhood risks and assets may impact urban youth civic engagement. Aim 3 will statistically compare structural equation models, informed by resilience theory and Aim 2 results, to test theory of how multiple risks and assets operate to predict urban youth civic engagement concurrently and over time. We will triangulate data from an existing in-depth mixed-methods study of 90 urban youth and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) Study.

Relevance for the field: This work will advance positive youth development and resilience theories by clarifying processes by which urban youth become civically engaged despite adversity. We will impact direct practice by offering events for practitioners working with urban youth that highlight ways to reduce barriers and build assets to promote youth civic engagement. We will impact public conversation by sharing findings that challenge blanket stereotypes that urban youth are disengaged and shed light on how systemic inequalities hinder urban youth civic engagement. Findings have the potential to inform more targeted program development and complement evaluation findings, strengthening the body of evidence that guides how CNCS serves diverse communities.

**University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work and University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work**

**PI:** Dr. Nicole Nicotera

**Co-PI(s):** Dr. Amanda McBride and Dr. Suzanne Pritzker

Title of Study: Civic engagement through the voices of Latino/a youth: Exploring definitions, supports, and barriers.

Summary: This study uses participatory research methods to obtain Latino/a youth-voice on definitions, barriers, and supports of civic engagement. The study is situated in two major U.S. cities: Houston and Denver. Partnerships with 3 community organizations focused on positive youth development and civic engagement supports recruitment of nearly 200 adolescent focus group participants and 16 youth co-researchers. Through focus groups and active youth co-researcher involvement in: study design; co-facilitating focus groups; data analysis, and interpretation, this study poses five research questions: 1. How do Latino/a adolescents define civic engagement? 2. How do Latino/a adolescents describe facilitators (supports and motivators) of their civic engagement? 3. How do Latino/a adolescents describe hindrances to their civic engagement? 4. In what ways are perceptions of these facilitators and hindrances similar or different between "high" and "low" engaged Latino/a adolescents? 5. What do Latino/a youth suggest as pathways for encouraging peer civic engagement? Our analytic strategy is guided by the combined approach of template analysis and in-vivo coding. Data will be analyzed from the ground up by coding participants' actual words or phrases to capture the local language and ground findings in youth's voices. Youth co-researchers will partner in analysis to provide their perspectives into developing themes and codes.

Relevance for the field: Findings from this study, including specific Latino/a youth-generated strategies to promote civic engagement among their peers, will be disseminated through peer-reviewed research publications and presentations and shared directly with local and national practitioners. Youth co-researchers will co-present findings to our partner organizations, local entities, and national civic engagement organizations. Findings have the potential to advance the work of civic health as recommended in the National Academy of Sciences report CNCS commissioned.

**University of Georgia**

**PI:** Dr. Rebecca Nesbit, Department of Public Administration and Policy

**Co-PI:** Dr. Laurie Paarlberg, Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University

Title of Study: Examining the Determinants of Rural/Urban Volunteering

Summary: Public policy increasingly depends upon voluntary action to address local issues, yet local capacity for voluntary action differs significantly across place. At the same time, ongoing shifts in communities' sociodemographic characteristics and alterations in the drivers of volunteerism may be changing the landscape of volunteering, particularly in rural communities where these shifts are creating greater barriers to participation. However, many contemporary studies of the place-based determinants of volunteerism are based upon data from metropolitan

respondents, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of volunteering in rural places. How do community contextual factors (e.g. diversity and economic conditions) influence volunteering behaviors across rural and urban communities? This project explores the place-based determinants of differences in volunteering behavior between rural and urban respondents by accessing the confidential Current Population Survey (CPS) volunteering data, supplemented by existing administrative records and county-level census and demographic data. We will analyze this unique dataset in a secure Census Bureau Research Data Center (RDC) using a multi-level modeling approach with lagged community variables. Analyzing the full population of CPS respondents across multiple years will allow us to understand how changing community dynamics affect volunteering and generalize our results to both rural and urban contexts.

Relevance for the field: We thus make a significant contribution to the scholarship of volunteerism and professional discussions about building engaged communities by exploring the community-level drivers and inhibitors of volunteering. We will disseminate the study's results to academics, professionals, and the public through a variety of traditional and web-based media. We will also collaborate with our land grant universities' extension services to help them use the results of our project in their work with communities in our states. Our findings have the potential to inform efforts to expand service and volunteering in rural areas.

### **University of Texas at Austin**

**PI:** Dr. Pamela Paxton

Title of Study: Nonprofits, Civic Infrastructure, and Health and Well-Being

Summary: How can we better measure and assess the civic infrastructure provided by nonprofit organizations? Do large nonprofits or nonprofits that use more volunteers produce greater benefits to the communities in which they are located? Does the introduction of a VISTA member into a nonprofit increase its number of volunteers? This proposed project addresses these questions and others related to civic infrastructure, volunteerism, and other outcomes. Using newly-released IRS data on 1.4 million nonprofit tax forms over the period 2010 to 2014, the project will create a database of thousands of measures of nonprofit finances, expenditures, mission, capacity, and leadership. Then, through both simple aggregation and leading-edge text analytics techniques, the project will create new county- and city-level measures of civic infrastructure (volunteerism, nonprofit capacity, and area mission-focus) based on features of the nonprofits located in the community. We will then estimate multi-level models that relate the health and well-being of individuals to the civic infrastructure created by nonprofits in their communities.

Relevance for the field: The Corporation for National and Community Service, academic researchers, and local politicians, administrators, activists, and citizens would all benefit from a better understanding of how nonprofits support civic infrastructure and increase the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Findings have the potential to advance measurement, demonstrate health outcomes created by civically healthy communities, and demonstrate the role of CNCS programs in achieving these community outcomes.

**Virginia Commonwealth University**

**PI:** Dr. Emily Zimmerman

Title of Study: Resident leadership and local capacity building: Volunteerism in disadvantaged communities

Summary: This study aims to contribute to knowledge about the processes and impact of volunteering by examining the characteristics of neighborhood-based and regional volunteers and organizations in Richmond, Virginia's East End neighborhood. The project will be co-led by an academic research team at Virginia Commonwealth University and Engaging Richmond, a community-university partnership, using a community-based, participatory research framework. RVA Engage, a local coalition addressing regional volunteerism, will serve as the project steering committee. Research questions focus on how the personal characteristics and volunteer activities of neighborhood-based and regional volunteers differ; whether there is synergy between the efforts of neighborhood-based and regional volunteers and organizations; and how regional volunteers and organizations maximize collaboration with neighborhood-based volunteers, leaders, and organizations. We will identify best practices for regional volunteers and organizations working in economically disadvantaged communities. We will conduct a mixed-methods study with 50 semi-standardized, in-depth interviews with volunteers living in Richmond's East End and those living in other communities, volunteer coordinators, and local leaders on volunteerism. We will also conduct an online surveys with eligible volunteers (e.g., age 18 and over who have volunteered in the East End in the past 24 months) from organizations in the East End and regional organizations. The study partners will collaborate to disseminate findings, including presentations to community partners and other community stakeholders, national conferences, and publication in appropriate print/web outlets.

Relevance for the field: This study aims to contribute to knowledge about the processes and impact of volunteering by examining the characteristics of neighborhood-based and regional volunteers and organizations in Richmond, Virginia's East End neighborhood. The findings can provide important information for organizations recruiting volunteers to work either within their own neighborhoods or to work in other areas – as all CNCS programs do – making findings potentially informative for enhancing how we engage communities with volunteers.