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After less than a year as the director of the Center for Community Studies (CCS), I wanted to take stock of where we are and where we are going. Last fall, the faculty participants in CCS met for dinner and a reflection on what CCS has been and what we hoped it would become. All agreed that the Center provides a valuable place to concentrate our intellectual concerns and commitment to research in partnership with communities. We see this work as both knowledge generation and the use of knowledge to improve pressing problems faced by communities today. The process of collaborative inquiry involves both prongs. The collective identification of problems, goals, relevant information and potential solutions anchors inquiry in the realities that make these problems obdurate while it also builds collaboration and communities capable of addressing them. The research, policy analyses and program directions that emerge constitute social knowledge firmly grounded in the contingencies that lead to both the problems and feasible solutions.

The presence of many new faculty members has prompted us to look for ways to expand the foundation built under the leadership of Douglas Perkins, following in the path established decades ago by Bob Newbrough and his colleagues. We determined that we needed to start by an accounting of what was actually going on in the CCS, what was working, and what could use some improvement. This first annual report of the Center for Community Studies represents the beginning of this process.

The clearest success of the CCS lies in its extensive and useful partnerships with local community organizations, governmental and private sector initiatives, and grass-roots efforts related to schools, health and urban neighborhoods. Therefore, we decided to center our core research groups on these areas and to increase CCS support financially and through student assistance to these three groups. The other research groups also provide vital intellectual foci, but are less dedicated to continuous faculty-led research programs. They will continue as CCS interest groups led either by faculty or graduate students. We also have begun work on new ways to provide support to our community partners while enriching graduate and undergraduate education.

Our public events were another clear contribution to the intellectual community of Vanderbilt, Nashville and Tennessee, and they provided a vital connection to national and international conversations. The growth of the faculty brought new energy and resources for taking the quality and usefulness of these events to a new level and for reaching new audiences both outside and inside of academia. As the section on CCS events in this report shows, these efforts have generated much excitement and interest, with more planned for 2009-2010.

We look forward to continuing these efforts in the new year by increased support to faculty for preparation of funded research proposals, a cutting-edge colloquium series, a new think tank initiative on Participatory Action Research and communities of faith, the next annual CCS One-Day Conference and other directions that still are emerging.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Saegert, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Community Studies
Professor, Graduate Program in Community Research and Action
Center Highlights

The Center for Community Studies has completed the 2008-2009 academic year with its new director, Susan Saegert. Guided by input from faculty and student members, we are working to review and streamline the Center’s historic research and information-dissemination activities. This effort has resulted in more precisely focused research work groups and a schedule of activities that has attracted audiences spanning multiple academic disciplines, as well as from numerous community agencies and organizations.

We continue to build upon the foundation laid from 1966-1981 by the director of the original Center for Community Studies, Professor Emeritus Bob Newbrough, and by the work of Associate Professor Doug Perkins, who revived the interdisciplinary collaboration in 2004 and served as director until 2008.

New Peabody hires in 2008-2009 have expanded the expertise of the Center membership, which includes both faculty and students who bring highly developed skills and unflagging commitment to the research and consulting projects they undertake. Center members continue to be deeply involved in community issues, consulting and working hands-on with partner agencies and providing policy guidance to key decisions makers. At the same time, they are productive scholars whose work is published in significant disciplinary, interdisciplinary and policy journals. A quick review of the activities of a few Center members illustrates this wide-ranging work (see “Faculty Spotlight” pages 6-7).

The Center’s work is carried on through:

- Grant-funded and other research, often collaborative and sometimes involving class and student projects;
- Colloquia and other types of information-dissemination activities;
- And project collaboration both internally among Center members and externally with our many community-partner agencies and organizations.

A half-time external relations coordinator is working to raise the Center’s public profile while revising the Center web site and documenting research activities. Our two graduate research assistants provide invaluable support on research projects, meeting organization and community-partner relationships. At the same time, as active Center members these students and their peers have unparalleled opportunities to undertake collaborative research with faculty members and each other, receive support for their own research projects, and network and learn from leading community-action experts and decision-makers who speak at the very well-attended, Center-sponsored colloquia and conferences.
The activities of our members continue to support three key areas to which the Center has a longstanding commitment:

- *Conducting research* that will enlarge the body of scholarly knowledge and inform workable social policies and initiatives;

- *Educating and mentoring* the next generation of community research and action scholars;

- *And working as partners* with community agencies and groups that are trying to meet the everyday challenges affecting people and the places they live.
Center Highlights

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Craig Anne Heflinger is . . .
. . .invited to speak regularly throughout the United States and abroad on her research about the emotional and behavioral problems of children and adolescents, particularly as it relates to rural youth. Her work has helped government and nonprofit agencies understand how to most effectively deliver mental health and substance abuse services to young people. She is serving as an expert witness in a class action lawsuit in U.S. District Court that is challenging the performance of the TennCare/Medicaid behavioral health system for Tennessee youth. As the recently appointed Peabody associate dean for graduate education, Craig Anne is working to expand and formalize graduate student mentoring, drawing upon her many years of teaching and guiding young student-scholars in their first independent forays into community and action research.

Susan Saegert works. . .
. . .with communities, government agencies and municipalities on the design, quality and social fabric of urban neighborhoods and cities. In Nashville she has helped organize and presented to standing-room-only crowds at the Governor’s Housing Summit session on shared equity housing. She serves on the steering committee of the Nashville Shared Equity Housing Initiative, conducting research related to affordable shared equity home ownership. Susan organized a major Affordable Housing Conference at Peabody in 2008, which helped facilitate Nashville being chosen one of three national pilot cities by the Ford Foundation and NCB Capital Impact. Her current work builds upon 20 years of conducting research and publishing on alternative forms of home ownership, as well as other issues in housing, community development and community social fabric. Her new books include The Community Development Reader, with James DeFilippis, and Urban Health and Society: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Research and Practice, with Nicholas Freudenberg and Susan Klitzman.
Jim Fraser studies. . .

. . .ways in which people make claims on space, working with colleagues on research projects in several U.S. cities to investigate questions related to such issues as neighborhood revitalization, social inequity and poverty. He also studies human dimensions of environmental behavior, with a focus on the factors that inform people’s decision-making in the context of uncertainty. His recent presentation at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers used a mixed-method approach to demonstrate that environmental behavior is governed through neighborhood organizations as well as informal neighboring, which may impact the way public policies seek to change beliefs and behavior. Similarly, Jim’s work on flood mitigation efforts across the United States has shown that place-based attachment and social network have important, yet understudied, effects upon household-level decision-making. Jim practices what he researches as a participant in the Edgehill neighborhood revitalization project and the Affordable Housing Coalition in Nashville.

Beth Shinn is. . .

. . . working to identify the most successful ways to provide services for the poor, mentally ill and excluded in modern society, including children, older adults and entire families. With a goal of using research to influence public policy, Beth regularly advises government agencies and nonprofit coalitions, with a sharp focus on the intractable problem of homelessness. Her research is helping the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development understand what combinations of housing and services end homelessness for families, and aiding New York City’s HomeBase program in identifying which families need the most immediate help to avoid becoming homeless. From this summer through the fall, Beth will be giving keynote addresses to three major professional associations on three continents, in Australia, France and in the United States.

Doug Perkins recreated. . .

. . . the Center for Community Studies in 2004 and was director until the fall of 2008, when he passed the reins to Susan Saegert with the anticipation of concentrating more on his own research. He directs the Organizational Networks project of the Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence (NUPACE) to Prevent Youth Violence. NUPACE, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, brings members of the Center for Community Studies together to work with academic colleagues outside Vanderbilt and reflects Doug’s deep interest in collaborative research efforts. Doug’s latest research has become more international in scope and collaboration as he directed Peabody’s 2007 Fieldschool in China, spent his 2009 spring semester on leave at universities in Italy, and expands his work studying citizen participation and social capital development among migrant and native populations in China, Europe and the United States.
Input from faculty and student members has informed the restructuring this year of the Center for Community Studies, with the goal of developing and formalizing ways to expand support for both Center members and community partners. To this end, the previous Center structure of six working groups has been streamlined to focus primarily on three core research groups:

**Schools and Community**
The Schools and Community core research group studies K-12 school-based interventions and partnerships, especially in low-income communities. Communities are an important context for educational outcomes, while schools are key to preparing young people for work and college and in transmitting cultural and civic values. Building on time-tested approaches, the group works through schools to identify children in need and to develop, implement and test health promotion and disease prevention programs.

**Urban Communities**
The multidisciplinary Urban Communities core research group focuses on problems that are distributed unevenly across neighborhoods and cities and should, therefore, be understood and addressed at the local level. Conceptually, the forces that shape society operate on multiple scales, from individual to national and global. This group aims to influence all levels, but research is focused at the impacts and interventions that emerge on neighborhood, community-based-organizational or metropolitan scales.

**Health and Community**
The Health and Community core research group promotes health and well-being in communities through teaching, research and advocacy. Projects deal with policy making, public health and individual-level behavioral changes. The group uses community participatory approaches that engage in action at multiple levels of intervention to maximize effective outcomes and principled processes.

*These three core research groups have formed around the research Center members currently are doing or want to undertake and will be fueled by their commitment of time and energy. One goal is to support the core research groups in the development of grant applications to fund collaborative research projects through the Center.*
To ensure that Center members whose work is ancillary to the core research groups continue to receive adequate support, we have established more informal interest groups to serve faculty members, students and community-partner representatives. The focus of these groups may change over time; currently Center members are working in these areas:

**Religion, Faith, Spirituality and Community**
This interest group has had strong support from faculty and students across the Vanderbilt campus. In the past, the group’s main interests have been the study of faith communities, the spiritual aspects of a psychological sense of community, and religion as a cultural force in the arenas of war, societal conflict and social change.

**Youth Development and Community**
While we have never had a work group devoted specifically to youth development and community, there are several research projects and a strong faculty and student interest that have kept this a popular subject among our members. Members expressing an interest in joining this group are interested in youth activism, the strengths and drawbacks of collaboration with local youth organizations, and the education and development needs among immigrant children.

**International Community Studies**
Globalization continues to connect the local to the global and the global to the local. This interest group is made up of faculty and students who are committed to the study of global processes as they affect communities locally and overseas. Our members have conducted research and action projects in Italy, Argentina, Ecuador, Rwanda, China and Moldova, as well as among immigrant communities in Nashville. Currently we have faculty and student members who are planning research projects in South Africa and Russia. Our subject interest is as wide-ranging as our geographic scope, including reconciliation, microcredit, rural and urban community needs, women’s empowerment, migration, human trafficking, housing and graffiti.
Center-Sponsored Events

The Center continues to embrace and expand its mission to provide a regular forum for the presentation and discussion of cutting-edge scholarship, national and local policy initiatives, and community issues and programs. During this past year national and local experts from a variety of disciplines have made presentations to mixed, engaged audiences drawn from academia, government and community groups. Round-table discussions and Q-and-A sessions are common and integral elements of these programs and ensure an interactive, productive interchange of information and viewpoints.

Center events attract large audiences that include not only Peabody students and faculty, but colleagues from throughout the University and from other campuses. Representatives of the Center’s many community partners are both attendees and participants, illustrating the two-way collaboration we value and nurture in Center research and activities. This year’s colloquia included Vanderbilt attendees from Anthropology, Philosophy, Germanic and Slavic Languages, Economics, the Divinity School and the Law School. Community partners in attendance included representatives of Food Security Partners, Organized Neighbors of Edgehill, The Housing Fund, Urban Housing Solutions, Woodbine Community Organization, Tennessee Fair Housing Council, Bank of America, Federal Reserve-Nashville, the United Way, Habitat for Humanity and the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency.
Thursday, May 14

**Dan Immergluck.** Associate Professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Visiting Scholar at the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank, and panel members Cathie Dodd (Woodbine Community Organization), Ted Fellman (THDA), Loretta Owens (The Housing Fund) and Scott Ratcliffe (Pinnacle Financial Partners)

Immergluck, a housing policy, real estate and foreclosure expert, spoke about the financial crisis consequences for housing and community development advancement in his presentation, “The Implication of the Financial Crisis for Housing and Community Development.” The panel then focused on the financial crisis as it relates to local – Nashville and/or Tennessee – housing and community development efforts. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta co-sponsored this well-attended event.

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Friday, April 17

**John Davis.** Research Fellow at the National Housing Institute and Co-Founder, Burlington Associates in Community Development LLC, and community panel members Mike Hodge, Ronnie Owens, Rene McAllister and Loretta Owens

In a presentation titled “Stewardship and Shared Equity,” Davis examined how communities across the country are developing various types of affordable housing and the importance of continuing stewardship in that process. Community-partner panel members shared examples of local ideas and examples of stewardship and shared equity.
Center-Sponsored Events

Wednesday, April 1

Christopher Carey, Assistant Professor of University Studies, Portland State University, and former Deputy District Attorney

Carey discussed his work exploring the diverse world views within the anti-trafficking community in his talk, “A Qualitative Exploration of Human Trafficking: The Curious Case of an Activist Researcher.” Through interviews, dialogue sessions and participant observation, Carey investigates how the anti-trafficking community makes sense of its world in the 21st Century and accounts for what it does. He also explores how diverse world views impact the ability of groups to work together to meet the larger goal of alleviating human trafficking.

Wednesday, March 11

Robert Gottlieb, Henry R. Luce Professor of Urban Environmental Studies and Director of the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College in Los Angeles

A long-time activist and historian of social movements, Gottlieb has been directly engaged in policy, program development and community action projects in such areas as food systems, transportation and land use, resource policy, and work and industry. His talk, “Food Justice in Los Angeles: Using Action Research to Evaluate and Transform the Food System,” drew upon his research and writing about issues of food security.

Wednesday, January 28

Participatory Action Research Think Tank Session

This session began the effort to develop a Participatory Action Research Think Tank to partner in a project funded by the Ford Foundation. Michelle Fine, a professor of social psychology at the City University of New York Graduate Center, invited CCS to join the PAR Collective, which involves several places around the country in dialogues unique to their communities. The goal of this session was to create a working group to submit a proposal for a project; the result is the establishment within Peabody of Participatory Action Research — Communities of Faith: A Vanderbilt/Community Think Tank, which is led by Susan Saegert and includes several Center members.
Friday, January 23

**Sandra Barnes, Professor in Peabody’s Department of Human and Organizational Development and in the Vanderbilt Divinity School**

In her presentation, “Black Mega Churches and Prophetic Community Engagement,” Barnes examined some of the purposes and programs of Black mega churches that lead to community engagement and personal empowerment, with particular emphasis on whether and how Black mega churches respond to issues related to race, poverty and politics.

Wednesday, October 1

**Nell Levin, Coordinator, Tennessee Alliance for Progress**

In this colloquia, “The Common Message Project: How to Frame a Progressive Vision for the Future,” Levin presented an interactive vision-and-values workshop like the one Tennessee Alliance for Progress did with progressive leaders and concerned citizens around the state of Tennessee. Participants envisioned what they want Tennessee to be like in 2015 and then looked at what values underlie that vision. Levin then shared the process and outcomes of the Common Message Project and reported on the group’s research with Tennessee voters.

Friday, September 5

**Kimberly Bess, Doug Perkins and Paul Speer, Peabody’s Department of Human and Organizational Development**

Our Peabody researchers discussed their work on how coalitions are used to address complex or “wicked” social problems in this presentation, “The Knitted Network: Predicting Coalition Participation in Youth Violence Prevention.” The study illuminates the question of participation from a social network perspective. Drawing from ecological theory, the researchers shared their explorations of the relationship between a local youth-violence prevention coalition and the broader context in which it is embedded.
Collaboration with Community Partners

A core strength of the Center for Community Studies is its emphasis on marrying interdisciplinary academic research with genuine community partnerships to address some of the most critical issues affecting people and how they live. Center experts work with government agencies, non-profit organizations, private sector partners and grassroots groups to define and address major societal challenges, providing objective analyses grounded in current research and best practices. In turn, these agencies provide on-the-ground information that informs Center members’ research, as well as access to real-life laboratories for gathering data.

The Center supports this two-way collaboration in a variety of ways:

- Our One-Day Fall Conference during which community partners hold a booth session to disseminate information about their groups and informally answer questions from conference attendees;
- Colloquia focusing on the housing crisis, which have drawn wide attendance and participation from community-partner representatives and academic colleagues, building upon the very successful Affordable Housing Conference organized by the Center in Spring 2008;
- A continued commitment to build our close relationships in the nearby community as we work with the Organized Neighbors of Edgehill on projects important to that community.

We are exploring the potential for formalizing a structure to match student researchers, whether individually or by class, with community partners who have small projects that would benefit from expert input or data-gathering. This need has been identified by faculty members who receive requests for such assistance, but are unable because of time constraints, topic orientation or project limitations to provide that help. However, for students, the matching program would not only offer opportunities for independent research, it also would provide an additional avenue for graduate students to fulfill their practicum and internship requirements in Community Research and Action and Community Development and Action. Undergraduate majors in Human and Organizational Development also might participate to meet internship requirements. The matching program will be organized to agilely adapt to the specific needs of community partners. We foresee that these experiences could help graduate students identify areas of interest as they work toward defining their masters’ projects and dissertations and go on to academic and practice careers.
This partial list of community partners highlights the variety of agencies and groups that Center researchers recently have partnered with to conduct research and consult on developing, implementing and evaluating programs and initiatives:

- Affordable Housing Resources
- Alignment Nashville
- Barnes Fund Affordable Housing
- Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee
- Civic Design Center
- Food Security Partners of Middle Tennessee
- Low Income Housing Coalition
- Martha O’Bryan Center
- Metro Nashville Public Schools/Safe and Drug-Free Schools
- Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity
- Nashville Coalition for Youth Safety
- Neighborhoods Resource Center
- New Level CDC
- Oasis Center
- Organized Neighbors of Edgehill (ONE)
- Tennessee Health Care Campaign
- Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
- Tennessee Voices for Children
- The Housing Fund
- Thistle Farms/Magdalene House
- Tying Nashville Together (TNT)
- United Way
- Urban Housing Solutions
- Woodbine Community Organization
Center-Awarded Grants

The small research grants awarded through the Center have been instrumental to the development of numerous young researchers, particularly in their dissertation work and classroom teaching. The grants have led to the organization of major public events and the formation of new community organizations and coalitions, as well as exciting new research that has laid the groundwork for larger projects. The work supported by the Center grants also has been an asset for the recipients who now have gone on to take faculty positions at major universities.

A review of the activities of some of these grant recipients shows great success in their recent endeavors. Darcy Freedman received the 2009 Division 27 APA “Best Dissertation on a Topic Relevant to Community Psychology Award.” She now is an assistant professor in the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina. Sarah VanHooser will begin study in June at Duke University as a post-doctoral fellow, focusing on health and spirituality. Emily Thaden was able to leverage her CCS small grant with a grant from the Gannett Foundation and various donations to direct a highly successful PhotoVoice project (see project spotlight below). Josh Bazuin used his funding to collect data for both his thesis and dissertation projects.

Project Spotlight: Napier Youth PhotoVoice

The Napier Youth PhotoVoice Project received a CCS small grant in 2007 for $1,100. This small grant was leveraged with a grant from the Gannett Foundation, a donation from Gresham, Smith & Partners, in-kind donations from Wolf Camera, and additional funding and loans from Vanderbilt to total approximately $8,500. The CCS research team, including CRA and CDA students, partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle TN, the Nashville Civic Design Center, and a staff member from Gresham, Smith & Partners to develop and administer the 12-week youth PhotoVoice program. The purpose of the program was for youth in the oldest and largest public housing development in Nashville to document their neighborhood through photography, dialogue about their images to identify social issues affecting their lives, and create a message for social change. Their work was presented in a 90-day public exhibit in the summer of 2008. The reception was attended by over 200 community members, including Mayor Dean, the executive director and staff of MDHA, non-profit leaders and Napier residents. The event made the local news on WSMV Channel 4, aired as a five-minute story on WPLN-NPR, and was selected as the “Critic’s Pick” in The Nashville Scene. Also, the CCS research team self-published a book on the project to leave a lasting impact of the youth’s photography and message; approximately 200 copies were sold. Further, the Nashville Civic Design Center hosted a follow-up planning session with community leaders and CCS researchers to facilitate future change in this community. Since that time, numerous social service leaders have contacted CCS researchers to explore whether PhotoVoice could be piloted in TN public school settings or additional low-income communities.
2007-2008 Small Grant Winners

CCS small grants are made possible by the generous support of Dean Camilla Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development, Vanderbilt Peabody College.

2008:

Katy Attanasi
Pentecostalism, HIV/AIDS and South African Women's Burdens

Josh Bazuin
Evaluating Post-Genocide Reconciliation Promotion Programs in Rwanda

Carrie Hanlin
Expanding Power Theory: The Qualitative Study of a Campaign for a Living Wage in a Mid-sized, Southern City

Chad Lykins
The Educational Ecology of Nashville's Neighborhoods

Nichole Phillips
'On Wings Like Eagles': What Death Rituals Reveal about Race, Evangelicalism and Southern Civil Religion

Sarah VanHooser
Exploring Women's Freedom in the Context of Inter-Cultural Exchange

Courte Voorhees
The Navajo Wasteland: A Multi-Community, Network-Based Assessment of Waste Disposal Site Impact and Citizen Attitudes in the New Mexico Region of the Navajo Nation

VanHooser Project—Rwanda

2007:

Kimberly Bess
Baby College for the James A. Cayce and Surrounding Community: A Pilot Program

Darcy Freedman
Food Security in Middle Tennessee: A Community Health Initiative

Kristin McGranera and Claire Smrekar
The Impact of HOPE VI Housing Programs on Neighborhood Schools

Freedman Project—Nashville

Peter Redvers-Lee
Afro-Ecuadorians of Northern Esmeraldas Province and Their Participation in the National Political Process

Emily Thaden
"Littles" Speaking Big About Social Issues: A Photovoice Project
Active Research Projects

Members of the Center for Community Studies continued their wide-ranging research activities in 2008-2009, with projects that are defining and offering solutions for such pressing societal issues as youth violence, youth mental health, distressed families, healthy communities, homelessness and affordable housing.

CCS projects continue to reflect collaborative efforts that often cross the boundaries of multiple disciplines. Graduate students work both in collaboration with faculty members and as principal investigators on their own independent research projects. In this work, both students and faculty members often serve as expert consultants to community-partner agencies and organizations in need of research-informed direction to address a specific problem or concern.

These currently active research projects, in various phases of completion, illustrate the broad range of work being done by CCS faculty and student members (listed alphabetically by principal investigator):

Evaluating Reconciliation Promotion Programs in Post-Genocide Rwanda

Josh Bazuin, Principal Investigator

In this study, Ph.D. student Josh Bazuin is evaluating the peacebuilding efforts in Rwanda. It employs a mixed methods design (a combination of survey work with more than 300 people and in-depth interviews with more than 30 people), and has four primary goals: (1) to develop and test an index for use in survey-based research that measures both attitudes towards reconciliation and the social enactment of reconciliation; (2) to evaluate multiple peacebuilding and reconciliation promotion programs in Rwanda on the basis of their contributions to the social enactment of reconciliation; (3) to explore the role of religiosity and spirituality in promoting or hindering the realization of reconciliation among individuals in Rwanda; and (4) to establish a dataset that will allow exploration of the individual and community-level benefits of participation in reconciliation promotion programs and social expressions of reconciliation. Josh conducted three months of field work in 2008 and will return to Rwanda in 2010 to collect additional data, this time focused more explicitly on the role of religion and spirituality in reconciliatory processes.

Funding: The Center for Community Studies, The Center for the Study of Religion and Culture
The goal of this program is to develop transformative collaborative structures and strategies that will bring clinical and translational investigators and research programs together with community partners to shape and support innovative and community-engaged research. Strategies include health-focused community building efforts, research consultation services, training studios and pilot research funding opportunities.

Tied Together: A Scaling-up Strategy for Community Change

**Kimberly Bess, Principal Investigator**

Launched in the spring of 2008 at the Martha O’Bryan Center, Tied Together is continuing as a comprehensive parent education program aimed at providing new parents and their families with the skills and modeling needed to promote healthy families. The model differs from other parent training classes in that it goes beyond the traditional core curriculum of child development and parenting skills. It is not seen as a stand-alone program; rather, it is conceived as part of a larger systemic intervention to alleviate the root causes of intergenerational poverty and as the foundation for connecting families to a path of success. The research, conducted in collaboration with the Martha O’Bryan Center, has evaluated participant outcomes in the pilot program and will continue to study the impact of this type of “scaling up” strategy on community wellbeing and change. Finally, the research aims to understand the process organizational change and development that the Martha O’Bryan Center has undergone as it strives to transform its work in the community.

Effects of RFID Technologies on Organizational Dynamics in Hospitals

**Jill A. Fisher and Torin Monahan**

This project investigates the implementation of radio-frequency identification (RFID) technologies in healthcare systems. Hospitals are rapidly adopting RFID systems to track inventory, identify patients and manage personnel. RFID systems are seen as valuable because of their ability to collect data in real-time. As a result, these systems may lend themselves to surveillance, such that the location of individuals is tracked and analyzed under the rubric of management paradigms like “workflow management.” This two-year project is exploring the effects of RFID systems on organizational dynamics in hospitals. Research sites include hospitals with fully functioning RFID systems in place or those with systems under development. The research questions are (1) what effects do RFID systems have upon organizational roles and relations, and (2) what are the surveillance potentials of RFID systems? The focus of these questions includes documentable practices and policies, as well as hospital staff’s perceptions of the changes brought by the RFID systems. Using qualitative methods, the research is being conducted through observational studies at six hospital sites and a minimum of 90 semi-structured interviews with hospital staff, including physicians, nurses, administrators and information technology staff.

**Funding:** National Science Foundation
Active Research Projects

Exploring the Determinants of Household Environmental Behavior: A Socio-Spatial Analysis of Lawn Care Practices
**James Fraser, Principal Investigator**

In this research, James Fraser is examining the spatial distribution and the socioeconomic and environmental factors that influence residential lawn management behavior in Baltimore. As one of the key sources of nutrients that are exported into and threaten the biodiversity of the Chesapeake Bay, residential lawn management has to be understood as a complex activity occurring at the nexus of biophysical, spatial and socio-economic factors. Research design is multi-faceted and involves in-person household and organizational surveys, telephone interviews, soil sampling, high-resolution image analysis of residential patterns, and the analysis of census and commercial demographic and consumption information. These data are assembled into a GIS database, which is used to determine to what extent household versus neighborhood characteristics predict household environmental behavior. Interview and survey responses complement the analysis by exploring the mechanisms through which these predictors operate.

**Funding:** National Science Foundation

The Role of Public, Private, Non-Profit and Community Residents in Shaping Mixed-Income Outcomes
**James Fraser, Principal Investigator; Csilla Weninger and Karl Jones**

This study examines the roles that public, private, non-profit and community residents play in mixed-income housing projects, it considers how those roles change, and examines plausible correlates of success in the place-based and people-based outcomes of mixed-income developments. We conceptualize the public sector in relatively simple terms, as the different levels of government that coordinate and deliver public goods, based in part on the workings of a private sector of actors whose activities revolve on capital investments, related employment and wages. Non-profit groups, in theory, may serve as service providers as well as advocates for community residents, which may also be beneficial for other people-based and place-based goals. For the purposes of our analysis, we also are interested in community residents and their role in producing neighborhood-based changes that impact the existing community. We conceptualize “place-based” goals and outcomes as primarily relating to neighborhood infrastructure, including housing stock, business development, telecommunications, water/sewer/electric and roadways. We conceptualize “people-based” goals and outcomes as the building of individual and social capital in communities so that they may take advantage of economic opportunities (e.g., job skills development, educational improvement, poverty amelioration and moving people into home ownership).

**Funding:** Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies
Creating Food Systems Change: Food Security Partners of Middle Tennessee
Darcy Freedman, Principal Investigator; Kimberly Bess and Cassi Johnson

This coalition-building project, spearheaded by Peabody graduate Darcy Freedman, continues the effort to develop a coordinated, collaborative, just and sustainable food system in the Middle Tennessee region by making strategic connections with stakeholders from all parts of the food system and by constructing an alternative discourse related to public health concerns such as hunger and obesity.

**Funding:** LifeWorks Foundation, James Stephen Turner Foundation, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Frist Foundation, Peabody College, Office of the Dean

**Partners:** See www.foodsecuritypartners.org/FSP_AboutUs_Partners.php for a list of more than 50 community partners

Rural Child/Adolescent Mental Health Service Use; Substance Use Disorders and Service Use among Youth
Craig Anne Heflinger, Principal Investigator; Ana Maria Brannan, Robert Saunders, Abraham Mukolo, Cheri Hoffman, Mike Pullmann, Daniel Leland, Sarah Van Hooser, Diana Jones and Pallie Davis

The aims of the research are: (1) to generate new knowledge on rural youth's use of mental health and substance abuse services that can inform research, practice and policy by: describing differences in predisposing, enabling and need characteristics between rural and non-rural Medicaid-enrolled children and adolescents; testing hypotheses about differences between rural and non-rural populations in access and service use patterns and clinical outcomes; and (2) to refine established theoretical models of service use and outcomes for future health services research with this population. This project is not only focused on research but also has linked students with statewide advocacy groups and task forces on issues facing rural youth such as juvenile justice, transition to adulthood and addressing disparities.

**Funding:** National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

**Partners:** Tennessee Voices for Children, Mississippi Families as Allies, Mississippi Division of Medicaid, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities

Stigma, Psychosocial Wellbeing and Help-Seeking Among Families of Vulnerable Children and Adolescents
Craig Anne Heflinger, Abraham Mukolo and Maury Nation

To develop and test a tool that explores the effect of child mental illness stigma on parents/primary caregivers’ help-seeking behavior. The instrument measures domains of stigma that have been theorized to impact self-esteem and efficacy among adults, but not among vulnerable children. We intend to collaborate with four community agencies to help recruit (1) knowledgeable parents of vulnerable children to serve as parent “experts” in instrument refinement focus groups and (2) more typical parents of children in community pediatric clinics. Research will be conducted at two health clinics to capture stigma experiences and perceptions of 400 typical parents using the developed stigma assessment instrument.

**Funding:** Center for Medicine, Health and Society, Vanderbilt University

**Partners:** K. Wallston (School of Nursing) and L. Craft (VUMC)
Active Research Projects

Tennessee Adolescent Coordination of Treatment (T-ACT)
Craig Anne Heflinger, Principal Investigator

This study is an evaluation of the state’s efforts to improve coordination of adolescent substance abuse treatment services.

Funding: State of Tennessee

Tennessee Small Business and Health Care Reform Project
Craig Anne Heflinger, Principal Investigator; Marielle Lovecchio and Jill Robinson

A survey of randomly selected small businesses across Tennessee is underway to examine (1) whether or not they offer health insurance to employees and, if yes, what type; (2) factors associated with offering employer-sponsored insurance or not; and (3) opinions about pending health care reform.

Partner: Tennessee Health Care Campaign, Lori Smith

Surveillance and Empowerment Workshop
Torin Monahan, Jill A. Fisher, Simon A. Cole and Gary T. Marx

This workshop brought together a transdisciplinary array of international scholars studying the social implications of contemporary surveillance with a particular interest in the complexities of empowerment. In the surveillance studies literature, there have been significant contributions on social sorting, digital discrimination, privacy invasion, racial profiling, sexual harassment and other mechanisms of unequal treatment. In contradistinction, this workshop explored the potential of surveillance for individual autonomy and dignity, fairness and due process, community cooperation and empowerment and social equality. Key to this inquiry was questioning the extent to which surveillance can be designed, employed and regulated to contribute to democratic practices and/or the social good. The findings of the workshops will be disseminated by means of special issues of the journals Surveillance & Society and Theoretical Criminology.

Funding: National Science Foundation

Segregation and Housing: Race, SES and Property Values in Nashville
Michael Nelson, Principal Investigator

This dissertation presents two analyses: (1) a descriptive analysis of the changing demographic, economic and housing patterns in Nashville’s 13-county region from 1970-2000. These findings are connected to (2) a multilevel model of housing value that includes property location, property characteristics and neighborhood composition.

Funding: Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies
Social Capital, Community Civic Participation and Health and Wellbeing among Both Representative and Migrant Samples in the People’s Republic of China (study series)

Neal Palmer, Douglas Perkins and Qingwen Xu (Boston College)

Participation in Urban Resident Committees (URCs) and other community organizations offers important opportunities for the development of social capital and democracy. In the first study by Xu, Perkins and Julian Chow (UC-Berkeley), urban and rural political participation are compared using a nationally representative survey. For urban residents, just knowing one’s neighbors is more important whereas in rural areas, neighboring (helping) behavior is more important, but both predict participation. Social capital was not found to predict local political participation among the general population in China.

A second study, led by Palmer, focuses on the massive migrant population in China. Survey data from a sample of migrant workers in seven cities across China are used to predict three types of community participation: (1) contact with community organizations; (2) frequency of help sought from community organizations; and (3) the rate of more formal participation in URC meetings. Results indicate that education, neighborhood social interaction and organizational social capital predict all three types of community participation. Additional predictors of community organization contact include number of children in the household, length of residence, trust in community members, place attachment and occupational quality of life. Predictors of help-seeking also include number of children and neighborhood social capital. Predictors of participation in URC meetings also include number of elderly kin living in the household and place attachment. In a related project, the team is exploring influences on the health and wellbeing of migrants and their families in China.

Community and Applied Developmental Psychology in Italy

Doug Perkins, Massimo Santinello, Alessio Vieno, Lorenza Dallago, Maury Nation, Francesca Cristini, Mark Lipsey and Tom Smith

Based on a series of visiting scholar and Ph.D. candidate exchanges, both at the CCS and at the University of Padua, Italy, a group of CCS faculty has collaborated and published extensively with an Italian team of applied developmental and community psychologists. Based on various Italian and WHO datasets, studies have included: civic participation and the development of adolescent behavior problems; a multilevel analysis of democratic school climate and sense of community; social support, sense of community in school and self-efficacy as resources during early adolescence; bullying in school and adolescent sense of empowerment—an analysis of relationships with parents, friends and teachers; adolescent place attachment, social capital and perceived safety—a comparison of 13 countries; the Adolescents, Life Context & School Project—youth voice and civic participation; and a special edited volume on community psychology in Italy.

Funding: Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy, University of Lecce, Italy
Partners: Università degli Studi di Padova, World Health Organization Health Behavior of School-aged Children Collaborative
Active Research Projects

Housing Trust Fund Action Research Project
**Doug Perkins, Principal Investigator; Michael Nelson, Emily Thaden, John Vick and Paul Speer**

The Housing Trust Fund Action Research Project examines the challenges and opportunities faced in community organizing and political advocacy in Nashville. In partnership with a large array of local organizations, the researchers – as highly involved participants – use ethnographic research to focus on the roles of the university, non-profit groups and government representatives to foster a grassroots and advocacy-based coalition to create a local affordable housing trust fund.

The Hidden Costs of Homelessness in Nashville
**Doug Perkins, Principal Investigator; Courte Voorhees and Scott Brown**

Homelessness is an issue that touches every community in America. Many of the costs of homelessness are externalized because they are unknown, difficult to quantify, or because there are insufficient resources to track them. The purpose of this study is to determine the full current costs of homelessness in Nashville, costs for permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness, costs for permanent supported housing, and the relative difference in expenditure for these options.

**Funding:** Metropolitan Nashville Homelessness Commission, Vanderbilt Office of Community Public and Government Relations

The Children of Moldovan Orphanages
**Jill Robinson, Principal Investigator**

Rolling Hills Community Church in Brentwood, Tennessee, has been working with Moldovan orphanages for the past five years. In response to the needs of children graduating from orphanages, and especially their vulnerability to human trafficking, the church is founding a non-profit organization to assist children with transitional living needs. Although church staff has collected some data to gauge the perspectives and needs of children, Robinson designed a research project which helped them with more systematic data collection. The pilot study was conducted over a two week period in the summer of 2008 in and around Chisinau, Moldova. Once analyzed, this data is intended to help the church better make decisions about addressing the needs of the children they are serving. The project involved two different data collection methods: questionnaire distribution (85 questionnaires collected); and stick-figure art activity (28 drawings collected).
Nashville Shared Equity Initiative
Susan Saegert, Principal Investigator; Emily Thaden and Andrew Greer

Center members Susan Saegert, Emily Thaden and Andrew Greer are working with the Nashville Shared Equity Housing Initiative, conducting research related to affordable shared equity home ownership to support the program’s development. Thus far they have: (1) interviewed the decision-makers in Nashville involved in starting a shared equity sector about their goals, perceived challenges, needs for information and directions for action, and produced a report on this for the steering committee; (2) worked with the graduate action research class to produce a PowerPoint presentation and written report on models of shared equity housing and best-practice examples nationally; and (3) are conducting focus groups with potential residents drawn from renters, clients of home ownership counseling programs, and clients of foreclosure prevention programs about their perceptions and preferences regarding renting and owning market-rate and shared equity housing. A March 2008 Affordable Housing Conference organized by the Center helped facilitate Nashville being chosen as one of three national pilot cities by the Ford Foundation and the National Cooperative Bank Capital Impact Fund.

Family Resource Centers – McKissack and Pearl Cohn
Sharon Shields, Principal Investigator

Family Resource Centers are neighborhood-based service delivery systems designed to increase the health and wellbeing of children, families and communities. The lead organization’s role is to coordinate with partner organizations to ensure the operational and programmatic success of the Family Resource Centers. This entails planning and coordinating services, facilitating input and involvement from local residents and agencies, and coordinating data collection and maintenance of data records.

Funding: United Way, Metro Board of Education

Twist of Fate
Sharon Shields, Principal Investigator; Jill Robinson, Suzanne Pratt and Emanuel Gunn; Geordie Brackin, Ashley Byars, Marielle Lovecchio, Julie Phenis and Jessica Thompson

Using photovoice and interviews, high school students from three Middle Tennessee counties (Macon, Sumner and Williamson) explored the recovery process after their communities were devastated by tornadoes last year. Vanderbilt HOD graduate students met with the high school students on a weekly basis to guide them through inquiry methods and to discuss their photography. The products of this project include a newspaper insert, a planned book publication and a community meeting to discuss this participatory community project.

Funding: Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies

Twist of Fate project—High school students working on the project said, “(This picture) . . . shows the house as sort of a skeleton, but it will soon be something very different . . . a home to a family. . . . It sort of shows there is hope up ahead.”
Active Research Projects

Center to Study Recovery in Social Contexts
Beth Shinn, Principal Investigator of Subcontract

In this study, Beth Shinn attempts to understand and measure how social programs and community-based organizations promote social integration for individuals who experience mental illness. The work uses the capabilities framework pioneered by economist Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum to understand people's freedom to plan their lives, undertake valued social roles and live life fully, despite disabilities. Shinn's work focuses on features of social settings that enhance or impede these freedoms or “capabilities.”

Funding: National Institute of Mental Health (in collaboration with the Nathan Kline Institute)

Impact of Housing and Services Intervention on Homeless Families
Beth Shinn, Principal Investigator of Subcontract

This study is designed to understand what types of housing and service interventions for homeless families work best to promote families’ residential stability and self sufficiency, adult and child well-being, and family preservation. Researchers will randomly assign 2,400 homeless families across 12 cities to four types of housing and service interventions to develop rigorous answers to the question, “What works best for what sorts of families?”

Funding: Department of Housing and Urban Development (in collaboration with Abt Associates, Inc.)

Study of Religion and Politics in Tennessee Communities
Paul Speer and Douglas Knight, Co-Principal Investigators; Bill Partridge, Dylan Swift, Diana Jones, John Vick, Obiko Magvanjav, Josh Bazuin and Eric Tesdahl

This ethnographic study addresses the interaction between religion and politics, especially its form within local communities of the South. The project eschews the specialized research silos wherein religious and political behaviors are circumscribed into distinct arenas. Instead, we will address their convergence in contemporary American communities. We posit an intercultural nexus wherein human communities' religious and political beliefs and practices are increasingly merging, where local values, beliefs and aspirations derived from contrasting secular and sacred traditions are negotiated and harmonized. We ask how Americans are learning to construct and transmit to the next generation a coherent, cohesive world view that accommodates deep-seated contradictions among their religious and political commitments. We seek to explore how local cultural and religious forces propel citizens toward certain political decisions and actions and, conversely, how local cultural and political forces induce certain religious belief and practice. We bridge the social sciences and humanities to conduct research along both theoretical and empirical lines. In addition to other topics pursued in this work, the Vanderbilt Project on Religion and Politics will achieve special focus by examining current social issues, as well as the problem of war.

Funding: Vanderbilt Peabody College, Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, School of Law and Center for Ethics
Longitudinal Study of Congregation-Based Community Organizing
Paul Speer, Principal Investigator; Diana Jones, Brian Christens, Theresa Armstead and Eva Imbsweiler

This is a study of members of congregation-based community organizing longitudinally in five U.S. communities. This study examines strategies and impacts of organizing efforts and impacts to participants over time. It focuses on community organizing, social power and community change, and the processes and mechanisms of community organizations as these groups work to alter social conditions in their communities. Additionally, this longitudinal study links these organizational processes to their associated impacts on the broader community, as well as the impacts on individual participants.

**Funding:** Raskob Foundation, Vanderbilt Undergraduate Summer Research Program
Active Research Projects

NUPACE Research Collaboration

The Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence (NUPACE) is an interdisciplinary collaboration among academic and community partners to carry out planning, research and evaluation, communication and dissemination activities on effective youth violence prevention interventions, outcomes and best practices. The project goal is to identify and institute strategies and initiatives that will reduce violence among youth aged 10-to-24 in Nashville/Davidson County. In this effort, members of the Center for Community Studies at Vanderbilt Peabody College are working with academic colleagues from Meharry Medical College and Tennessee State University, as well as with the Metro Public Health Department and other community partners.

Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence (NUPACE)
Paul Juarez, Principal Investigator; Maury Nation, Doug Perkins, Rev. Neely Williams and Vicente Samaniego

The mission of NUPACE is an academic/community partnership that integrates prevention science with community action to reduce youth violence. It advises and consults with public agencies, community representatives and youth to incorporate scientific methods and evidence-based practice knowledge into youth violence prevention surveillance, programming, organization, research and evaluation methods.

NUPACE uses a strengths-based primary prevention and developmental-ecological model that examines youth violence within the context of family, peers, schools and community. It employs a community-based participatory research (CBPR) model that promotes and supports interdisciplinary collaboration among academic and community partners in carrying out planning, research and evaluation, communication and dissemination activities on effective youth violence prevention interventions, outcomes and best practices. Doug Perkins and Maury Nation have served as principal investigators for two of the three research core projects for NUPACE, and other faculty members are collaborating in the research.

NUPACE: Data Core, GIS and Neighborhood Asset Mapping Project
Paul Juarez, Principal Investigator; Vicente Samaniego, Bob Levine, David Padgett, Tim Van Wave and Paul Speer

This project is developing a comprehensive geographic database of social, educational and health indicators related to youth violence. GIS and spatial analysis are used to map assets and link neighborhood characteristics to protective factors, and in turn, to youth violence. Students in the community are asked to generate a list of neighborhood risk and protective factors for youth violence; this will be translated into a taxonomy of community assets and problems. Students will then walk through neighborhoods and code assets and problems based on the taxonomy, and identify the location electronically through GPS devices. Propose mapping social networks of students with peers in the community, and parents with organizations in the community.

Funding: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Partners: Meharry Medical College, Tennessee State University, Metro Public Health Department, Nashville Community Coalition for Youth Safety
NUPACE: Metro Nashville Middle School Bullying Prevention Experiment
Maury Nation, Principal Investigator, and Leslie Collins

This five-year, quasi-experimental action-study to improve middle school climates to reduce bullying and violence is a centerpiece of the NUPACE grant. The primary aim of this project is to implement and evaluate two bullying prevention programs that take different, but complementary, approaches to changing school climate in public middle schools. Previous research has associated bullying with the development of more serious forms of violence, including suicides and school shootings, and a host of other risky behaviors, including juvenile delinquency. Both theory and research suggest a sustained decrease in the prevalence of bullying is most likely to occur when there are changes in the school climate. Central to the program is an enhancement of student services developed by Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools through Alignment Nashville. The Alignment Enhanced Services (AES) intervention is based in part on a comprehensive approach to student well-being called Student Assistance Programs (SAP). SAP is a systemic process that mobilizes school resources to remove barriers to learning. The core of the program is a professionally trained coordinator who serves as a liaison to community agencies to address violence and behavior problems of students. AES intervention is unique because it has developed an approach that utilizes existing resources and nonprofit organizations that attend to violence, behavior problems and youth development to maximize its impact on bullying prevention.

**Funding:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
**Partners:** Metro Public Schools, Alignment Nashville, Oasis Center, the Center for Youth Issues (STARS), Martha O’Bryan Family Resource Center

NUPACE: Monitoring Change in the Network of Organizations Addressing Youth Violence
Doug Perkins, Principal Investigator; Kimberly Bess, Paul Speer, Adam Voight, Eric Tesdahl and Dan Cooper

This is a three-year study that monitors and analyzes changes in the network of nonprofit organizations and public agencies addressing youth violence in Nashville. Leaders of all the major organizations on this issue have been interviewed. Analyses focus on: (1) organizational relationships at the city level; (2) the external networks of each of 12 middle schools participating in a bullying and violence prevention experiment; and (3) change in the approaches and resources each organization devotes to youth violence prevention and in the approaches taken, with particular attention to ones that are strengths-based, primary preventive, empowering, and focused on changing root causes of violence in the community.

**Funding:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
**Partners:** Meharry Medical College, Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence, Nashville Community Coalition for Youth Safety
The Center for Community Studies would like to thank our university and community colleagues for helping us make our Center a success!

For more information about CCS, please contact Jill Robinson at jill.robinson@vanderbilt.edu.