



Center for the Development of Peace and Well-being

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Undergraduate Fellows – Project Descriptions

Scott Chu, Public Health
Child Mortality and the Family

Globally, there are 10 million children who die from diseases that are easily preventable. Caring for the sick and dying child places an enormous stress and financial drain on families. This research concentrates on the centrality of the family in creating health even among the poorest of circumstances. By transferring knowledge into the home, families are able to utilize information and use home-based methods to promote the health of their children.

Elizabeth Havstad, Urban Studies, College of Environmental Design
Addressing Poverty Through Projects: The Favelas of Salvador, Brazil

The urban poor in Brazil, as in much of Latin America, live in slums called favelas. In Brazil, political and popular attitudes towards favelas have ranged from viewing them as parasitic communities, as marginal populations invading the formal city, and in the past two decades as centers of drug trafficking and violent criminal behavior. Structural characteristics of the economy and society do not often allow people from the favelas to lift themselves out of poverty, and as a result both the government and private organizations have created many programs with the goal of helping favela residents. There are various types of organizations in the favelas: non-government organizations (NGOs), local grassroots groups, the Evangelical Church, and residents associations. All these organizations, try to improve the lives of favela residents by challenging, changing or just improving their situations. Among their efforts there have been successful projects, and unsuccessful ones. The purpose of this research is to define characteristics that distinguish the projects that work from those that do not. The researcher proposes to evaluate a collection of projects which direct their efforts at helping favela communities in Salvador, Brazil. The research will include interviews with heads of NGOs, city officials, Church leaders, and community leaders to understand how they define the problems in the favelas, and how they believe their organizations are helping. Interviews will also be conducted with favela residents who participate in different programs as well as residents who do not participate in any programs. The emphasis for interviewing favela residents will be to try and understand how they perceive projects in their communities, and what they think makes a project useful or not.

Joseph Scalice, Interdisciplinary Field Studies Major
Conflict and Dialogue: Christian-Muslim Relations in Recent Philippine History

The conflict in the Philippines between Christians and Muslims is an ongoing nightmare for many Philippine citizens. Countless lives have been lost in bombings, raids, and military campaigns. The roots of this conflict are political and economic in origin but have taken on a religious framework. This research will be the foundation of a major paper outlining the possibilities of and challenges for genuine dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines and the achievement of an authentic peace. The research project will include the economic and political origins of this conflict in the government documents at the Philippine National Archives. The investigation will also examine the slowly emergent religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines, most specifically from the standpoint of grassroots communities founded on the ideas of liberation theology. The researcher intends to synthesize the results of the research in a concise but thorough statement of the history and current status of Philippine Christian-Muslim relations.

Rachel Stewart, Psychology
Quality of Life and Spinal Muscular Atrophy

This study proposes to investigate the quality of life of people with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) and how it is related to both the severity of their impairment and the extent to which they perceive themselves to be discriminated against and/or socially excluded because of their disability. Spinal Muscular Atrophy is a genetic neuromuscular disease which causes weakening of the muscles, often leading to the use of a wheelchair. The literature on people with physical disabilities has generally been dominated by discussions of medical concerns and health matters, but examinations of topics such as discrimination, social and physical barriers, and disability identity have been far less common. This study wishes to add to that literature by examining the factors which affect the well-being and quality of life of individuals with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) through a quantitative and qualitative psychological study. Using a disability studies framework, it explores the level of stigma and discrimination experienced by people with SMA, as well as those factors which contribute to the reduction of social barriers and the improvement of understanding and acceptance (i.e. social support and disability identity). Hopefully, the knowledge gained from this study will be useful to parents, educators, and communities to help improve the inclusion, well-being, and quality of life not only of people with SMA, but disabled people in general.