

Centers Spotlight: Center for Research and Child Wellbeing--Promoting Research,  
Training Scholars, Informing Policymakers  
Autumn 2005 - WWS News (Vol 29, Issue 1)

The Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (CRCW) is an interdisciplinary center at the Woodrow Wilson School and the Office of Population Research. The Center's mission is to stimulate basic research, educate faculty and students about issues related to children's policies, and influence policymakers and practitioners at the federal, state, and local levels.

CRCW supports three initiatives: the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a basic research project; the Future of Children Project, a journal and outreach program for policymakers, practitioners, advocates, and researchers; and the Youth Policy Initiative, a set of studies that design and evaluate policies for youth. CRCW staff has been busy these past six months working on all three projects.

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is following a longitudinal birth cohort of nearly 5,000 children born in the U.S. at the end of the 20th century. The study provides new information on the capabilities and relationships of parents, particularly unwed parents, as well as the effects of parental resources and public policies on children's wellbeing. During the spring of 2005, researchers at the Center have been preparing the third wave of data for a September 2005 public release and are currently in the field with the fiveyear follow-up survey. In June, the Center submitted a grant application to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, requesting funds for another round of follow-up interviews when the children are nine years old. Additional information about the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study can be found at [www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu](http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu).

The Future of Children Project seeks to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing policymakers, practitioners, and the media with timely, objective information based on the best available research. The project is co-sponsored with the Center for Health and Wellbeing and the Education Research Section at the Woodrow Wilson School, and the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. The project publishes a bi-annual journal, sponsors courses and conferences for the WWS M.P.A. students, and hosts outreach activities for policy-makers and practitioners at the national and local levels. This past spring the project published its first volume, *School Readiness: Closing Racial and Ethnic Gaps*, and hosted a number of outreach activities, including an ERS-sponsored practitioners' conference at Princeton, two events at the Brookings Institution on early childhood education, and an audio-conference on the Web. Center practitioners also taught a course, "Childhood Obesity" at the School in the spring of 2005, in conjunction with an upcoming volume (Spring 2006) on that topic. A second volume, *Marriage and Child Wellbeing*, was published in September, and will be followed by several public events. More information about the journal and related events can be found at [www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org).

The Youth Policy Initiative designs and evaluates policies and programs for youth, including mentoring, after-school, and pregnancy prevention programs. Much of the work is carried out in conjunction with researchers at applied research organizations such as Public/Private Ventures and MDRC. The Center's researchers are currently involved in several studies: an evaluation of Children's Future, an initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that is designed to improve the lives of children in Trenton ages 0 to 3 years old; a study of Philadelphia's Beacon School program which examines how after-school staff practices and characteristics affect the engagement and learning of young participants; a random-assignment evaluation of school-based mentoring; and a random assignment evaluation of a specially designed after-school math and reading curriculum. Additional information about these studies can be found at [crew.princeton.edu/evaluation.asp](http://crew.princeton.edu/evaluation.asp).

In conjunction with the Woodrow Wilson School, CRCW has launched a new speaker series this fall, entitled "Researcher Meets Policymaker," bringing together leading researchers and policymakers to discuss issues of common interest. The first presentation on September 27 featured Kathryn Edin and Robert Doar, speaking about the low marriage rates among low-income mothers. Dr. Edin, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, is co-author of the book, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*; Robert Doar is the commissioner of the New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and is charged with developing a marriage program aimed at low-income women. The next presentation will be held on November 15 and will feature Jonathan Rauch from the Brookings Institution. Rauch is the author of *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*; he will discuss gay marriage and parenting.

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