An Eye to the Future

By Bettina Dahl Søndergaard, SIG Chair

Dear members,

I am very proud to be the chair of this SIG. At the last Annual Meeting, we had very high quality presentations and a high attendance to both the sessions and the Business Meeting. We had some very interesting discussions on the quality of OST programs both now and from a historical perspective. Our SIG is vibrant, and it has increasingly become a meeting point for people interested in the OST area. Our membership number is also now well above 100 and consistently rising. But we should not stop here. We should still aim at developing our identity and fulfilling our purpose which is: “To provide a forum for researchers in out-of-school time teaching and learning to share resources and become each others' resources; to provide venues and opportunities to present related research; to bring additional knowledge and resources to AERA.”

This is also one of the reasons why we are seeking collaborations with SIGs in related areas, but you will hear more about this in the next newsletter. We are already working to connect with a youth organization in New Orleans to invite them to share their program at our Business Meeting AND to bring some youth representatives with them. We have made such arrangements at the last two Business Meetings, but the youth weren’t able to attend at the last minute. We especially value the youth perspective on out-of-school-time programs, so we are committed to promoting a youth presence at our Business Meeting in 2011.

I am very pleased to present the new team of SIG Officers. Together, we represent the OST field well, and we are eager to work together toward fulfilling the purpose of the SIG.

David Shernoff is the Program Chair for 2010-11, hence the Chair for 2011-12. He is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at Northern Illinois University. His postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Wisconsin - Madison focused on researching youth engagement in school-based after-school programs. He presently teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on adolescent development, motivation, and educational psychology. He co-authored a 2009 book entitled, Good Mentoring. He has organized symposia and served as an ad hoc reviewer for the OST SIG, and gave the keynote address at 2009 OST SIG business meeting.

Joy Connolly is our Secretary/Treasurer and she is a graduate student in Education Policy Studies at UW-Madison. She received a BA from Wesleyan and a MPA from NYU. In addition, she worked in afterschool education for several years as a dance/literacy teacher, program coordinator, and professional development consultant. Her MA thesis examined the underlying assumptions in the Supplemental Educational Services provision of NCLB through provider case studies.

Jrène Rahm is our Membership Director. She is an Associate Professor at the Université de Montréal. She currently explores transnational youths’ engagement and positioning in science and beyond, focusing on the ways their diverse cultural and social capital plays out. She has just published a book on science learning outside of school, entitled: “Science in the Making at the Margin: A Multisited Ethnography of Learning and Becoming in an Afterschool Program, a Garden, and a Math and Science Upward Bound Program.”

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Sara Hill is the Website Manager. Sara is a consultant at Hill Consulting. She has her M.Ed from Harvard University Graduate School of Education and her Ed.D. from Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. She has documented youth programs in the United States as well as internationally, and published work in the area of literacy and youth development. Last year, she edited a book entitled, *Afterschool Matters: Creating Programs that Connect Youth Development and Student Achievement*. Sara was one of the founders of the OST SIG and a past Chair of the SIG.

Sarah Pitcock is the Newsletter Editor. She is the senior director of program quality for the National Summer Learning Association, overseeing the development and implementation of the Association’s quality indicators and quality assessment instruments for summer learning programs. She also develops and disseminates resources and tools for quality improvement to the Association’s member network and conducts site visits and community-level research.

Finally, let me say a few words about myself. I am an Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark at the Faculty of Science’s Centre for Science Education. My work is focused on mathematics education, teaching “university pedagogy” to colleagues, evaluation and further development of OST STEM programs for school children at the Faculty of Science, and OST programs for gifted children in mathematics. Previously, I worked as Assistant Professor at Virginia Tech where I participated in the forming of an OST STEM informal learning project, POISED (Partners for Outreach in Informal STEM Education), in which I am still involved.

Bettina Dahl Søndergaard

**YOUTH PROGRAM PROFILE**

**Urban Trailblazers Program**

Crissy Field Center is a partnership of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the National Park Service. Since opening its doors in 2001, the Center has welcomed more than 400,000 people through school field trips, summer camps, outreach, after-school programs, youth internships and family events.

The Urban Trailblazers Program is a four-week summer program for middle school youth focused on environmental leadership. Each summer, a group of culturally diverse San Francisco public school students enters the program to get knee-deep in their natural and cultural surroundings.

Throughout the program, youth are encouraged and empowered to become stewards of their local environment through restoration projects and field research in national and city parks. This summer, UTB focused its field work on watersheds, and youth experienced and explored their impact from both the highest point in the city and a local beach. Along the way, youth build healthy relationships and confidence through tackling new skills and tasks as a team, and having a lot of fun in the process.

This year was the first summer that Crissy Field expanded beyond the Golden Gate National Parks to partner with San Francisco Recreation and Parks. Program Manager Ernesto Pepito says, “We wanted kids to be able to learn and experience leadership and environmentalism in their own backyards. Many of them live in parts of the city that are far away from Crissy” (cont. on page 6)

**NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT**

From Sense Publishers

*Science in the Making at the Margin: A Multisited Ethnography of Learning and Becoming in an Afterschool Program, a Garden and a Math and Science Upward Bound Program*

By: Jrene Rahm, Universite de Montreal, Canada, OST SIG Officer

*Now available on amazon.com*
The Annual Meeting in Denver this spring was very beneficial and productive for our SIG. Many members attended and actively participated in our seven sessions and business meeting. Program Chair, Bettina Dahl Soendergaard and SIG President David Fleming are to be commended for an outstanding job in putting together a program of such high caliber and relevance to the SIG members.

The theme for the 2011 Annual Meeting in New Orleans from April 8-12 is “Inciting the Social Imagination: Education Research for the Public Good.” As we start to look forward to the 2011 meeting, we reflect on the meaning of social imagination and the importance of educational research for the public good, particularly out-of-school time research. Despite new interest in educational reforms and policies, initiatives are often technocratic and market-driven, not allowing for equal access to families of all social classes and backgrounds. AERA proposes that present and forthcoming research helps to expand our thinking about the goals of the education that effectively serve a democracy. A chief question to consider, according to the AERA website, is “What new tools, social arrangements, forms of assistance, and identities promote expansive and sustainable learning?”

There can be little doubt that research on out-of-school time, with the great variety of innovative social and curricular arrangements fostered within it, invariably widens traditional notions of learning. Research on learning in out-of-school environments can provide new insights into both supporting the development of diverse youth as well as stimulating the growth of social networks for the common good. We become introduced to empirically-based models whereby youth have a mutually beneficial relationship with their ecological and social contexts.

The review process for the 2011 meeting began in January this year, when we began accepting volunteers for our expert reviewer panel. Active reviewing of the proposals submitted to our SIG took place between August 3 and October 8, and submitters will be notified of a decision beginning in October.

This year, we had a strong 36-member reviewer panel consisting of both volunteers and those accepting an invitation to become a reviewer. AERA suggests that each member of a review panel may review between 10-20 proposals, something that all reviewers understand in advance, making their act of service so significant and appreciated.

Even with the number of submissions to our SIG increasing this year, a testament to its growing health and vibrancy, we were successfully able to limit the number of reviews to no more than three for any single reviewer, and several solicited reviewers were needed only for two reviews. We are extremely grateful to all participating reviewers. When it comes to the review process, there truly is “safety in numbers.”

Being a member of a Review Panel is also an honor publicly recognized by AERA as well as our SIG. I look forward to telling you more about the result of the present review process in the next newsletter, where we will also give an overview of the OST SIG sessions selected for the Annual Meeting in 2011.

Join us in New Orleans!

2011 AERA Annual Meeting

April 8-12

New Orleans, LA

Be sure to attend to the OST SIG Business Meeting for the presentation of the OST Scholars Awards as well as to hear from a local youth development OST program from New Orleans. The new OST officers will also be introduced, and there will be time to chat with SIG colleagues over light appetizers, cookies, and coffee/soda.

2009-2010 SIG Chair David Fleming at the Denver Business Meeting.
Emerging Scholar Award Winner Q & A with Erika Patall

Erika Patall is an associate professor in the department of educational psychology at the University of Texas and one of two 2010 OST SIG Emerging Scholar award winners. We interviewed Erika to learn more about her 2008 study “Parent Involvement in Homework: A Research Synthesis,” published in the Review of Educational Research.

Describe the research questions you were looking to answer through your meta analysis and why they are compelling.

In this meta analysis, we wanted to know if there was a difference in the achievement outcomes of youth with parents who were trained to be involved in homework versus parents who weren’t. Specifically, we wanted to know the size of that difference and characteristics of students and the intervention that influence when/why some interventions are most influential.

We felt this study was important because parent involvement (PI) had been getting a lot of attention in the media as a possible solution to achievement outcomes. But, when we looked at research there were a lot of mixed findings and a lack of clarity, even though there had been a lot of previous work on the topic. We wanted to see what the state of the work was and what take-home message for practitioners could be gleaned from research.

Your meta analysis built on previous syntheses of data on parent involvement. How did you benefit from that work? How did your findings compare?

There were a number of earlier syntheses on parent involvement in homework. Hoover-Dempsey (1995) was an excellent narrative review of the topic but lacked benefits of quantitative synthesis, as far as providing a numeric value to describe the relationship. It definitely pointed to studies I needed to include in the meta analysis and guided my thinking on theoretical reasons why we might expect parent involvement to have an impact, as well as helped to explain contradictory findings.

Our study is unique because we examined an extensive number of potential moderators between PI and achievement. We clearly outlined the most important moderating factors: age of student, type of involvement in homework and subject matter. The types of involvement we looked at included: monitoring (just checking if homework is done), direct aid (parents actually provide instruction) and rule-setting (parents set expectations for when homework is going to be done).

I think your finding that effective strategies for parent involvement change over the course of a child’s schooling is really interesting. It certainly resonates with what I see in OST programs and what I hear from program administrators about how they approach parent involvement differently depending on the age and stage of youth served.

Yes, we found that PI was related to achievement for elementary and possibly high school students, but not for middle school students. We can speculate a few things based on our findings.

First, involvement is more important for younger students because they haven’t developed self regulation and study skills and their parents’ involvement can help develop those things.

In contrast, middle school kids have made strides on self regulation and study skills, and they are trying to establish independence from their parents. Struggling middle school kids, who can use the help, still may experience negative outcomes because of conflict associated with parental interaction, which may override any potential positive outcomes. Parents of middle school kids should support homework in a way that promotes autonomy. Getting overly involved is likely to have negative outcomes.

NCLB’s parent involvement component prompted your research. What would you say to policymakers who are rethinking parent involvement for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act?

Policymakers should encourage parent involvement in homework, especially in the early grades, but don’t expect it to be any type of panacea. It’s going to have small effects because there is a lot of variability in the extent to which parents can provide support. If the purpose is to affect more proximal outcomes, then by all means, getting parents involved in homework is going to have a good outcome.

What drew you to OST research?

I believe that there are a lot of important socio-cognitive, achievement and learning outcomes happening when kids are not in school. I take a slightly broader notion of what OST is; I think of it as anything when kids are not in school. I think, there is so much time that kids are not in school, how can that time be utilized to enhance their achievement in learning and motivational outcomes? As a meta analyst, your area of expertise is constantly expanding. OST is a convenient way for me to link a lot of my interests together.

What’s next in your work?

I have started to look at the effect of extending the school year or school day, which is essentially making out-of-school time, in-school time. It is a messy literature with a lot of conflicting viewpoints. (cont. on page 6)
Emerging Scholar Award Winner Q & A with Ingrid Nelson

Ingrid Nelson recently received her Ph.D. in Sociology of Education from Stanford University. We sat down with Ingrid to discuss her study “Street Ball, Swim Team and the Sour Cream Machine: A Cluster Analysis of Out of School Time Participation Portfolios.”

Describe your OST portfolio study. What prompted your research?

One of the things we noticed in the literature is that there is a lot of work that looks at a specific OST program or a specific kind of program without looking at the youth’s perspective. Youth might go to one program one day, go home and do homework another day and just watch TV at home on another day. So only looking at one activity seems like a limited scope in some way. We started with participation portfolios to try to get a picture of all the things that kids are doing to see how that combination varies for different kids and how that variation relates to different attitudes and behaviors regarding school.

What methodology did you use?

We used cluster analysis on the data, which is a way of finding how the data hang together into groups that are different from each other. We found five distinct portfolios and named them based on the activities that were common. We found five distinct portfolios that generally correlated with positive behaviors and attitudes, but the activities were very different in those portfolios: Social, Unstructured, All-Around, Employed and Study. We didn’t find any evidence of “uninvolved” students. Most kids are involved; it just depends on the measures used whether or not you capture that involvement.

What were your key findings? Did they align with your hypotheses?

There were a number of things we found surprising in the results. One of the big things was that there were three different portfolios that generally correlated with positive behaviors and attitudes, but the activities were very different in those portfolios: Social is characterized by low involvement in school clubs and sports and high social involvement; All-Around reports significantly higher than average levels of involvement in all out-of-school activities except for employment and hobbies; and Study reports significantly higher than average time spent on homework and non-school reading, and significantly less time in social activities.

Two portfolios- Employed and Study- report similar amounts of time spent in school-sponsored extracurricular activities- but on almost every indicator in our study, they are significantly different. Whereas the Study group has the most positive assessment of school climate, lowest levels of victimization and truancy, highest level of honors, and most students in the highest achievement quartile, the Employed group tends toward more negative indicators in those categories. So, it shows that even though a part of their time is spent the same way, if the remainder of their time is spent doing homework, that’s going to have a different impact on attitudes and behaviors than if the remainder of that time is spent working for pay.

Another thing we hadn’t originally planned to look at- which is a good jumping off point for the future- was that the Study group had a disproportionately high percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino youth. Immigration status might be an important variable to include in the study.

How are the findings relevant for practitioners? What’s the headline from this study?

No single activity is the magic bullet; there is nothing that is uniformly associated with either positive or negative attitudes or behaviors about school. Activities seem to operate differently in combination with other activities, which speaks to the importance of the portfolio perspective. It’s important to look at all the things that are going on for a kid. For communities at large, this study points to the importance of having a wide variety of options. Considering other things that youth can be doing with their out-of-school time can be important. Schools and structured OST programs should communicate with youth employers and find a way to link employment to other kinds of activities going on for youth.

Future research could look at how different combinations cause different outcomes based on youth demographics or characteristics.

What’s next in your work?

I just started a tenure track job in the sociology department at Bowdoin so I’ll be teaching here, and I’m starting out teaching on race and ethnicity, research methods and sociology of education, and I’m really excited about that. I hope to continue researching out-of-school time in various contexts using both national data sets and also doing qualitative research. It will be an interesting transition from California to Maine because the communities of students are so different. I think there will be some similarities. Portland, Maine, is an official refugee resettlement community, so it’s a very different immigrant community than California and has very different out-of-school time programs.
Field, and it’s powerful for them to have new, eye-opening experiences in their own neighborhoods.”

When UTB is in the Center, youth apply what they’ve learned in the field in global environmental contexts, often using the media lab. Youth explore topics such as consumerism from a 360 view—examining advertisements, reflecting on their own consumption, studying the consumption of others and participating in an experiential lesson in distinguishing between “wants” and “needs.”

Upon successful completion of the program in year one, UTB youth are given a stipend and offered the opportunity to apply for UTB II—a second summer with increased leadership responsibility in the program. UTB II gives youth the opportunity to explore career options while gaining a deeper understanding of environmental issues that affect their community.

For more information on the Crissy Field Center, visit www.crissyfield.org.

Meta analysis wasn’t possible, but we’ve done a very detailed narrative synthesis which is published in the Review of Educational Research.

Our current education administration wants to extend the school day and year as a way to prevent U.S. students from falling behind their international counterparts. It’s an expensive proposition, plus it can take away time from other meaningful things, so I think it should definitely be explored thoughtfully before any policy changes are made.