

Project Statement

Project Title: Lecturing in Clinical Psychology and Applications to Parents and Children

Interest in the Appointment and Relevant Experience

In seeking a Fulbright teaching award, I offer several attributes that would allow me to make a contribution to higher education in the Czech Republic. These include my education, my teaching and applied research experiences, and my administrative experience directing a graduate training program in clinical psychology. This is an especially timely moment for an exchange of ideas on the topic of clinical psychology education in the U.S. and the Czech Republic, as recent developments in the Czech Republic afford new opportunities to develop its higher education institutions. The strong tradition of higher education in the Czech Republic was constrained by political events and policies during the Second World War and its aftermath. However, the Higher Education Act of 1990 restored academic rights, freedoms, and autonomy to higher education institutions in the Czech Republic, and it spurred the development of enhanced teaching capabilities. My work in an urban area (Chicago) and with children and families of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds has sensitized me to the need for psychologists to understand the social, political, and cultural influences on human behavior. Programs in clinical psychology must prepare students to work with a broad range of persons and to understand the contexts in which they live. The knowledge base of clinical psychology has grown substantially in the past 30 years, both in understanding the complexities of human behavior and in developing empirically-supported interventions to address human problems. I am greatly interested in sharing my knowledge of the United States and its clinical psychology methods and practice with interested Czech students and colleagues, and of learning from my hosts, in a mutual educational exchange.

I am pleased to have received an invitation from the Charles University in Prague to teach psychology and work with students in its Department of Psychology. I believe my academic and professional background will be a good fit with the Charles University academic program, and I look forward to contributing to its teaching faculty. Through an initial letter of invitation and subsequent correspondence, the psychology department has confirmed its continued interest in my joining their faculty during the winter semester of 2004.

I entered the field of psychology with a passion and commitment to foster the best possible outcomes for children, and this remains the central motivation for my work. My psychological research and practice have focused on understanding how childrearing patterns and parent-child interactions influence children's socialization, and on developing effective psychosocial interventions for children and parents. As a graduate student in developmental and child psychology at the University of Kansas some three decades ago, I studied several psychological theories of human behavior. I was especially attracted to a behavioral approach, based on the principles of learning theory, because of its emphasis on objective data and rigorous standards of scientific proof. After receiving an undergraduate degree in education and teaching junior high school for two years before entering graduate school, I was humbled by how little I knew about how to help children who were unmotivated or unable to achieve in public school classrooms. In graduate school, I learned methods of psychosocial treatment and applied research, and I began conducting systematic investigations on ways to help improve psychosocial (i.e., behavioral, educational, social, and health) functioning in children, often through parent-focused interventions. In the ensuing years, I have expanded my knowledge of psychological applications through teaching, applied research, and practice. I propose to share my experience with Czech students as part of a Fulbright teaching appointment.

A particular area of my professional interest concerns families who come to the attention of child welfare or legal authorities due to child abuse or neglect. Although child maltreatment can occur

anywhere, the problems are more prevalent in urban areas. Families at risk for maltreatment often have multiple problems that complicate the potential solutions devised by social service systems or policymakers. I first became involved in working with parents and children with a history of child maltreatment over 15 years ago when I moved to Chicago. I began working with teenage mothers who were wards of the state due to a history of abuse or neglect in their families of origin. Many of these teenagers were unprepared for parenthood, and they often suffered from other problems such as poor academic achievement, mental health conditions, and unstable interpersonal relationships. I received five years of funding from the state child welfare system to develop a model of psychosocial assessment of the young mothers and their young children. This assessment served as the first step toward providing the teen mothers with individualized services to help prepare them to care for their children and to develop skills for independent living.

As an outgrowth of this work, I was invited to join in the development of an interdisciplinary project in the juvenile court system to improve the use of clinical information in judicial decision-making on children, parents, and families. This project, titled Clinical Evaluation and Services Initiative, has been underway for the past six years, and I have been integrally involved in providing clinical psychology expertise. Based on our applied research, we developed a comprehensive reform model for improving the use of clinical information in legal decisions in the child protection system. Our project is currently being pilot-tested in several courtrooms, thus providing a real-life laboratory for systems reform of the largest juvenile court system in the U.S. As evidenced by my work in the child welfare and juvenile court systems, I have a strong commitment to improving child welfare practice. I would very much like to exchange ideas with psychology students and faculty in the Czech Republic regarding our countries' practices of dealing with issues of child maltreatment. Although the Czech Republic is much smaller in size and population than the U.S., no country is immune to the problems of child abuse and neglect. Three-quarters of the Czech population live in urban settings, and it is likely that some of these persons share the vulnerabilities of persons in the U.S. In particular, ethnic minorities, such as African Americans and Latinos in the U.S. and Romani in the Czech Republic, are overrepresented in child abuse and neglect statistics.

Scholars and practitioners concerned with children's welfare and the struggles of families have much to gain by listening to one another's analyses and proposed solutions to these complicated issues. Many maltreated children in the U.S. are of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural heritage, and some are first- or second-generation immigrants to America. Eastern and Western Europe also face challenges in understanding and meeting the social needs of their increasingly diverse inhabitants. An international and cross-cultural perspective is in keeping with the growing interdependence of the global community and the realization that it is not possible to solve large-scale social problems in isolation. An exchange of ideas from U.S. and Czech perspectives has the potential to make a significant contribution to shaping more humane and effective strategies for improving services to children and families in our countries.

In addition to teaching courses as a Fulbright grantee, I also would be happy to contribute by consulting on curriculum and program development in the field of clinical psychology. In 1986, I completed a formal post-doctoral retraining program in clinical psychology at the University of Mississippi. This program entailed several courses and a full-time, one-year post-doctoral fellowship at the Boston Children's Hospital, which is affiliated with Harvard University. Since 1986, I have held full-time appointments as a faculty member in clinical psychology; in 1995, I was promoted to full professor at DePaul University. In 2002, I was appointed Director of Clinical Training for our program. The clinical program at DePaul consists of 11 full-time faculty members (of a total of 27 in the psychology department), and the program has held continuous accreditation as a doctoral training program by the American Psychological Association since 1976. We are currently preparing for our accreditation review, which occurs every seven years. The process entails preparation of a comprehensive self-study document, which I am currently writing, and a site visit by representatives of the American Psychological

Association, which will occur in the winter of 2003. In addition to these experiences, I served for three years as Director of Clinical Training during my previous faculty appointment at Illinois Institute of Technology. Thus, I am familiar with curriculum, program development, and training issues of clinical psychology programs. I would be happy to share my experiences about training in clinical psychology with Czech educators, and I look forward to gaining a broader perspective that would enrich my ability to serve as training director at DePaul.

Teaching Experience and Planned Teaching Activities

Professionally, I have much to offer in the teaching of clinical psychology. I have been engaged in teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in academic psychology for over 15 years. At the undergraduate level, I have taught Abnormal Psychology, Psychology Research Seminar, and Psychology of Exceptional Children. At the graduate level, I have taught Applied Behavior Analysis, Assessment of Family Interactions, Basic Clinical Skills, Behavioral Assessment, Behavior Modification and Therapy, Child Behavioral Medicine, Child Behavior Therapy, Family Interventions in Child Abuse, and Pediatric Psychology. Because clinical psychology training in the U.S. occurs at the graduate level, I have greater experience teaching at this level; however, I enjoy working with students of varying levels of experience and can adapt my courses to the expectations and backgrounds of students. During the past few years, I have worked with colleagues at DePaul to create a new master's degree program for graduate students interested in a child welfare concentration within public services. I developed syllabi for two new courses in Child Maltreatment and Child Welfare Practice.

Among the courses listed above, I have included syllabi for two: Behavior Modification and Therapy and Child Welfare Practice. The behavior modification and therapy course is a required part of the doctoral program for students in the child track of our clinical psychology program. It covers the basic concepts and methods of a behavioral approach to human problems, and surveys the literature on empirically-supported treatments for adult and child disorders, many of which are behavioral or cognitive-behavioral in orientation. In addition to didactic activities, students carry out a behavior modification project as a class assignment, and they write a review paper on applications of behavioral psychology research to clinical practice in an area of their interest. This course generates lively discussions about how psychological treatments can be applied to cases similar to those the students are seeing in their clinical practica. It exposes students to research evidence on successful interventions applied under systematic conditions, and it promotes thinking about the challenges of applying treatment outside a research context, such as in community mental health settings. Because students present some of the course material to each other, they become very engaged in the subject matter, and their review papers show an impressive level of understanding.

The Child Welfare Practice course provides students with an overview of child welfare issues in a seminar format. It is intended to inform students about the political and social conditions that have helped shape practice, highlight trends in major services and practices within them, develop skills for working with client populations, and sensitize students to ethics and values inherent in child welfare services. Throughout the course, issues of poverty and services for children and families with diverse conditions are covered. The course emphasizes critical thinking and analytic skills for confronting the complex problems affecting children and families in the child welfare system.

These courses are both suitable to graduate students in clinical psychology. There are several ways I could modify the courses for Czech students, especially to allow for comparison between the concepts, assumptions, and methods underlying U.S. practice and those present in the Czech Republic. Students, for example, could read from both U.S. and Czech sources, and we could discuss similarities and differences in clinical psychology and child welfare practice across our countries. I would also invite interested faculty members from the host institution to visit the class and share their perspectives.

During my Fulbright appointment, I propose to teach courses in the general areas of (a) clinical psychology methods, (b) psychosocial interventions with parents and children, and/or (c) the contemporary status of children's welfare. Given that I have taught several different courses and have a range of experiences, I can adapt the nature of my teaching to fit the needs of the host institution. For example, if I were to teach clinical psychology methods, I would draw on my experiences teaching behavior modification and therapy. In addition, I would use my experiences from teaching introductory courses on abnormal psychology, basic clinical skills, and behavioral assessment to develop the course content. To the extent feasible, I enjoy integrating both didactic methods and practice activities in my teaching. Thus, I would develop experiential assignments related to the course content that would allow students to try out their skills (such as interviewing a lay person about a problem or observing children interacting in a play setting) in order to foster the connection between concepts and practice.

I have much experience related to the topic of psychosocial interventions with parents and children that would serve as the basis of a course. I have taught several courses on interventions with children with developmental, behavioral, health, and/or social problems; likewise, I have taught several courses on interventions with parents in a family or child welfare context. Because working with parents is at the heart of my applied research and practice experiences, I would love the opportunity to teach a course on parenting that incorporates a cross-cultural perspective. One book I would be likely to use is "Parents and the Dynamics of Child Rearing" by George W. Holden (1997, Westview Press). This book provides an excellent overview of theories of parent-child relationships, models of studying the determinants of parental behavior, associations between parenting and children's outcomes, attributes of effective parents, how parenting can go awry, and contemporary family problems and social policy. I would bring a cultural perspective to the course by considering parenting from differing cultural vantage points and examining the clashes in parenting that arise from cultural beliefs and values. One apt source is a special issue of the journal *Developmental Psychology* (1998, issue 4) entitled "Social and Emotional Development: A Cross-Culture Perspective." This issue contains several articles on parenting and parent-child relationships across world-wide cultures. This course could be designed to fit either a graduate or undergraduate audience.

For a course relating to the contemporary status of children's welfare, my course on child welfare practice would be a good beginning. This course would examine statistics on how children are faring in the U.S. and the Czech Republic, in relation to other countries worldwide. It would then look for explanations for similarities and differences between the status of children's welfare in our countries, exploring the political, social, economic, and cultural factors that impact children. I also would like to promote the students' thinking on how to foster children's welfare through research, practice, policy, and advocacy. This course could be created for students at either a graduate or undergraduate level.

My first teaching experience was as a junior high school teacher on the island of Guam, in the early 1970s. Guam is a U.S. territory, and most students there reflect a blend of native Chamorro culture, Hispanic culture, and American culture. For most students, English was a second language. (My students on Guam gave me the nickname "20-20" because I watched them during assignments and exams, instructing them to work independently when they routinely used copying as a method of mastering assignments in English.) From personal experiences teaching in Guam and Chicago, I have become sensitive to the needs of culturally diverse students. I expect to adapt aspects of previously taught courses to meet the cultural and pedagogical differences of Czech students. I use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies, including lectures, discussions, student-led discussions, videos, practice exercises, and research assignments. My experience with multiple pedagogies and with students who are just learning English will be valuable in adapting both the pace and the intensity of classes and assignments to Czech students' language abilities. I expect that the students' motivation and commitment to their studies will help them overcome linguistic barriers.

In addition to my academic teaching experience, I have extensive experience supervising students on master's and dissertation research. I very much enjoy research supervision, and I would be happy to assist in this role as part of a Fulbright appointment. My students typically conduct applied research, some using traditional group designs and others using single-subject designs. Occasionally, my students have conducted program evaluations or qualitative interviews for their research, in order to carry out preliminary investigations on innovative topics. One of my current doctoral students is examining the views of judicial court professionals (judges, defense attorneys, and guardians ad litem, who represent children) regarding the topic of minimal parenting competence. She recently learned that she has received an award from the American Psychological Association's Division on Child, Youth, and Families for the quality and significance of her dissertation proposal.

International Perspective

Besides my academic preparation, I bring other personal experiences that demonstrate my collegiality, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and ability to serve as a cultural ambassador. I have traveled to over 20 countries on four continents, although I have had only brief exposure to countries in Eastern Europe. In 1998, I was selected to participate in a university-sponsored study tour to Thailand and Vietnam, traveling with 19 other faculty and staff. Over three weeks in Southeast Asia, we had the opportunity to meet colleagues from a number of universities, the American ambassador to Vietnam, and Vincentian sisters working in Vietnam (thanks to DePaul's status as a Vincentian Catholic university). This was a fascinating and eye-opening experience, familiarizing me with the living conditions in cultures different from my own. This year, I was selected to participate in a similar faculty study tour to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. During our travels, I was struck by the depth and range of Chinese cultural traditions, and I was able to meet with a psychology professor in Beijing about the state of the field.

Beyond my professional travel, I enjoy international traveling as a pastime. My husband, son, and I traveled to Australia and New Zealand for the Millennium, and we toured Scandinavia in the summer of 2001. One reason for seeking a Fulbright at this time is that I want my son, who is now eight years old, to have the experience of living and going to school in a foreign country as a child. I believe the exposure to other environments provides valuable lessons in adapting to new situations, respect for diverse perspectives, and appreciation of the resources we take for granted.

Extensive travel within the U.S. also gives me an added background for teaching clinical psychology from an American perspective. I have visited all the major American cities, and I have lived in the Midwest (Kansas, Nebraska, and Illinois), New England (Massachusetts), and the South (Mississippi). Chicago, where I now reside, has many citizens of Czech descent, including some close friends of mine whose travel to the Czech Republic aroused my interest in going there myself.

Anticipated Impact of Fulbright Teaching Award

My objectives in applying for a Fulbright award are both to share my knowledge of psychology with Czech students and to bring back an enriched perspective of Czech psychology and culture that I can share with DePaul and Chicago. DePaul University has a strong commitment to international collaboration, as evidenced by its annual sponsorship of the faculty study tour and its diverse network of foreign study programs for students. I would be interested in developing a foreign study program for DePaul students to the Czech Republic based on my experiences there. I also intend to incorporate concepts and insights from my experiences abroad into my courses, applied research, and consultation activities. I also would be pleased to offer presentations to academic, community, and cultural organizations in Chicago about my experiences in the Czech Republic. Overall, I anticipate that I will gain enormously from a Fulbright teaching appointment, and I eagerly await this opportunity.