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July 2017 Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow: Yunsoo Park, Ph.D.

2016-2017 Federal Executive Branch Policy Fellow

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As I pursued my PhD in Clinical Psychology, I continually considered how I wanted to apply my clinical and research training to a career path that encompassed my diverse interests. Throughout graduate school, I had gained significant experience in conducting research that focused on specific topics and outcomes of interest, such as the development of aggression across the lifespan. In addition, I had provided mental health care for youth, adults, and families struggling with a variety of psychological issues. As I neared the completion of my graduate training, I developed a desire to expand my knowledge and experience in a broader capacity that had federal- and state-level implications for benefitting the lives of youth and families. Specifically I wanted to learn how different kinds of scientific research could be utilized to impact policies and programs to ultimately improve various psychological outcomes. Accordingly, I also became interested in the effective translation and dissemination of research to a wide range of audiences, such as policymakers, practitioners, and community members. As an executive branch policy fellow at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), I am ideally situated to develop and refine my skills and interests to address these

very goals.

The National Institute of Justice is the research, development, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Justice and is committed to using science to advance knowledge and understanding of issues related to crime and justice. I work in the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) in the Violence and Victimization Research Division (VVRD), and am involved in a range of research portfolios including Teen Dating Violence, Children Exposed to Violence, and Elder Abuse. Given my desire to be immersed in various topics pertaining to crime and victimization, this wide range of projects suits my interests and goals perfectly. Thus, my day-to-day duties vary to a great extent, ranging from organizing special topic meetings with internal and external experts and advisors to consulting with partner organizations on aspects of national program evaluations.

In accomplishing these tasks, I have greatly appreciated seeing firsthand how NIJ scientists interact with a range of individuals and organizations, including academic researchers, practitioners, and other professionals with expertise in the field, to encourage research agendas that are most imperative for prevention and response to crime. For instance, I have had the opportunity to observe review panels to gain a better understanding of how funding decisions are made with diverse inputs and how experts with potentially differing viewpoints reach consensus decisions. I have also greatly appreciated being involved in discussions with researchers, practitioners, and other experts regarding various components of project planning and implementation.

Relatedly, I have also had many opportunities to understand the complex and dynamic partnerships within and outside of federal agencies. Interagency workgroups provide a venue for communication and exchange of information about relevant and important research, evaluation, and program efforts across many government agencies. For instance, teen dating violence research efforts began with a series of workshops around 2006-2007 that eventually led to the formation of a federal interagency workgroup. I have had the opportunity to be highly involved in leading this workgroup. For example, I helped to coordinate a webinar for teen dating violence awareness month featuring several expert researchers and practitioners in the field.

I have also greatly appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the communication of scientific research to a wide range of audiences. I have worked with the communications team at NIJ to write website summaries based on final reports of NIJfunded projects. This experience has allowed me to learn and engage in a very different style of writing in the context of social media, compared to the academic writing that I have grown

accustomed to. In addition, I have had the opportunity to contribute as a first author to a book chapter focusing on outcomes related to teen dating violence. My research background has been crucial in completing these types of tasks, but it has also been essential to learn new methods of writing and communicating for different types of audiences.

I am extremely grateful to NIJ and SRCD for this fellowship opportunity and the invaluable experiences and knowledge that I have gained thus far. I am excited for the lessons, challenges, and opportunities that I will encounter during my upcoming second year of the fellowship at NIJ!