

ROBERT B. OLSEN
Research Professor
George Washington Institute of Public Policy
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Current and Prior Positions

Senior Fellow, George Washington Institute of Public Policy (April 2019-present)
Associate Director, Education Studies Practice, Westat (April 2018-December 2021)
Research Professor, George Washington Institute of Public Policy (April 2017-March 2019)
Independent Researcher, Rob Olsen LLC (August 2016-December 2018)
Principal Scientist, Abt Associates (October 2007-August 2016)
Senior Research Associate, Urban Institute (February 2006-October 2007)
Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research (February 1999-January 2006)
Research Assistant/Programmer, Mathematica Policy Research (June 1990-June 1993)

Education

Ph.D., Cornell University, Labor Economics, 1999
Dissertation: Essays in wage variation across industries and education groups
Dissertation Committee: Ronald Ehrenberg, George Jakubson, Gary Fields, Kausik Basu

M.S., Cornell University, Labor Economics, 1995
Thesis: The effect of price on the decision to attend Cornell

B.A., Williams College, 1990
Thesis: The non-wage benefits of college education: An analytical survey and new empirical results

Expertise

- **Impact evaluations.** Over 20 years of experience designing and conducting impact evaluations in education and other policy areas. Published on a range of methodological issues, including random assignment, selection bias, attrition bias, generalizability, and missing data methods.
- **Evidence standards for impact evaluations.** Over 10 years developing and applying evidence standards for impact evaluations (e.g., *What Works Clearinghouse*).
- **Generalizability or external validity.** Over 10 years researching the generalizability of randomized trials. Awarded over \$3.6 million in competitive grants from federal agencies and foundations. Published 7 papers in top policy and education journals and a new guide to generalizability for the Institute of Education Sciences.

Awards

Best Scholarly Article Award, Abt Associates, 2013

Competitive Grants for Scholarly Research

Site Selection When Participation is Voluntary: Improving the External Validity of Randomized Trials

Funder: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
Award #: R305D190020
PI: Dr. Robert Olsen (Westat)
Co-PI: Dr. Stephen Bell (Westat)
Amount: \$899,034
Period: 2019-present

Using Evidence from National Studies to Improve Local Policy Decisions that Affect Youth

Funder: William T. Grant Foundation
PI: Dr. Elizabeth Stuart (Johns Hopkins University)
Co-PI: Dr. Robert Olsen (Westat)
Amount: \$595,785
Period: 2019-present

Statistical Methods for Using Rigorous Evaluation Results to Improve Local Education Policy Decisions

Funder: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
Award #: R305D150003
PI: Dr. Elizabeth Stuart (Johns Hopkins University)
Co-PI: Dr. Robert Olsen (Abt Associates)
Amount: \$896,361
Period: 2015-2019

Enhancing External Validity in Existing STEM Evaluations

Funder: National Science Foundation, Division of Research on Learning
Award #: 1335843
PI: Dr. Elizabeth Stuart (Johns Hopkins University)
Co-PIs: Drs. Robert Olsen and Stephen Bell (Abt Associates) and Dr. Larry Orr (JHU)
Amount: \$796,205
Period: 2013-2017

Testing Different Methods of Improving the External Validity of Impact Evaluations in Education

Funder: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
Award #: R305D150003
PI: Dr. Robert Olsen (Abt Associates)
Co-PIs: Dr. Stephen Bell (Abt Associates), Dr. Larry Orr (Johns Hopkins University)
Amount: \$489,178
Period: 2010-2013

Journal Publications

- Orr, L. L., Olsen, R. B., Bell, S. H., Schmid, I., Shivji, A., & Stuart, E.A. (2019). Using the results from rigorous multisite evaluations to inform local policy decisions. *Journal of Public Policy Analysis and Management*, 38(4), 978-1003.
- Tipton, E., & Olsen, R. B. (2018). A review of statistical methods for generalizing from evaluations of educational interventions. *Educational Researcher*, 47(8), 516-524.
- Olsen, R. B., Bell, S. H., & Nichols, A. (2018). Using preferred applicant random assignment (PARA) to reduce randomization bias in randomized trials of discretionary programs. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 37(1), 167-180.
- Stuart, E. A., Bell, S. H., Ebnesajjad, C., Olsen, R. B., & Orr, L. L. (2017). Characteristics of school districts that participate in rigorous national educational evaluations. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 10(1), 168-206.
- Olsen, R. B., & Orr, L. L. (2016). On the “where” of social experiments: Selecting more representative samples to inform policy. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 152, 61-71.
- Bell, S. H., Olsen, R. B., & Orr, L. L. (2016). Estimates of bias when impact evaluations select sites purposively. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(2), 318-335.
- Olsen, R. B., Orr, L. L., Bell, S. H., & Stuart, E. A. (2013). External validity in policy evaluations that choose sites purposively. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(1), 107-121.

Papers Under Review

- Fay, R. E. & Olsen, R. B. (2021). *Comparing balanced and probability site selection methods for randomized trials in education*. Revise and submit.
- Litwok, D., Nichols, A., Shivji, A., & Olsen, R. B. (2022). *Selecting districts and schools for impact studies in education: A Simulation study of different strategies*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Olsen, R. B., Orr, L. L., Bell, S. H., Petraglia, E., Badillo-Goicoechea, E., Miyaoka, A., & Stuart E. A. (2022). *Using a Multi-Site RCT to Predict Impacts for a Single Site: Do Better Data and Methods Yield More Accurate Predictions?* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Book Chapters

- McEwan, P. J., & Olsen, R. B. (2010). Admissions lotteries in charter schools. In J.R. Betts and P.T. Hill (Eds.), *Taking measure of charter schools: Better assessments, better policymaking, better schools*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Olsen, R. B., Kelso, M. L., & Decker, P. T. (2002). Predicting the exhaustion of unemployment compensation. In C.J. O’Leary, R.W. Eberts, and S.A. Wandner (Eds.), *Targeting employment services*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute.

Ehrenberg, R. G., Rothstein, D., & Olsen, R. B. (1999). Do Historically Black Colleges and Universities enhance the college attendance of African American youths? In P. Moen, D.D. McClain, and H.A. Walker (Eds.), *A nation divided: Diversity, inequality, and community in American society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Reports on Evaluation Methods

Tipton, E., & Olsen, R. B. (2022). *Enhancing the Generalizability of Impact Studies in Education (NCEE 2022-003)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022003/>.

Olsen, R. B., Unlu, F., Price, C., & Jaciw, A. P. (2011). *Estimating the impacts of educational interventions using state tests or study-administered tests (NCEE 2012-4016)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED524806.pdf>.

Olsen, R. B., Unlu, F., Price, C., & Jaciw, A. P. (2011). *Estimating the impacts of educational interventions using state tests or study-administered tests (NCEE 2012-4016)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED524806.pdf>.

Puma, M. J., Olsen, R. B., Bell, S. H., & Price, C. (2009). *What to do when data are missing in group randomized controlled trials (NCEE 2009-0049)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED511781.pdf>.

Kauff, J., Olsen, R., & Fraker, T. (2002). Nonrespondents and nonresponse bias: Evidence from a survey of former welfare recipients in Iowa. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Retrieved from <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/-/media/publications/pdfs/nonresponse.pdf>.

Olsen, R. B., & Decker, P. T. (2001). Testing different methods for estimating the impacts of Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services Systems. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Research and Evaluation Monograph Series 01-G. Retrieved from <wdr.doleta.gov/opr/fulltext/01-testwprss.pdf>.

Reports on Evaluation Findings

Webber, A., Rui, N., Garrison-Mogren, R., Olsen, R. B., & Gutmann, B. (2019). *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts three years after students applied. (NCEE 2019-4006)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED594875.pdf>).

- Boulay, B., Goodson, B., Olsen, R., McCormick, R., Darrow, C., Frye, M., Gan, K., Harvill, E., & Sarna, M. (2018). *The Investing in Innovation Fund: Summary of 67 evaluations, Final report (NCEE 2018-4013)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED583834.pdf>).
- Epps, S. R., Jackson, R. H., Olsen, R. B., Shivji, A., & Roy, R. (2016). *Upward Bound at 50: Reporting on implementation practices today (NCEE 2017-4005)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED570483.pdf>).
- Olsen, R. B., Bradley, M. C., Price, C., Herman, R., Garet, M. S., Bos, J. M., & Puma, M. (2009). *Design options for an evaluation to turn around chronically low performing schools*. Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates.
- Olsen, R., Seftor, N., Silva, T., Myers, D., DesRoches, D., & Young, J. (2007). *Upward Bound Math-Science: Program description and interim impact estimates*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497631.pdf>).
- Myers, D., Olsen, R., Seftor, N., Tuttle, C., & Young, J. (2004). *The impacts of Regular Upward Bound: Results from the third follow-up data collection*. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED518667.pdf>).
- Fraker, T. M., Levy, D. N., Olsen, R. B., & Stapulonis, R. A. (2004). *The Welfare-to-Work Grants Program: Enrollee outcomes one year after program entry*. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (<https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/73516/report-2sided.pdf>).
- Fraker, T. M., Ross, C. M., Stapulonis, R. A., Olsen, R. B., Kovac, M. D., Dion, M. R., & Rangarajan, A. (2002). *The evaluation of welfare reform in Iowa: Final impact report*. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (<https://www.mathematica.org/download-media?MediaItemId={00F1F495-78FE-495A-8CCD-2AA5CB1ABA75}>).
- Decker, P. T., Olsen, R. B., Freeman, L., & Klepinger, D. H. (2000). *Assisting Unemployment Insurance claimants: The long-term impacts of the Job Search Assistance Demonstration*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, OWS, Occasional Paper 2000-02, February 2000 (<wdr.doleta.gov/owsdrr/00-2/00-02.pdf>).

Invited Presentations

- External Validity of Impact Evaluations. Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy, March 2019.
- Repurposing Standard Methods to Improve the External Validity of Impact Evaluations. Spring Meeting of Institutional Representatives, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, May 2018.

Using Preferred Applicant Random Assignment to Reduce Randomization Bias in Randomized Trials of Discretionary Programs. George Washington University, September 2017.

Using Preferred Applicant Random Assignment to Reduce Randomization Bias in Randomized Trials of Discretionary Programs. The Urban Institute, March 2017.

Early Evidence on External Validity Bias in Impact Evaluations of Educational Interventions. George Washington Institute of Public Policy, January 2017.

Statistical Methods for Generalizing Impact Findings from Randomized Trials. NORC, January 2018. RTI International, January 2017.

Bias from Purposive Site Selection in Impact Evaluations: Early Evidence and Implications. MDRC, October 2016. Mathematica, November 2016.

Selecting More Representative Samples in Social Experiments. Administration for Children and Families, May 2014.

Design Innovations for Improved External Validity: Selecting Sites for Social Experiments. Abt-APPAM sponsored forum titled *Social Experiments in Practice: The Why, When, Where, and How of Experimental Design & Analysis*, April 2014.

Purposive Site Selection in Multi-Site Impact Evaluations. Mathematica Policy Research, June 2013.

Purposive Site Selection in Social Experiments. Center on Education Policy and Workforce Competitiveness, University of Virginia, October 2011.

External Validity in Policy Evaluations that Choose Sites Purposively. Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, August 2011 (with Larry Orr, Stephen Bell, and Elizabeth Stuart).

Missing Data in Evaluations of Educational Interventions and Programs. IES Predoctoral Program at the University of Pennsylvania, October 2010.

Missing Data Issues in Randomized Control Trials: What to Do When Data Are Missing? NCEE Methods Group Meeting, October 2008 (with Michael Puma).

School and District Lotteries and Lottery-Based Studies. Regional Educational Laboratories Directors' Meeting, U.S. Department of Education, February 2007.

Using Rigorous Research Synthesis to Identify Effective Education Policies. The Spencer Foundation, February 2007.

Upward Bound and the Effects of Pre-College Programs. MDRC-sponsored event on high school reform, November 2005.

Wise Choices About School Choice: Evidence-Based Policy and Policy Research. Conference to commemorate the centennial of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, October 2005.

Conference Presentations

Selecting Balanced Samples of Sites for RCTs in Education, Annual conference, Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, September 2021.

Using the Results from Rigorous Multi-Site Evaluations to Improve Local Policy Decisions. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Annual Principal Investigators Meeting, January 2018.

Making Generalizations from Experimental Findings: An Introduction to New Methods. Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association, November 2017.

Assessing Statistical Methods for Generalizing Effect Estimates from Trials to Target Populations: Learning from Real World Scenarios. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2016.

Sample Size Requirements for Education RCTs that Select Sites Randomly. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2015.

Obtaining More Representative Samples for Random Assignment Experiments. 17th Annual Welfare Research and Evaluation Conference, May 2014.

A Conceptual Model of Purposive Site Selection in Impact Evaluations. Annual conference, Society for Prevention Research, June 2011.

A Conceptual Model of Purposive Site Selection in Impact Evaluations. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2010.

Estimating the Impacts of Educational Interventions Using State Tests and Study-Administered Tests. Annual conference, Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, March 2010.

Handling Missing Data in Group Randomized Trials in Education: Simulation Results. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2009.

A Novel Design for Improving External Validity in Random Assignment Experiments. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2007.

School and District Lotteries and Lottery-Based Studies. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2006.

Wise Choices About School Choice: Evidence-Based Policy and Policy Research. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2005.

Policy Evaluation and Federal Spending: The Effect of OMB Program Ratings on the Federal Budget. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2004.

The Effect of Upward Bound Participation on College Attendance: Interim Results. Annual conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2003.

Upward Bound Math Science: Overview of the Evaluation and Early Descriptive Findings. Annual conference, Council for Opportunity in Education, September 2003.

The Impacts of Upward Bound: High School Experiences and College Access. Annual conference, Council for Opportunity in Education, September 2002 (with David Myers).

Measuring the Well-Being of Families That Left TANF: Nonresponse in Iowa's TANF Leavers Survey. National Welfare Reform Evaluation Conference, June 2002.

Comparing Experimental and Nonexperimental Impact Estimates for a Job Search Assistance Program. North American Winter Meeting, Econometric Society, January 2001.

Assisting UI Claimants: The Impacts of the Job Search Assistance Demonstration. Briefing for senior administrators, U.S. Department of Labor, January 2000 (with Paul T. Decker).

Long-Run Impacts of Iowa's Welfare Reform: Results from Administrative Data. Annual conference, Southern Economic Association, November 2000.

Competing Explanations for Interindustry Wage Variation." Annual conference, Southern Economic Association, November 1998.

Projects to Conduct Impact Evaluations

Quality Support Advisor, Study of the Impact of English Learner Reclassification Policies (2021-present). This regression discontinuity design impact evaluation is estimating the effect of reclassification for English learners to inform policy decisions about where to set reclassification thresholds. Responsibilities: Provide technical guidance on how to design and conduct the study so that the study findings will generalize as much as possible to English learners nationwide. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Technical Expert, Study of Strategies to Address Unfinished Learning in Math (2021-present). This randomized controlled trial (RCT) is testing different strategies for using education technology products to improve math achievement in low-performing, Title I schools. Responsibilities: Provide technical guidance on how to design and conduct the study so that the study findings will generalize as much as possible to low performing, Title I schools nationwide. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Senior Technical Advisor, Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (2018-2019). The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program provides need-based annual scholarships to DC children to attend a participating private school of their parent's choice. This RCT measured program impacts on student achievement, student and parent satisfaction, and student and parent perceptions of school safety. Responsibilities: Provide technical guidance on the analysis and reporting of findings. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Principal Investigator, Evaluation of the Transitional Living Program (2012-2017). The Transitional Living Program provides supervised shelter and services to older homeless youth (ages 16-21). The evaluation was to include a randomized control trial (RCT) to measure program impacts on youth safety, permanent connections, self-sufficiency, and well-being, but it was redesigned as an implementation study based on direction from the client. Responsibilities: Provided technical leadership to the design of the impact evaluation. (Client: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.)

Consultant, Recommendations for Evaluating the Impact of Teen and Unintended Pregnancy Prevention on Health, Social, and Economic Outcomes (2016-2017). While prior evaluations have estimated the impact of pregnancy prevention interventions on whether women have a pregnancy, none of these evaluations have examined the health, social, and economic outcomes of the mother or the child. This project developed design options estimating the impacts of pregnancy prevention interventions on these outcomes. Responsibilities: Develop and draft report chapter on design options that involve random assignment. (Client: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.)

Principal Investigator, Design and Conduct of a Study of TRIO Implementation and Outcomes (2010-2017). TRIO programs are designed to improve access to college for disadvantaged students. The project developed design options for an impact evaluation of promising practices in Upward Bound and examined Upward Bound implementation through a survey of Upward Bound project directors. Responsibilities: Led the development of design options for an impact evaluation and co-authored to the implementation report. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Project Director, Evaluation for the Robin Hood College Success Prize (2014-2016). This randomized controlled trial (RCT) tested the effects of three technology-based interventions designed to help community college students persist in and complete a two-year degree program. The RCT is being conducted within a competition that will award up to \$5 million in prize money to intervention developers whose interventions are found to be effective. Responsibilities: Led the evaluation team in designing and implementing the RCT. (Client: Robin Hood Foundation.)

Principal Investigator, Upward Bound College Advising Demonstration (2013-2016). This study is a randomized controlled trial to test the effects of an intervention to give students in the Upward Bound program more information about the net costs and benefits of attending different types of colleges. Responsibilities: Provided technical leadership to the design and implementation of the impact evaluation. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Project Quality Advisor, Random Assignment Evaluation of Youth Corps (2009-2011). Youth corps combine intensive community service with job training and education. The evaluation randomly assigned eligible applicants to youth corps or a control group and estimated the program's impacts on educational attainment and civic engagement. Responsibilities: Advised the study team on the analysis and reporting of findings, reviewed the study's final report. (Client: Corporation for National and Community Service.)

Methodologist for Randomized Trials, The Regional Education Laboratory for the Southeast (2007-2011). The REL-Southeast conducted two randomized controlled trials of the effects of educational interventions: one designed to improve vocabulary and reading achievement of students early in elementary school, and one to improve to math and science achievement for students later in elementary school. Responsibilities: Advised the study teams in the design, analysis, and reporting of study findings, helped them in navigating the external review process, and reviewed study reports. (Client: U.S. Department of Education.)

Project Director, Design Options for an Evaluation to Turn Around Chronically Low Performing Schools (2008-2009). Abt Associates developed design options for evaluations that would randomly assign school "turnaround" interventions to low performing schools or school districts. Responsibilities: Directed all aspects of the work, including the development of design options and the production of a design report. (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Research.)

Co-Principal Investigator, Impact Evaluation of Upward Bound's Increased Emphasis on Higher-Risk Students (2006-2008). The Upward Bound program is designed to help disadvantaged high school students prepare for college. For this project, Abt Associates led a randomized controlled trial of the effects of the program in randomly selected Upward Bound programs. The study was cancelled by the U.S. Department of Education midway through random assignment. Responsibilities: Provided technical leadership to the design and implementation of the evaluation. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.)

Projects to Develop and Apply Evidence Standards for Impact Evaluations _____

Advisory Panel on Implementation and Generalizability, Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (2020). The Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) reviews impact studies of labor force programs and interventions against its standards to identify rigorous evidence. Responsibilities: Advise CLEAR on how to incorporate evidence on implementation into its standards, with a focus on implications for generalizability. (Client: ICF, for the U.S. Department of Labor, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Advisory Panel on Missing Data, What Works Clearinghouse (2016-2017). The What Works Clearinghouse reviews studies of the impacts of educational interventions against its standards to identify rigorous evidence. Responsibilities: Advise the What Works Clearinghouse on whether and if so how the standards on missing data should be revised. (Client: Mathematica, for the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Task Leader for Analysis and Reporting, Evaluation of Investing in Innovation (i3) (2010-2017). The i3 program supported school districts and nonprofit organizations in expanding, developing, and evaluating promising efforts to improve student outcomes. Abt Associates provided evaluation technical assistance to local evaluators of i3 grants and summarized the findings from the evaluations. Responsibilities: Led a systematic review of the strength of the evidence and the findings from the individual evaluations of over 100 i3-funded programs. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Advisory Panel on Cluster Designs, What Works Clearinghouse Standards (2014-2015). This advisory panel was tasked with proposing revised WWC standards in the areas of cluster randomized designs and cluster quasi-experimental designs. Responsibilities: Contributed to group deliberations about the previous standards and how to improve them; reviewed the revised standards. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Project Director, Promising Practices Initiative (2007-2007). The U.S. Department of Education's Promising Practices Initiative was conducted by the Urban Institute and designed to provide research-based evidence on educational practices. Responsibilities: Developed protocols for identifying, screening and reviewing studies in education. Directed an intensive effort to review hundreds of studies to synthesize the findings for more than ten policies and practices. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Policy and Program Studies Service.)

Projects on Impact Evaluation Methods

Project Director and Principal Investigator, Site Selection When Participation is Voluntary: Improving the External Validity of Randomized Trials (2019-present). This project is using simulations to test different methods for selecting sites and replacement sites in randomized trials when site participation is voluntary. These simulations are testing stratified random sampling—with random or nearest neighbor replacement—balanced sampling, and cube sampling, and they are using data from the Common Core of Data and the Head Start Impact Study. Responsibilities: Oversee all aspects of the project, including three simulation papers. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Research, Statistical Methods and Research Methodology in Education.)

Principal Investigator, Using Evidence from National Studies to Improve Local Policy Decisions that Affect Youth (2019-present). This project is assessing whether local policy decisions that benefit youth can be made reliably using evidence from multi-site impact evaluations of youth programs in other sites. This project builds on prior work by estimating the impact of using this evidence on the likelihood of making a policy decision that improves youth outcomes, as well as the downstream impacts on those youth outcomes. Responsibilities: Co-lead all aspects of the project, including re-analysis of three randomized trials in education. (Client: William T. Grant Foundation.)

Consultant, Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation – Strong Start (2017-2018). This MDRC evaluation is estimating the impacts of home visiting programs for pregnant women. Some local programs were required to participate in the evaluation by virtue of receiving federal funding from the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program while other sites participated voluntarily. Responsibilities: Assess the generalizability of findings by comparing the impacts at sites that were required to participate to the impacts at sites that were not required to participate. (Client: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)

Co-Principal Investigator, Statistical Methods for Using Rigorous Evaluation Results to Improve Local Education Policy Decisions (2015-2018). This project developed and tested statistical methods for predicting the impacts of educational interventions in particular schools or districts using findings from evaluations conducted in other locations. Responsibilities: Co-led all aspects of the project. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Research, Statistical Methods and Research Methodology in Education.)

Co-Principal Investigator, Enhancing External Validity in Existing STEM Evaluations (2013-2017). This study is conducting empirical analyses with real and simulated data to estimate the external validity bias from purposive site selection in rigorous evaluations of STEM interventions. In addition, the study will test different statistical methods for reducing the bias. This study is being conducted in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University. (Client: National Science Foundation, Promoting Research and Innovation in Methodologies for Evaluation.)

Project Director and Principal Investigator, Testing Different Methods of Improving the External Validity of Impact Evaluations in Education (2010–2013). This project examined the bias that can result when impact evaluations are conducted in purposive samples of sites that are not representative of the population of policy interest. Responsibilities: Direct the efforts of the study team, lead the analysis, and co-author journal articles. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Project Director, Estimating Impacts of Educational Interventions Using State Tests or Study-Administered Tests (2009-2011). This project explored the implications of using student test scores from state-required tests to measure student achievement outcomes in evaluations of educational interventions. The project produced a technical report that was published by the Institute of Education Science. Responsibilities: Directed all aspects of the project, including the analysis and production of a technical report. (Client: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.)

Project Director, Methods for Addressing Missing Data in Randomized Controlled Trials (2007-2009). This project was conducted to describe, evaluate, test, and recommend methods for addressing missing data in randomized controlled trials in education. The project produced a technical report that was published by the Institute of Education Science. Responsibilities: Managed the Abt team, led computer simulations, and drafted key sections of the technical report. (Client: U.S. Department of Education.)

Service to the Field

Co-chair for Education, 2020 Fall Research Conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management

Editorial Board, Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 2021-Present