

## **Melinda Kay Lewis, LMSW**

4630 W. 70<sup>th</sup> Street, Prairie Village, KS 66208 (home)  
1545 Lilac Lane, Twente Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045 (work)  
[melindaklewis@gmail.com](mailto:melindaklewis@gmail.com) or [mlewis@ku.edu](mailto:mlewis@ku.edu)  
816-806-6094 or 785-864-1047

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Melinda Lewis is an Associate Professor of Practice in the School of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas. Her teaching is concentrated in the School's graduate program, particularly within macro social work and policy courses, at the generalist and advanced levels. In her faculty role, Ms. Lewis provides advising and mentorship to students and field education agencies to support their capacities related to community organizing, policy analysis, and advocacy and teaches in traditional (all in-person), blended, and online formats. She is also the Associate Director of the School's Center on Community Engagement and Collaboration, with responsibility in the areas of agency capacity-building and evaluation. This role builds on Melinda's decade of work with nonprofit organizations to enhance their strategic communications, advocacy strategy development and execution, and evaluation of social change efforts. For five years, Ms. Lewis was Assistant Director of the Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion, now based at the University of Michigan. At AEDI, she co-authored three books about wealth inequality, student debt, and policies to make education an equitable ladder of upward mobility. These publications were culminations of Ms. Lewis' responsibility for translating research on the effects of early children's assets into materials with direct policy implications and media appeal; supporting scholarship around economic mobility and wealth creation; and advancing the field of Children's Savings Accounts. Before joining the KU faculty, Ms. Lewis spent more than a decade in policy advocacy, community organizing, and strategic communications, working on economic justice and human rights at the local, state, and federal levels.

### **EDUCATION**

M.S.W. Washington University, St. Louis, May 2001  
B.S.W. with honors University of Kansas 1999

### **ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**

8/13-present Associate Professor of Practice, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas  
8/18-present Associate Director, Center on Community Engagement and Collaboration, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas  
8/13-6/18 Assistant Director, Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI), University of Michigan School of Social Work  
10/12-8/13 Policy Director, Assets and Education Initiative (AEDI), School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas  
8/07-8/13 Lecturer, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas

### **AWARDS**

2021 Gene A. and Gretchen Budig Award for Excellence in Teaching, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas  
2020 Mid-Career Award, Association for Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA)  
2015 Rocco Award, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas  
2005 Outstanding Alumna, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas  
1999 Truman Scholar

1999  
1996

Phi Beta Kappa  
National Merit Scholar

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Refereed Journal Articles**

#### **In print**

- Elliott, W., Kite, B., O'Brien, M., **Lewis, M.**, & Palmer, A. (2018). Initial elementary education findings from Promise Indiana's Children's savings account program. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 85, pp. 295-306.
- Lewis, M.**, O'Brien, M., & Elliott, W. (2017). Immigrant Latino Families Saving Against Great Odds: The Case of CSAs and the Prosperity Kids Program. *Race and Social Problems*, 9(3), pp. 192-206.
- Lewis, M.**, O'Brien, M., Jones-Layman, A., O'Neill, E., & Elliott, W. (2017). Saving and educational asset-building within a community-driven CSA program: The case of promise Indiana. *Poverty and Public Policy*, 9(2), 188-208.
- Elliott, W. & **Lewis, M.** (September 2015). Student debt effects on financial wellbeing: Research and policy implications. *Journal of Economic Surveys*. doi:10.1111/joes.12124
- Elliott, W., **Lewis, M.**, Nam, I., & Grinstein-Weiss, M. (2014). Does parents' college savings reduce college debt? *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, 96(4).
- Lewis, M.**, Cramer, R., Elliott, W., and Sprague, A. (2013). Policies to promote economic stability, asset building, and child development. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 36, 15-21.
- Lewis, M.** (2008). Familias in the Heartland: Exploration of the Social, Economic, and Cultural Realities of Latino Immigrants. *Families in Society* 89(2), pp. 193-201.

#### **Books**

- Chapin, R. and **Lewis, M.** (2020). *Social Policy for Effective Practice: A Strengths Approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2018). *Making Education Work for the Poor: The Potential of Children's Savings Accounts*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2016). *Student Debt: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Elliott, W. with **Lewis, M.** (2015). *The real college debt crisis: How student borrowing threatens financial well-being and erodes the American dream*. Broomfield, CO: Praeger.

#### **Book Contribution**

- Lewis, M.** (series editor, 2016-present). *New Directions in Social Work*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lewis, M.**, Chapin, R., and Rand, H. (2020). Strengths Perspective Policy Practice Principles. In *Rooted in Strengths: Celebrating the Strengths Perspective in Social Work*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas.
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2016). *Student Debt Effects on Financial Well-Being: Research and Policy Implications*. For Claus, E. and Claus, I. (Editors). A Collection of Surveys on Savings and Wealth Accumulation. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Lewis, M.** (2017, 2014, 2011). *Instructor Resources* and editorial assistance. For Chapin, R. *Social Policy for Effective Practice: A Strengths Approach*. Second, Third, and Fourth Editions. New Directions in Social Work: Routledge.

## Book Review

Lewis, M. (2010). Book Review: Jessica Valenti, *Full-Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters*. *Affilia-Journal of Women and Social Work* 25(3):323-324.

## Encyclopedia Chapter (Peer-Reviewed)

Elliott, W. and Lewis, M. (2014). Child development accounts (CDAs). *The Encyclopedia of Social Work*.

## Op-Ed Articles

Cartwright, M. and Lewis, M. (June 10, 2014). [Smart Way to Save for College](#). *The Hill*.

Lewis, M. (2013, July 3). Saving for Education Improves Outcomes, Evidence Shows. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Lewis, M. and Weatherford, H. (2012, February 15). Circus in Topeka. *The Kansas City Star*.

Lewis, M. (April 26, 2006). Immigrants, College. *The Kansas City Star*.

## Media Appearances

Whitford, E. (August 7, 2018). ['Making Education Work for the Poor'](#). Author profile in *Inside Higher Education*.

Lewis, M. (2015). *WRHI*. Radio show. Charlotte, NC, local.

Lewis, M. (2015). *WFSK's 411 with Sharon Kay*. Radio show. Nashville, TN, regional.

Lewis, M. (2015). *KCUR's Central Standard*. Radio show. Kansas City, MO, regional.

Lewis, M. (2015). *New Books in Education*. Podcast. New York, NY.

## Blog Posts

Lewis, M. (May 27, 2016). [Save a Little, Gain a Lot: Cultivating College-Saver Identities](#). *EDinsight*. The Kauffman Foundation.

Lewis, M. and Elliott, W. (October 30, 2015). [College financing: from debt to assets](#). *Social Mobility Memos*. The Brookings Institution.

Lewis, M. (2014-2015). [The Mobility Beat](#).

Elliott, W. and Lewis, M. (September 9, 2014). [New Report: Are Student Loans the Best we can Do?](#)

Lewis, M. (November 7, 2013). [An Assets Agenda for Higher Education](#).

Lewis, M. (November 6, 2013). [The Student Loan \(Financial\) Shuffle](#).

Lewis, M. (November 5, 2013). [Student Loans buy a degree, but at what cost?](#)

Lewis, M. (2009-2014). [Classroom to Capitol](#).

## Research Reports/Major Monographs

Elliott, W., Lewis, M., O'Brien, M., LiCalsi, C. Brown, L. Tucker, N. and Sorensen, N. (2018). *Contribution activity and asset accumulation in a universal children's savings account program*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI).

O'Brien, M., Lewis, M., Jung, E., & Elliott, W. (2017a). *Savings Patterns and Asset Accumulation in the Promise Indiana Children's Savings Account (CSA) Program: 2017 Update*. (AEDI Working Paper 01-17). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI).

O'Brien, M., Lewis, M., Jung, E., & Elliott, W. (2017b). *Harold Alfond College Challenge (HACC) 2017 Savings Report for Households Who Opted-In to the Program from 2008 to 2013*. (AEDI Working Paper 03-17). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI).

O'Brien, M., Lewis, M., Jung, E., & Elliott, W. (2017c). *Savings Patterns and Asset Accumulation in New Mexico's Prosperity Kids Children's Savings Account (CSA) Program: 2017 Update*.

(AEDI Working Paper 02-17). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI).

- Lewis, M.** and Elliott, W. (2015). *A Regional Approach to Children's Savings Account Development: The Case of New England*. Lawrence, KS: Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI).
- Elliott, W., **Lewis, M.**, Poore, A., and Clarke, B. (2015). *Moving Toward a Policy Agenda for Improving Children's Savings Account Delivery Systems*. Boston, MA: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion.
- Elliott, W., and **Lewis, M.** (2015). Transforming 529s into Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs): The Promise Indiana Model. Lawrence, KS: Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI).
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2014). *Unequal outcomes: Student loan effects on young adults' net worth accumulation*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative (AEDI).
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2014). *The student debt problem in America: It is not enough to say, "students will eventually recover"*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative (AEDI).
- Lewis, M.** and Elliott, W. (2014). Examining the Canadian Education Savings System and its Implications for U.S. Children's Savings Account (CSA) Policy. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative. (AEDI).
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2014). *Harnessing assets to build an economic mobility system: Reimagining the American welfare system*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative (AEDI).
- Elliott, W. and **Lewis, M.** (2013). *Are student loans widening the wealth gap in America? It's a question of equity*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative (AEDI).
- Lewis, M.**, Elliott, E., Cramer, R., and Black, R. (2013). [Policy Discussion](#). In *The Biannual Report on the Assets and Education Field*.

## SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

### Webinars

- Lewis, M.** (April 2, 2020). *Why evaluate your advocacy? And how?* Webinar for the Center for Community Engagement and Collaboration. University of Kansas School of Social Welfare.
- Lewis, M.** (February 6, 2020). *A Framework for Nonprofit Board Capacity*. Webinar for the Center for Community Engagement and Collaboration. University of Kansas School of Social Welfare.
- Lewis, M.** (November 7, 2019). *Nonprofit Advocacy Rules for Election Years*. Webinar for the Center for Community Engagement and Collaboration. University of Kansas School of Social Welfare.
- Lewis, M.** and Elliott, W. (May 17, 2017). Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs), Asset-Based Financial Aid, and the Opportunity Pipeline. National College Access Network webinar.
- Lewis, M.** (January 19, 2017). *Why evaluate your advocacy? And how?* Webinar for the Kansas City Nonprofit Advocacy Collaborative.
- Elliott, W., Adams, D., Friedline, T., Rauscher, E., and **Lewis, M.** (March 10, 2015). Center for Social Development 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Lawrence, KS: AEDI.
- Lewis, M.** (October 28, 2014). *Asset Building for Parents and the Next Generation*. Region V Fatherhood Initiative. National Institutes of Health and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Lewis, M.**, Elliott, W., and Black, R. (November 18, 2014). [If you Build It, Will they Save? Examination of the Canadian Education Savings Program](#). Webinar.

### Invited Presentations

- Elliott, W., Reeves, R., Hamilton, D., and **Lewis, M.** (July 25, 2018). *Making Education Work for the Poor*. Book presentation at New America. Washington, DC.

- Lewis, M.** (April 4, 2018). *Impact of Children's Savings Accounts*. Presentation for the Midwest CSA Consortium. Minneapolis, MN.
- Lewis, M.** (March 7, 2018). *Telling your Story*. Presentation for Kansas NASW Day. Topeka, KS.
- Lewis, M.** (December 6, 2017). *Building a Movement, to Construct a Pipeline*. Presentation for the Midwest CSA Consortium. Madison, WI.
- Lewis, M.** and Elliott, W. (November 2, 2017). *Imagining an Opportunity Pipeline*. Presentation for the Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.
- Lewis, M.** (October 30, 2017). *Pathways to Service*. Presentation for Office of Service Learning, University of Kansas. Lawrence, KS.
- Lewis, M.** (June 12, 2017). *Supporting your Nonprofit's Advocacy*. Presentation for the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the REACH Healthcare Foundation, Kansas City, MO.
- Lewis, M.** (May 6, 2017). *Student Debt, the Racial Wealth Gap, and the American Dream*. Presentation for the United We Stand Coalition, Kansas City, MO.
- Lewis, M.** (March 6, 2017). *Strategic Communications for Advocacy*. Presentation for the Kansas City Nonprofit Advocacy Collaborative.
- Lewis, M.** (May 18, 2016). *Making Tax Time, Saving Time, for Economic Mobility and the American Dream*. Keynote Presentation for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, United Way of Greater Kansas City.
- Lewis, M.** (April 22, 2016). *Saving for Postsecondary Education: Why? How?* Presentation to Kansas City GradForce Task Force, Mid-America Regional Council (MARC).
- Lewis, M.** (November 2, 2015). *The Real College Debt Crisis and the Coming Revolution in Financial Aid*. Presentation at University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, MO.
- Lewis, M.** (August 6, 2015). *The Real College Debt Crisis: How Student Borrowing Threatens Financial Well-Being and Erodes the American Dream*. Presentation for State Assets Learning Cluster. St. Louis, MO.
- Lewis, M.** (April 9, 2015). *Integrating Advocacy into your Nonprofit Organization*. Presentation for the Kansas Health Foundation. Wichita, KS.
- Lewis, M.** (October 3, 2014). *Immigration Policy and its Effects on Social Work Practice*. Presentation for School of Social Welfare Lecture, University of Kansas.
- Lewis, M.** (October 1, 2014). *Student Loans and Financial Security*. Panel moderation for Pew Charitable Trusts/Senate Economic Mobility Caucus.
- Lewis, M.** (September 11, 2014). *Integrating Advocacy into your Communications*. Presentation for the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the REACH Healthcare Foundation.
- Lewis, M.** (September 9, 2014). *Saving for Prosperity: Building Wealth and Educational Achievement through Asset Building*. Presentation at the Alliance for Economic Inclusion conference. Kansas City, MO: Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.
- Lewis, M.** (August 22, 2014). *Foundation Students and the Organizational Context*. Presentation for Field Education Office, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas.
- Lewis, M.** (August 12, 2014). *Asset Building for Parents and the Next Generation*. Presentation at the National Child Support Enforcement Association conference. Portland, OR.
- Lewis, M.** (August 8, 2014). *Field Instructors and Policy Practice*. Presentation for the Field Education Office, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas.
- Lewis, M.** (May 2014). *Using Your Whole Team: Integrating Advocacy into your Organization*. Presentation for the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the REACH Healthcare Foundation.
- Lewis, M.** (September 2013). *An inequitable welfare system for the poor*. Address presented at the University Forum, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

- Lewis, M.** (July 2013). *Policy Agenda for the Assets and Education Field*. Address presented at the release of the Biannual Report on the Assets and Education Field, New America Foundation, Washington, DC.
- Lewis, M.** (June 2012). *The Strained Safety Net*. Address presented at the Human Services Summit, for United Community Services, Overland Park, KS.

### **Conference Presentations**

- Lewis, M.** (September 25, 2019). *A Strengths-Based Policy Agenda: With and for those we serve*. Keynote presentation for Mid-America Assistance Council annual conference. Kansas City, MO.
- Lewis, M.** (April 3, 2019). *Making Education Work for the Poor*. Keynote presentation for the Kansas Association of Scholarship and Financial Aid Administrators conference. Lawrence, KS.
- Lewis, M.** (July 18, 2018). *Building Advocacy Capacity to Reduce Poverty*. Presentation for the Kansas Conference on Poverty. Topeka, KS.
- Quint, C., Feinstein, A., Grant, P., & **Lewis, M.** (October 9, 2017). *Children's Savings Accounts and Scholarships: Practitioners' Perspectives*. Presentation for the National Scholarship Providers Association Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Lewis, M.** (September 21, 2016). *Interim Measures for Children's Savings Account Programs*. Presentation for the Assets Learning Conference, Washington, DC.
- Lewis, M.** (July 17, 2015). *Assets for Mobility: Agenda for Prosperity in the New Economy*. Presentation for Kansas Poverty Conference. Topeka, KS.
- Lewis, M.** (March 4, 2015). *Asset-Building and Child Well-Being*. Plenary Presentation at California Child Support Policy Symposium. Sacramento, California.
- Lewis, M.** (September 17, 2014). *The Canadian Education Savings Program and its Implications for U.S. CSA Policy*. Panel Presentation at the CFED Assets Learning Conference, Washington, DC.
- Lewis, M.** (May 8, 2014). *Does Parents' College Savings Reduce College Debt?*. St Louis Federal Reserve Bank Research Symposium, *The Balance Sheets of Younger Americans: Is the American Dream at Risk?*
- Lewis, M.** (2013, July). *Giving Students a Stake*. Presentation at the Kansas Poverty Conference.
- Lewis, M.** (2013, April). *Working with what you've got: integrating advocacy into direct-service organizations*. For the School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

### **PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

11/2009-Present Nonprofit Advocacy and Evaluation Consultant, independent practice  
 Advise nonprofit organizations and philanthropies on policy advocacy, advocacy evaluation, and strategic communications, toward an aim of more effective policy and social change efforts. Provide capacity-building for agency staff, service constituents, and Board members, prepare tools and policy documents, conduct analyses, and organize events to build nonprofits' understanding of the communities they serve, the skills and resources needed to influence the policy environment, and the organizational structures that facilitate social change. Conduct analysis and facilitate strategic consideration of outcomes related to philanthropies' policy change activities. Assess field capacity related to community change initiatives. Past clients include American Civil Liberties Union, Child Abuse Prevention Association, Communities Creating Opportunity, Cornerstones of Care, El Centro, Foster Adopt Connect, Harvesters, Health Forward Foundation, Heartland Conservation Alliance, Jewish Vocational Services, Kansas Action for Children, Kansas Association of Community Action Programs, Kansas Association for the Medically-Underserved, Kansas Head Start Association, Lee's Summit Cares, Mattie Rhodes Center, Missouri Budget Project, Missouri Jobs with Justice, Missouri

Foundation for Health, Rawlins County Dental Clinic, REACH Healthcare Foundation, ReDiscover Mental Health, reStart, Inc., Samuel Rodgers Health Center, Sunflower Foundation, Support Kansas City, The Whole Person, Tri-County Mental Health, Vibrant Health, United Community Services, Uzazi Village, United Way Association of Kansas, United Way of Greater Kansas City.

8/02-6/07                      Director of Policy Advocacy and Research, El Centro, Inc.  
Conducted policy advocacy on issues including access to higher education, predatory lending, affordable housing, workers' rights, civil liberties, immigration reform, and health care. Cultivated allies in Kansas to work on legislative, media, and organizing campaigns. Conducted qualitative and quantitative research with immigrant families to inform policy decisions and give voice to immigrants' struggles. Directed voter registration and education efforts in Latino communities, trained nonprofit organizations on civic participation, and facilitated immigrant-centered leadership development. Led successful campaigns to pass in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students, more than \$800,000 per year in asset-based anti-poverty initiatives, and enhanced consumer protections; organized opposition to several anti-immigrant legislative attacks. Led grassroots fundraising efforts and secured national grants to support advocacy and community organizing efforts.

1/2000-5/2001                Research Assistant, Center for Social Development, Washington University  
Supported CSD research on inclusive state 529 college savings plan policy and assisted with planning national symposium on asset policy.

## **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

*Influencing Social Policy*, Board Member (2020-present)

*Children and Youth Services Review*, Peer Reviewer (2016-present)

*Council on Social Work Education*, Special Commission on Macro Practice Workgroup (2017-2018)

*Families in Society*, Peer Reviewer (2008-2010)

## **KU TEACHING RECORD**

SW 455                      Poverty in the Global Economy (2009-2013)

SW 532                      Community and Organizational Dynamics and Human Behavior (2009-2012)

SW 713                      Community and Organizational Practice (2007, 2014-present)

SW 720                      Social Policy and Program Analysis (2011-present)

SW 841                      Advanced Policy and Programs (2003-2005, 2007-present)

SW 846                      Advanced Advocacy and Community Practice (2008, 2009, 2014-present)

## **SERVICE**

### **National Service**

2005-2007                Campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, National Strategy Council member

2003-2007                United We DREAM Campaign, National Steering Committee member

### **University Service**

2018-present              Chair, Macro Subcommittee KUSSW MSW Committee

4/14-present              Truman Scholar Selection Committee, University of Kansas

2019-present              Service-Learning Showcase Judge, University of Kansas

2020                        University Scholars Mentor, University of Kansas

5/16-8/16                McNair Scholars Faculty Mentor, University of Kansas

November 2014            Presentation for Freshman Seminar, University of Kansas

October 2014              Presentation for KU Fights Hunger event, Student Union Activities

2011-2013 Immigrant Justice Student Group Faculty Advisor, University of Kansas

**Community Service**

2016-present Kansas Action for Children, Member, Board of Directors  
Chair, 2020-present  
Board Chair-elect, 2019-2020  
Chair, Operations Committee, 2018-2019

2017-2019 ACLU of Kansas Immigration Task Force, Chair

2014-2016 United Way of Greater Kansas City, Advisory Member

2010-2012 REACH Health Care Foundation Community Advisory Committee

2007-2012 Kansas Families for Education, Member, Board of Directors

2003-2006 Cross Border Network for Justice and Solidarity, Vice-President, Board of Directors