

# Jessica M. Heckert, MS

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## Summary

Social demographer and international health professional and with nine years of program and research experience; Excellent quantitative analysis skills and complimentary qualitative research experience; Specific expertise in youth sexual and reproductive health and youth migration; Skilled in technical report writing, cross-cultural communication, and presenting complex technical materials to diverse audiences

## Education

- Ph.D. The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA** June 2013  
Demography, Human Development, & Family Studies (expected)  
Dissertation: *Youth Migration and Youth Transitions: The Haitian Experience*  
Specializations: Social Demography, Research Methods, Adolescence
- M.S. The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA** Dec. 2010  
Demography, Human Development, & Family Studies  
Thesis: *Ethnic Group Disparities in Academic Skill Development across Four Economically Developing Countries*
- B.S. Greensboro College, Greensboro, NC** May 2003  
Psychology, *Summa Cum Laude*, Honors Program Degree  
Minors: Math and Women's Studies

## Professional Experience

- Families and Communities in Transition Project Office, University Park, PA** Aug. 2007 – present  
**Graduate Research Assistant**
- Lead the Haiti Youth Transitions Study, a longitudinal mixed-methods study of youth migration
  - Analyzed complex survey data, including: Demographic and Health Surveys; Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys; Survey and Assessment of Vietnamese Youth; Young Lives Study; and the Haiti Youth Survey
  - Assistant for Television and International Family Change: A Randomized Experiment (Vietnam, NICHD funded)
  - Utilized expertise in (i) longitudinal analysis & (ii) mixed quantitative/qualitative design
  - Secured grants to support research activities and budgeted their use
- USAID, Global Health- Policy, Evaluation, and Communication Div., Washington, DC** May 2012 – Dec. 2012  
**Demographic and Health Surveys Intern, Global Health Fellows Program-II**
- Authored a technical report to evaluate the DHS women's empowerment questions in sub-Saharan Africa and recommend priority gender themes for household surveys
  - Conducted key-informant interviews with gender experts and stakeholders in Ghana, Mozambique, Senegal, and Uganda
  - Contributed to DHS project design and management
  - Taught seminars in DHS data use to other GHFP-II interns
  - Maintained secret level security clearance
- Center for Evidence-Based Prevention and Intervention Programs, University Park, PA** Jan. 2010 – May 2010  
**Evaluation Consultant**
- Conducted an impact evaluation of an evidence-based violence prevention program
  - Interpreted findings and wrote reports for funders and community stakeholders

**United States Peace Corps, Dominican Republic**

Sept. 2005 –  
July 2007

**Youth, Family, and Community Development Specialist**

- Trained and supervised youth peer-educators in sexual and reproductive health topics (PEPFAR financed), developed program indicators
- Won support, supervised implementation, and monitored progress for a two year project to enhance youth employment in ecotourism (\$50K; World Bank financed)
- Developed, implemented, and scaled-up a computer-skills curriculum to economically empower women transitioning to service-sector employment
- Provided program support for cross-border projects implemented by the Pan-American Development Foundation's Our Border project (USAID financed) in Haiti and the Dominican Republic; expanded initiatives to youth and women's groups

**United States Peace Corps, Haiti**

Aug. 2003 –  
Feb. 2004  
& Dec 2004 –  
June 2005

**Rural Health Specialist**

- Implemented community health initiatives in reproductive health, HIV/AIDS (PEPFAR financed), child health, and nutrition
- Won support (\$3K) for latrine construction and water system strengthening
- Supported a rural health clinic through patient and provider education

**Fellowships and Awards**

The National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (\$124,000)	2010 – 13
The National Institute of Child Health & Human Development Predoctoral Traineeship in Family Demography (\$85,000)	2008 – 10
Ruth W. Ayers-Givens Award for Interdisciplinary Research that Benefits Society (\$1,500) Annual Meeting of Noble Laureates, Lindau, Germany, Penn State Nominee	2012 2011
Early Career Development Award, Center for Global Studies, Penn State (\$2,000)	2011
Research Grant, Africana Research Center, Penn State (\$2,000)	2011
Travel Grant, International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (\$2,500)	2010
University Graduate Fellowship, Penn State (\$35,000)	2007- 08
Herbert Bailey Graduate Fellowship for Demography Recruitment, Penn State (\$5,000)	2007

**Languages**

**Spanish:** Fluent

**Haitian Creole:** Fluent

**French:** Working Proficiency (knowledge of specialized vocabulary in health and statistics)

**Data Analysis Packages**

STATA, SAS, R, SPSS ATLAS.ti, Excel

**Publications**

Smith-Greenaway, E. & **Heckert, J.** (Forthcoming). Does the Orphan Disadvantage “Spill Over”? An analysis of whether living in an area with a higher concentration of orphans is associated with children's school enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa. *Demographic Research*.

Nau, C. & **Heckert, J.** (2012). Integrating perspectives on child health: Where do we go now? In N. Landale, S. McHale, & A. Booth (Eds.), *Families and Child Health*. New York, NY: Springer.

Jayakody, R., **Heckert, J.**, and Anh, D.N. (2010). Social change and premarital sexual behavior and attitudes in Vietnam. In R. Silbereisen & X. Chen (Eds.), *Social Change in Human Development: Concepts and Results* (pp. 227-244). London, UK: Sage.

**Manuscripts under Review (available upon request)**

**Heckert, J.** & Fabric, M.S. (Revise and Resubmit). Women's empowerment data needs in sub-Saharan Africa: Data collection recommendations for the Demographic and Health Surveys and other household surveys. *Studies in Family Planning*.

**Manuscripts in Progress (available upon request)**

**Heckert, J.** The intersection of migration and sexual initiation among Haitian youth.

**Heckert, J.,** Boatemaa, S., & Altman, C. Migrant Youth’s Changing Consumption Patterns: The Role of Peer Social Engagement

**Heckert, J. & Shoff, C.** Targeting unmet need among married adolescents: An application of geographically weighted regression using Demographic and Health Survey data.

**Unpublished Manuscript**

**Heckert, J.** (2010). *Ethnic Group Disparities in Academic Skill Development across Four Economically Developing Countries*. Thesis archived at <<https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/paper/10743/>>.

**Invited & Conference Presentations**

**Heckert, J.** (2013). Negotiating migration: The experiences of Haitian youth and their families. Poster to be presented at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, New Orleans, LA.

**Heckert, J.** (2013). The intersection of migration and sexual initiation among Haitian youth. Poster to be presented at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, New Orleans, LA.

**Heckert, J.** (2012). Negotiating youth migration: The Haitian experience. Research seminar presented at the Africana Research Center, University Park, PA.

Smith-Greenaway, E. & **Heckert, J.** (2012). Who is vulnerable? The role of context in shaping foster children’s school enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa. Poster presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, San Francisco, CA.

Smith-Greenaway, E. & **Heckert, J.** (2011). Who is vulnerable? School enrollment among foster-children and orphans in West and Southern Africa. Paper presented at the Quadrennial Meeting of the Union for African Population Studies, Ougadougou, Burkina Faso.

**Heckert, J.** (2011). Haitian migration and the changing context of the transition to adulthood. Poster presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Washington, DC.

**Heckert, J. & Jayakody, R.** (2010). Household labor participation among children. Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, Lusaka, Zambia.

**Heckert, J. & Jayakody, R.** (2010). Ethnic group disparities in academic skill development across four low-income countries. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Dallas, TX.

**Heckert, J. & Jayakody, R.** (2009). Premarital sexual behavior, attitudes, and knowledge among Vietnamese youth. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Detroit, MI

**Service & Public Education**

Exhibit Organizer, Demography booth, USA Science & Engineering Festival Designed multimedia presentations and learning tools with Gap Minder	2012
Demography Graduate Students Methodology Workshop Committee	2009-11
Co-Chair, Graduate Steering Committee	2009-10
Community Outreach Coordinator, Graduate Steering Committee	2008-09
Newsletter Coordinator, Graduate Steering Committee	2007-08