The current research and scholarship of:

Stephanie Potochnick, PhD
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Focus
Dr. Potochnick is a public health policy analyst and has a primary interest in the study of immigrant well-being of children and families here in the US. Her current projects focus on how state and local policies in addition to federal policies affect the day to day lives of immigrants. State and local governments have increasingly begun to adopt their own immigrant related policies. Her research then examines how these localized policies result in opportunities for immigrants and consequent changes in their lives. Using secondary data sources, Dr. Potochnick has discovered that states that offer instate resident tuition to undocumented immigrants (rather than out of state tuition) have lower high school dropout rates and higher college investments among their undocumented immigrant citizenry. Undocumented immigrants however still struggle in these states because they are not eligible for federal financial aid and may have to work part-time or save up enough money to attend college, entering college later in their 20s, or may attend a two-year program. A forthcoming publication in Review of Higher Education and a recent publication in Social Science Research, describes this work, "How States Can Reduce the Dropout Rate for Undocumented Immigrant Youth: The Effects of In-State Resident Tuition Policies". She plans to examine Census data available through the new MU Census Bureau Research Data Center along with NIH data to examine state and local policies regarding food insecurity safety net, and local police force procedures and how they affect mental and physical health in the immigrant children and families.

Most Interesting Finding
Dr. Potochnick's most interesting finding is that there are in fact 17 states who are providing support for immigrants and their families and that immigrants are thriving more in these states. However, the support systems are not enough and these families face significant challenges. Of course, politics within the states play a huge role in what supports are offered to immigrants.

Biggest Challenge
Like many academic faculty, the biggest challenge that Dr. Potochnick faces is having to prioritize her time to produce the elements that will result in tenure which often results in having to delay the translation of her findings into provision of real supports for immigrants and their families.
Greatest Satisfaction

Dr. Potochnick’s greatest satisfaction is having the opportunity of being a faculty member of a university where one’s daily job is to ask interesting questions and use data to discover the answers. It is not an easy process. The question changes as one digs into the available data, but the challenge of putting the many pieces of the puzzle (question) together towards making a significant difference in the lives of people, in this case immigrants, can be hugely satisfactory.