

Family Strengthening Scholars: 2015 Grantee Project Abstracts

Allison Dwyer Emory

Project Title: Family Experiences of Pretrial Incarceration

Mentor: Dr. Maureen Waller

Project Funding Years: 2015 - 2017

University Affiliation: Cornell University

Project Abstract:

This study poses the central research question how do families or romantic partners experience a family member's incarceration in a county jail? This question will be addressed through approximately 40 qualitative interviews with family members and romantic partners visiting men incarcerated in a county jail in upstate New York. Building prior on studies, interviews will focus on how these experiences of incarceration shape (a) dynamics within families, (b) interactions with institutions, and (c) resources available to families. This project is consistent with the research priorities of understanding the effects of incarceration on family relationships in an understudied population. Findings will also be of immediate use to the local jurisdiction and community partners, who have expressed interest in developing programs or targeting services to the needs of families of the incarcerated within the county.

Sample: The purposive sample will be stratified by pretrial or sentenced status. 15-20 individuals will be interviewed in each stratum. The county is a relatively rural, white, and agricultural county. The jail itself is relatively small, with capacity of up to 100 but a population typically hovering around 80, with about half of that population unsentenced.

Measures:

- In-person interviews
 - The interview guide is designed around the following broad themes: experiences with the jail and criminal justice system, the relationship between the interviewee and the incarcerated individual, family dynamics, economic or material hardship, and access to social or institutional support.
 - Additional closed-ended questions similar to those used by Arditti et al. (2003) and Comfort (2008) will be asked at the end of the interview to develop a demographic profile of the interview sample.

Hannah Williamson

Project Title: Evaluating the Effect of Economic Interventions on Relationship Outcomes in the Building Strong Families Study

Mentor: Dr. Thomas Nelson Bradbury

Project Funding Years: 2015 - 2016

University Affiliation: Regents of the University of California, Los Angeles

Project Abstract:

The aim of the study is to conduct secondary analyses on the Building Strong Families (BSF) dataset, using propensity score analysis to control for selection effects and allow for causal inferences to be made. Four research questions will be addressed: 1) Do economic interventions improve relationship outcomes? 2a) Is the effectiveness of economic interventions dependent upon relationship satisfaction? 2b) Is the effectiveness of economic interventions dependent upon concurrent receipt of relationship interventions? 3) Is the effect of economic interventions mediated through improved finances or improved perception of partner's marriageability? The results of this study will determine whether helping improve economic conditions leads more couples to marry. It will also address whether economic improvements are sufficient, or whether the relationship must also be improved concurrently or be high-quality already for the economic interventions to work. These results will inform public policies aimed at supporting healthy marriages by indicating the best types of interventions to invest in and which couples they are most likely to work for.

Sample: The BSF dataset. The sample consists of 5,102 unmarried heterosexual couples who were expecting a baby or had a baby who was less than three months old. The sample was predominantly African American (52%), with Hispanic/Latino participants making up 20% of the sample and White participants making up 12% of the sample. Couples were quite young, with 42% of couples having at least one member below the age of 21. In only 37% of the couples did both partners have high school diplomas, and average annual earnings for all couples was \$20,475.

Measures:

- Control Variables
 - Propensity Score Analysis using all variables measured at baseline:
 - Program site, age, ethnicity, race, language spoken, education, current pregnancy status, whether pregnancy was planned, length of time couple has known each other, whether the couple lives together, how many children the couple has together, how many children each partner has with another partner, employment status, amount of time unemployed, receipt of public assistance, depressive symptoms, social support available, attendance at religious services, relationship satisfaction, and attitudes about marriage and parenting.
- Intervention
 - 15-month follow-up survey about:
 - Education
 - Job assistance
 - Participation in group relationship education
 - Individual relationship support
- Mediators
 - 15-month follow-up survey about:
 - Income
 - Perception of Partner's contribution to household
- Outcomes

- 36-month follow-up survey about relationship status measured as:
 - Romantic involvement
 - Living Together
 - Marriage

Ericka M. Lewis

Project Title: No Father Left Behind: Exploring Positive Father Involvement as a Protective Factor in the Prevention of Adverse Child Outcomes

Mentor: Dr. Patricia Kohl

Project Funding Years: 2015 - 2017

University Affiliation: Washington University

Project Abstract:

This dissertation study will use data from the Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN) to examine the role of father involvement in the reduction of neglect risk and adverse child outcomes among low-income families. The specific aims guiding this dissertation study are (1) to test the direct and indirect relationships between father involvement (physical care, emotional support, companionship, and financial support) and child well-being (physical health, internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and social competence) among low-income families at risk for neglect; (2) Examine the bidirectional relationship between father involvement and child well-being. The indirect effects that will be tested are neglect risk factors (maternal social support, neglectful parenting behaviors, and household family functioning). It is also of interest to examine the role interparental conflict plays in child outcomes over time. This dissertation study addresses father factors, child neglect risk, and child developmental issues related to underserved and understudied populations (e.g., low-income families and fathers). Understanding these relationships sets the stage for the development and implementation of evidence-based child mental health programs that include fathers as a protective factor.

Sample: The key data source is LONGSCAN which is a consortium of five prospective studies on the etiology and consequences of maltreatment. The study will use a subset of the total sample (n=772), which consisted of children and families residing in rural, urban, and suburban areas of Baltimore, Chicago, Seattle, and North Carolina. Families included in the sample were eligible for data collection at three time points (child age 6, 8, and 12), had low to high levels of neglect risk, did not have a substantiated case for neglect at the time of study enrollment (age 4), and had at least one father or father-figure (i.e. stepfathers, primary caregiver's significant other, and foster fathers) present when children were 6 years old. The majority of primary caregivers identified in the study were female. Due to small sample size all fathers who were identified as primary caregivers were excluded from the study sample.

Measures:

- Dependent Variables
 - Child Well-Being
 - Physical health
 - Child Health Assessment
 - Externalizing Behaviors
 - Teacher Report Form
 - Internalizing Behaviors
 - Teacher Report Form
 - Social Competence

- Vineland Screener
- Independent Variables
 - Father Involvement
 - Father Involvement with Child Instrument
- Mediating Variables
 - Maternal Factors
 - Social Support
 - ✓ Social Provisions Scale
 - Neglectful Parenting
 - ✓ A youth self-report of neglectful parenting behaviors (About my Parents; AMP)
 - Household Functioning
 - ✓ Self-Report Family Inventory
- Moderating Variable
 - Inter-parental Conflict
 - Conflict Tactics Scale: Partner-to-Partner