

Family Strengthening Scholars: 2016 Grantees

Sonia Molloy

Project Title: A Qualitative Inquiry of Fathering in the Rural Context of Appalachian Virginia

Mentor: April Few-Demoand and Mark Benson

Project Funding Years: 2016 - 2017

University Affiliation: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Project Abstract

Given the increasing evidence of the benefits of father involvement, it is important to understand the contributing factors to supporting father involvement and enhancing parenting skills (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007; Martin, Ryan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). This is of particular importance due to the limited research that has investigated intervention programs that consider fathering. An area that has been emerging in the fathering research is the role of complex contextual factors in influencing identities and behaviors. Life events and transitions provide an opportunity to study variation and change in fathering. Fathering an infant is a time of change and transition in the father's life course.

To address the current research gaps in the fathering literature, this qualitative study has the following aims:

1. Identify the identity processes of fathering an infant in a rural Appalachian sample.
2. Gain knowledge on possible variations of father involvement that can inform typologies of fathering considering contexts of co-parenting, diversity, life situations, and culture.
3. Identify the roles that contextual factors may play in the process of fathering and father involvement.
4. Identify the points of intervention that will encourage participation and retention in parenting programs for fathers of infants in a rural context by identifying participants' needs and desires in regards to parenting education.

This study is theoretically informed by symbolic interactionism and intersectionality and will employ the methodology of constructivist grounded theory. Results will further the scholarship through a deeper understanding of father involvement and father identity in a specific rural context. Implications of this research will result in recommendations for family strengthening practitioners, researchers, and policy makers.

Sample

The target population for this study is 50 fathers of infants who reside in the Appalachian region of Virginia. The fathers recruited for this study must have an infant between the ages of 0 to 12 months old.

Measures

Structured Survey

- Demographics
 - Race
 - Relationship status
 - Income
 - Employment
 - Incarceration history
 - Participation in parent programs

Semi-structured Interview

- Identity process
- Fathering an infant
- Challenges and goals
- Father involvement
- Co-parenting and relationships
- Contextual constraints and catalyst
- Community
- Parenting and family strengthening programming

Shuang Bi

Project Title: Parental Empathy, Psychological Control and Child Maladjustment: An Evaluation of the Nest Parent Education and Support Program

Mentor: Peggy Keller

Project Funding Years: 2016-2017

University Affiliation: The University of Kentucky Research Foundation

Project Abstract

This project partners with The Nest Center for Women, Children and Families (referred to as "The Nest" below) to:

1. provide a preliminary evaluation of their implementation of the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) and
2. improve understanding of the role of parental empathy in physically and psychologically aggressive parenting.

Scientific estimates of the association between empathy and aggression are mixed, creating a need for additional research. The proposed study addresses this need by employing multiple measures of empathy in relation to multiple outcomes.

Specific aims are to:

1. Estimate relations between parental empathy and parental physical aggression and psychological aggression in a sample of high risk, low income parents prior to (typically court-mandated) NPP;
2. Determine whether parental empathy increases following NPP administered by The Nest;
3. Evaluate mediated associations between parental empathy and child adjustment; it is expected that greater parental empathy will be associated with less aggressive parenting, which will be related to fewer adjustment problems in children.

Sample

A total of 162 parents will be recruited. It is expected that research participants will have demographic characteristics similar to those of all clients of The Nest, being predominantly low income and racially diverse.

Measures

Interview

- Demographic information
 - Socio-economic status
 - Age

- Gender
 - Race
 - Characteristics of the child
- Affective and Cognitive Measure of Empathy
 - Cognitive empathy
 - Affective resonance
 - Affective dissonance
- Parent Development Interview - Only the section on parents' reactions to child emotions will be used
- Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales
 - Neglect subscale
- Parental Behavior Inventory
 - Psychological control scale
- Child Behavior Checklist