

Research \ Action

Midyear Brief

New Project Will Transform Data into Action for Single Mother College Students

Almost one in five undergraduate women are unmarried mothers with dependent children. Single mothers face significant barriers to completing their degrees, but aren't often at the forefront of college access and success policies. Part of what makes it challenging to advocate for them is that colleges currently do not count how large their population is or track their educational outcomes. Federal data sources don't count them very well either.

In partnership with the Urban Institute and supported by a \$1.1 million grant from ECMC Foundation, the Wellesley Centers for Women recently launched the Data-to-Action Campaign for Pregnant and Parenting Student Success. The goals of the campaign are to identify the most effective strategies for implementing data tracking and reporting systems that identify parenting students enrolled in college, as well as follow their educational outcomes like grades, retention, and graduation.

These systems must allow students to be characterized in other ways—including by partnership status, gender, age, income level, and race/ethnicity—in order to help colleges and higher education systems identify segments of their student populations who may especially struggle to stay in school and



K-12 Educator Tianisha Torres celebrates her graduation from Endicott College in 2016 with her son Javian Maldonado. Photo courtesy of Autumn Green.

graduate, like single mothers, young parenting students, and student parents of certain racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The campaign also aims to help make sure the data that are tracked and reported are used effectively toward ensuring equity in educational access, inclusion, and degree attainment.

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Prosecution of Child Sexual Abuse: Overcoming Challenges to Achieve Justice



Prosecution of child sexual abuse (CSA) can provide an avenue to justice for survivors of abuse and their families, protect potential future victims, and send a message to the community that sexual abuse of children is taken seriously and that justice for child victims is a priority. But only a small number of reports of CSA actually lead to the prosecution of perpetrators and achieving justice for victims and communities.

WCW Senior Research Scientist **Linda M. Williams, Ph.D.**, and **Stephanie D. Block, Ph.D.**, associate professor of psychology

at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, recently published a white paper, *Prosecution of Child Sexual Abuse: Challenges in Achieving Justice*, based on their study funded by the National Institute of Justice. The study analyzed 500 child sexual abuse reports to examine predictors of which cases moved forward to prosecution. It looked at the response to reports of child sexual abuse and the characteristics of cases that dropped out of the criminal justice system along the way.

The white paper delves into the different factors that impacted cases as they moved from intake to investigation and then from investigation to prosecution, making actionable recommendations for achieving justice for all involved and for strengthening the safety of communities.

“Addressing the challenges documented by our research and finding and evaluating solutions will require the continued work of the justice system and the community,” said Williams.

Read the white paper at wcwonline.org/researchandaction

Single Mother College Students (continued)

The Data-to-Action Campaign is organized and co-led by WCW Senior Research Scientist **Autumn R. Green**, Ph.D., director of the Higher Education Access for Parenting Students Research Initiative, and **Theresa M. Anderson**, Ph.D., a principal research associate at the Urban Institute's Income and Benefits Policy Center. The campaign is the inaugural project of the Student Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative, a national partnership initiative that will be formally announced later in 2022 that supports connections between research and efforts to effect change for student parents.

“The call for better data on student parents has been growing in policy and advocacy spaces, and several states have taken action on requiring new data—led by Oregon,” said Green, who provided expert testimony in support of Oregon’s Senate Bill 564 in March 2021. “This project is all about developing a clear understanding of what comes next, and how to make sure that data collection processes actually work effectively.”

Front Cover: Environmental Sustainability Advocate Anna Grimes and her daughter Audrey, and Child Psychology Specialist Esraa Amira and her son Jaden share a two-generational graduation at the Keys to Degrees program celebration at Endicott College in 2017.

Photo courtesy of Autumn Green.



Shaping a Better World through Research & Action
Wellesley Centers for Women

The Wellesley Centers for Women is a research and action institute at Wellesley College that is focused on women and gender and driven by social change.

wcwonline.org/researchandaction



Workshops in Liberia Provide Training to Recognize Human Trafficking



Above: WCW Executive Director Layli Maparyan, Ph.D., (back right) with attendees, presenters, and organizers of the “When You See It, TALK It!” workshop in Monrovia, Liberia during March 2022. *Photos courtesy of Layli Maparyan.*

Left: Hon. Cynthia L. Blandford (left), a partner in the initiative to counter human trafficking in Liberia, and Maparyan (right) at a Liberian Bicentennial celebration.

WCW recently hosted two workshops aimed at countering human trafficking in Liberia.

The first workshop, “Trapped in Transit,” was held virtually in November 2021 for members of the transportation, travel, and tourism industries. Speakers included U.S. and Liberian government officials, air travel industry representatives, and trafficking experts, including WCW Senior Research Scientist **Linda M. Williams**, Ph.D., and Visiting Scholars **Kate Price**, Ph.D., and **Hauwa Ibrahim**, J.D., S.J.D., M.L., as well as **Lenni Benson**, J.D., of New York Law School. Over 90 people, mostly Liberians, attended the event.

The second program, “When You See It, TALK It!” took place in March 2022 in Monrovia and focused on the market sector. Presenters included representatives from the Liberian Ministries of Labor and Gender, a local NGO leader, Liberian journalists, and adult survivors of child trafficking. One highlight was a special video presentation prepared by **Clare Littlechild**, a Wellesley College exchange student. Following the workshop, the market leaders delivered anti-trafficking trainings in five local area markets.

“Trafficking in Liberia is an outgrowth of extreme poverty,” said WCW Executive Director **Layli Maparyan**, Ph.D., who co-led both workshops. “But when people in everyday settings learn to recognize it as a form of violence that is often hidden in plain sight, they are motivated to do something about it.”

The program, funded by the U.S. Embassy Monrovia, was developed in partnership with the University Consortium for Liberia (UCL), a non-profit organization based in Atlanta, Georgia, dedicated to coordinating diverse academic efforts between Liberia and the global community, and led by **Cynthia L. Blandford**, Honorary Consul, Republic of Liberia, State of Georgia.

New Study Will Investigate How Discrimination Affects the Mental Health of Asian American Teens



Asian American adolescents are facing unprecedented risks to their mental health. They are living with high levels of anti-Asian hate and violence fueled by references to COVID-19 as “the China virus.” Physical assaults against Asian

Americans skyrocketed by 145% in 2020, and 80% of youth report being bullied or verbally harassed.

WCW Senior Research Scientist **Linda Charmaraman**, Ph.D., is involved in a new study that will fill a critical gap in the science of how discrimination affects Asian American adolescent mental health. The study is funded by the National Institutes of Health and led by **Cindy Liu**, Ph.D., director of the Developmental Risk and Cultural Resilience Laboratory at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and **Tiffany Yip**, Ph.D., psychology professor at of Fordham University.

Charmaraman and her colleagues will follow 350 Chinese American adolescents, their Chinese heritage parent, and a peer to investigate the effects of discrimination experiences, discrimination responses, and racial socialization processes on adolescent mental health and chronic stress. The long-term objective is to develop evidence on how parents, peers, and social media can be leveraged to mitigate the negative health consequences of discrimination. Charmaraman and her **Youth, Media & Wellbeing Research Lab** will focus on understanding the racial socialization processes that take place within peer relationships, particularly on social media.

“There are so many overt and covert messages about race and ethnicity that are circulating online and offline, which can significantly affect a racial/ethnic minority adolescent’s sense of self-worth,” said Charmaraman. “This will be the first study of its kind to understand the impact of this discriminatory socialization on an often overlooked population: Asian American youth.”

Fathers Want Guidance on How to Talk to Their Kids About Sex and Relationships

Research has shown that when fathers talk with their teenage children about sex, it can protect teens from risky sexual behavior. But few fathers actually talk with their teens about sex, and those who do report not talking very often. Most research on this topic focuses on mothers, and few interventions (i.e., educational programs) to promote parent-teen talk about sex are tailored for fathers.

WCW Senior Research Scientist **Jennifer M. Grossman**, Ph.D., and her team recently interviewed 43 fathers of high school-aged teens to find out about their experiences. The fathers were asked about talking with their teens about dating, sex, and relationships; their attitudes toward a potential intervention to support father-teen talk about dating, sex, and relationships; and for feedback about the structure and content of a potential intervention.

The most striking aspect of the research findings was that fathers were enthusiastic about the idea of an intervention that could guide them in these conversations. This is surprising given low rates of father participation in parent-based sex education programs. When it comes to an intervention, fathers wanted something more peer-based or interactive than most existing programs. They wanted the opportunity to share experiences and learn from other fathers, especially in the context of programs led by people with backgrounds similar to theirs.

“With this study, we’re moving closer to understanding what fathers want and need in an intervention program tailored to them,” said Grossman.



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Featuring:

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White Paper on Prosecution of Child Sexual Abuse
New Research on Asian American Teens' Wellbeing