**Guss, Shannon (PS3-A)**

**Parents’ Adverse Childhood Experiences and Current Relationships with Their Young Children: The Role of Executive Function**

Parenting is a complex process that draws on cognitive resources for the regulation of emotions and behavior (Azar, Reitz, Goslin, 2008; Crandall, Deater-Deckard, Riley, 2015). One aspect of cognitive control is executive function (EF), an integration of inhibitory control, attention shifting, and working memory which develops in childhood and is continuously influenced by personal habits and the environment (Crandall et al., 2015, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). The current investigation conceptualizes these capacities within a bioecological model of human development to explore how early childhood experiences influence later parent-child relationships directly and indirectly through parents’ EF (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). We hypothesize that proximal processes of abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction disrupt the development EF in childhood, and that these effects endure into adulthood ultimately harming future parent-child relationships.

This study explored whether parents’ ability to regulate their behavior and attention, assessed as components of everyday executive function (EF), was influenced by their past adverse experiences – such as abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction – and in turn, influenced current relationships with their children. The sample included 73 parent-child dyads from children enrolled in three early childhood centers in the Midwestern United States serving low-income children and families. Parents reported on their adverse childhood experiences, EF, and relationship with their child. Findings indicate that more parental ACEs were associated with higher ratings of parent-child conflict. This association was indirectly linked through parents’ EF. Implications for interventions are discussed.

Keywords: ACEs, executive function, parent-child relationships, early childhood

Responsible author:

Shannon S. Guss,

Project Director

Early Childhood Education Institute, University of Oklahoma – Tulsa

4502 E. 41st St., Tulsa, OK 74135

Ph. 918-660-3879/ email: [shannon.s.guss@ou.edu](mailto:shannon.s.guss@ou.edu)

Co-authors:

Amanda S. Morris,

Regents Professor, George Kaiser Family Foundation Endowed Chair in Child Development

Human Development & Family Science, Oklahoma State University

Cara Bosler,

Evaluation Coordinator

Human Development & Family Science, Oklahoma State University

Sherri L. Castle,

Senior Research and Policy Associate

Early Childhood Education Institute, University of Oklahoma – Tulsa

Jennifer Hays-Grudo,

Director of the Center for Integrative Research on Childhood Adversity (CIRCA)

Human Development & Family Science, Oklahoma State University

Diane M. Horm,

George Kaiser Family Foundation Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education, Director

Early Childhood Education Institute, University of Oklahoma – Tulsa

Amy Treat,

Doctoral Student

Human Development, Oklahoma State University.

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