

Research \ Action

Midyear Brief

Conversations with Extended Family Can Boost Teen Sexual Health

Effective sex education can help teens make healthier decisions, but only half of U.S. teens talk with their parents about sex, research shows. Instead, many teens seek advice from other family members, like older sisters and brothers or aunts and uncles, who they see as easier to talk to and less judgmental than parents. However, little research has been done about these conversations and whether they can protect teens from risky sexual behaviors.

Senior Research Scientist **Jennifer M. Grossman**, Ph.D., is dedicated to understanding how extended family can support teens' sexual health. In a federally funded study, Grossman and her colleagues asked teens in five urban New England high schools about conversations with extended family on dating, sex, and relationships, including teen pregnancy and the risks of sex. The team found that almost half of the teens they surveyed are talking to extended family about these issues.

"Extended family can support teens' sexual health," said Grossman, "We found that teens who talk with extended family about protection from sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy actually had sex with fewer people."

For adults who are wondering how to have these conversations with teens in their lives, Grossman stresses it is important to meet teens where they are. If teens are already having sex, "discussing reasons not to have sex may be ineffective," said Grossman, "When teens have had sex, it's important



for caring adults to talk to them in ways that fit with their experiences. Talk about safer sex can encourage them to make thoughtful future decisions."

Grossman will present findings from this study at the American Psychological Association Convention in August 2019. Wellesley College student **Anmol Nagar** '21, will join Grossman at the Convention through The Class of 1967 Internship Program. Some of the findings presented at the Convention are also in an article authored by Grossman, **Alicia D. Lynch**, Ph.D., **Amanda M. Richer**, M.A., **Lisette M. DeSouza**, Ph.D., and **Ineke Ceder** in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Keep reading about Dr. Grossman's expertise on this issue: wcwonline.org/researchandaction

Social Biases Impede Justice for Sexual Assault Victims

When an assault is reported and police have identified a suspect and have probable cause for arrest, they make an arrest. That is what most people would expect to be the next step. However, that is not always happening when the crime reported is sexual violence, according to a federally-funded study from our **Justice and Gender-Based Violence Research Initiative (JGBVR)**.

The study authors, **Melissa Morabito**, Ph.D., **Linda M. Williams**, Ph.D., and **April Pattavina**, Ph.D., found that of the 2,887 sexual assault cases they examined, 30 percent got to a point where there was probable cause to make an arrest, but no arrest was made. This happened when police saw a victim as uncooperative or the prosecutors declined the case. In these situations, prosecutors thought a jury might not convict the suspect. This was most likely to happen if the victim knew

the suspect, had been drinking alcohol, or had mental health challenges.

To help more victims of sexual assault see justice, JGBVR Director Williams said, "We need to understand the social biases that influence our definition of who the ideal victim is so that we can further educate law enforcement, judicial staff, advocates, and the public as potential jurors about the rights of all women, regardless of their situations."

Learn more about the study findings: wcwonline.org/researchandaction



From the Executive Director



At WCW, we leverage the power of data to drive social change in the lives of women and girls, families and communities. Each day, we advance gender equality, social justice, and human wellbeing through our high-quality research and innovative action programs.

In this midyear brief, we offer a taste of how our research findings, presentations, and publications advance social change in five key areas: education, economic security, mental health, youth and adolescent development, and gender-based violence. I invite you to continue reading these short articles on our website and connect with us on social media to stay in touch until our next *Report*.

Layli Maparyan, Ph.D.

Katherine Stone Kaufmann '67 Executive Director

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New Findings, Publications, Presentations

Collaborating to Advance Equity and SEL

The **National SEED Project** and **Open Circle**, both action programs at WCW, teamed up in January 2019 to facilitate a workshop on equity and social and emotional learning (SEL) at Tufts University. The workshop was part of the Tisch College SEL and Civic Engagement Faculty Fellows program, which seeks to further integrate SEL skills into practices, programs, and research throughout the university.

“Collaborating with Tufts in this way provided an excellent and timely opportunity to broaden the work of both Open Circle and SEED in higher education,” said **Gail Cruise-Roberson**, SEED co-director and one of the workshop facilitators. Cruise-Roberson, along with SEED leader and educator **Sarah Fiarman**, and **Kamilah Drummond-Forrester**, M.A., director of Open Circle and a SEED leader, highlighted interconnections of SEL and equity in difficult classroom conversations. Faculty fellows left with action plans for implementing this work in their courses.



Immigrant Networking and Collaboration

High-skilled immigrants contribute substantially to U.S. entrepreneurship, but the path to entrepreneurial success might differ for immigrants versus those born in the U.S. For instance, networking is key to business success, but do immigrants and non-immigrants network in the same way? **Sari Pekkala Kerr**, Ph.D., economist and senior research scientist, is studying this issue with William R. Kerr, Ph.D., of Harvard Business School. In “Immigrant Networking and Collaboration: Survey Evidence from CIC,” a newly published paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research, Kerr and Kerr found that immigrants at entrepreneurial coworking spaces took more advantage than non-immigrants of networking opportunities, especially around exchanging advice. This shows immigrants are getting greater value out of these communities, but, “there remains much to be explored about how [immigrant entrepreneurs’] preferences and interactions shape the communities of which they are becoming an ever-larger share,” write Kerr and Kerr in a blog post about the study.

New Findings, Publications, Presentations *continued*



Gaming Affects Youth Development

Online games like Fortnite are captivating middle schoolers across the globe.

Linda Charmaraman, Ph.D., senior research scientist and director of the **Youth, Media, & Wellbeing Research Lab**, wants to know how these violent, mature games influence the health and social development of youth. As part of a larger study on adolescent social media use funded by Children and Screens, Charmaraman found that youth who play risky online games like Fortnite were more likely to show symptoms of addictive behaviors and computer overuse. Charmaraman will present the findings at the American Psychological Association Convention in August 2019 in a poster co-authored by **Amanda M. Richer**, M.A., and Wellesley College students **Sabina Unni '19**, **Cynthia Serrano Najera '21**, and **Stephanie Cobas '21**.

New Book from Peggy McIntosh

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D., senior research scientist and co-founder of the National SEED Project, is one of the world's leading voices on white privilege and anti-racism work. Now, she is sharing a collection of her essays

from the last 40 years on complexities of privilege and power in *On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching as Learning*. The book illustrates McIntosh's practice of combining personal and systemic understandings to focus on power in unusual ways. The book is available now for preorder from Routledge.



Child and Parent Depression Connections

There are many evidence-based interventions to prevent or treat youth anxiety and depression, but not all youth respond to available interventions. In a comprehensive review for *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, **Tracy Gladstone**, Ph.D., senior research scientist, and her colleagues identified a pattern suggesting that youth are less responsive to anxiety and depression interventions when their parents are also experiencing significant depressive symptoms. This is concerning because more than half of all parents with adolescents in treatment for depression have current mood disorders themselves. Gladstone and her colleagues discuss the importance of future research on this issue, writing, "understanding this connection would enable researchers to tailor

interventions, and possibly to address parental depressive symptoms, in order to improve intervention response in youth." The article, "The Association Between Parental Depression and Child Psychosocial Intervention Outcomes: Directions for Future Research," will be available in July 2019.

Leadership in Afterschool

Ellen Gannett, M.Ed., senior strategist and former director of the **National Institute on Out-of-School Time** (NIOST), was honored for her decades of leadership in the field of out-of-school time (OST) during the National AfterSchool Association Annual Convention in New York, NY, in March 2019. **Georgia Hall**, Ph.D., director of NIOST, was one of many speakers at the event. She commended Gannett's career, saying, "Thank you for your dedicated, lifelong service for ensuring high-quality out-of-school time experiences for the children, youth, and OST workers of this country."



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