
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME: Fatima A. Varner

eRA COMMONS USER NAME: FV3225

POSITION TITLE: Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Sciences

EDUCATION/TRAINING

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY
North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC	BA	05/2004	Psychology
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL	PhD	12/2010	Human Development and Social Policy
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI	Postdoc	2010-2012	Education and Psychology

A. Personal Statement

I am a developmental scientist who examines the roles of familial and social contextual factors in African American adolescents' academic and mental health outcomes. In addition, I am interested in how family resources, structure, and parental and child environments interact to influence parental mental health. I have published work related to the intersection of parenting, child characteristics, and contextual factors on African American adolescent outcomes, as well as the influence of financial resources on African American mothers' mental health. My research has increased understanding of the mechanisms by which familial factors such as socioeconomic status and parenting can influence gender and ethnic disparities. In addition, my work identifies racial discrimination as an influence on parenting in African American families. My research, therefore, fits at the intersection of two of PRC's primary research areas: 1) Demography: Family Demography and Intergenerational Relationships and 2) Demography: Education, Work and Inequality.

In the next five years I plan to expand my line of research in these areas by focusing on how parents' and adolescents' perceptions of racial discrimination experiences and anticipation of discrimination are related to parents' practices and mental health, as well as adolescent outcomes including academic achievement, mental health, and risk behaviors. This research aligns with PDB's Family Demography and Intergenerational Research Program. My expertise in secondary data analysis and analytical methods such as structural equation modeling and hierarchical linear modeling makes me well-qualified to conduct research related to families and adolescent development.

I have received support from PRC's Development Core through their grant proposal Boot Camp in developing a grant proposal to submit to NIH focused on the relationship between physical development and the mental health and risk behaviors of African American youth. In addition, I have received support with computer and software purchasing and set-up through PRC's Science & Technical core and assistance with grant proposal preparation from PRC's Administration Core. I also plan to become involved in the PRC working group on family research.

B. Positions and Honors**Positions and Employment**

- 2013-2015 Assistant Professor, Applied Developmental Psychology Program, Department of Psychology, Fordham University
- 2015-present Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, The University of Texas at Austin
- 2016-present Faculty Research Associate, Population Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Other Experience and Professional Memberships

- 2014-2015 Mentor, Bronx Science Mentor Program
- Present Member, Diversity Committee, Society for Research on Adolescence
- Present Member: Society for Research on Adolescence, Society for Research in Child Development, American Psychological Association
- Editorial Board Reviewer, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*

Honors

2000-2004	Park Scholarship, Full Scholarship & Leadership Program, 2000 – 2004
2004	Summa Cum Laude, Psychology, North Carolina State University, 2004
2004-2006	Minority Fellowship, Northwestern University, 2004-2006
2005	Spencer Training Program, Northwestern University, 2005
2006	Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship Honorable Mention, 2006
2006	National Science Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship Honorable Mention, 2006
2011	Family Research Consortium Fellow, Family Research Consortium V Summer Institute

C. Contributions to Science

1. Gender-Differentiated Parenting and African American Adolescents' Academic Achievement

Large gender differences exist in academic achievement and educational attainment among African Americans. These gender disparities have significant implications for employment, economic opportunities, and African American family life. One hypothesized contributor to these gender differences in achievement is gender-differentiated parenting. My work has found that African American mothers in both married and single-mother headed households engage in different parenting practices based on their children's gender and birth order and that these parenting differences partially account for gender differences in African American adolescents' academic achievement. In addition, this research suggests that one factor that contributes to gender-differentiation is mothers' differing concerns about the role of racial discrimination in the lives of their sons and daughters. These findings suggest that the history of discrimination toward African Americans has significant implications for parenting and academic achievement.

- a) Mandara, J., Varner, F., & Richman, S. (2010). Do African American mothers really "love" their sons and "raise" their daughters? *Journal of Family Psychology, 24*, 41-50.
- b) Mandara, J., Murray, C. B., Telesford, J. M., Varner, F. A., & Richman, S. B. (2012). Observed gender differences in African American mother-child relationships and child behavior. *Family Relations, 61*, 129–141. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00688.x
- c) Varner, F., & Mandara, J. (2013). Discrimination concerns and expectations as explanations of gendered socialization in African American families. *Child Development, 84*, 875–890. doi: 10.1111/cdev.12021
- d) Varner, F., & Mandara, J. (2014). Differential parenting of African American adolescents as an explanation for gender disparities in achievement. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 24*, 667-680. doi: 10.1111/jora.12063

2. Contextual Factors, Mothers' Mental Health, and Parenting

Many studies have found mothers' mental health to be related to their parenting and child outcomes. My research using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 has found that financial resources act as a buffer against lower self-esteem for single African American mothers and depressive symptoms for divorced mothers. These findings provide more knowledge about risk and protective factors associated with the mental health of the understudied population of African American mothers.

- a) Mandara, J., Johnston, J.S., Murray, C.B., & Varner, F. (2008). Marriage, money and African American mothers' self-esteem. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*, 1188-1199.
- b) Varner, F., & Mandara, J. (2009). Marital transitions and changes in African American mothers' depressive symptoms: The buffering role of financial resources. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 839-847.

3. Racial Discrimination in Black Families

This current line of research focuses on how perceptions of racial discrimination shape parenting cognitions, practices, and mental health, as well as adolescents' and emerging adults' academic achievement, mental health, and risk behaviors. Family systems theory suggests that external factors such as racial discrimination experiences not only influence the target of discrimination but also the relationships of interdependent family members. In research projects currently in progress I examine 1) how parents' and adolescents' racial

discrimination experiences together influence parenting practices; 2) parent and child characteristics such as gender, parental self-efficacy, and parental mental health that modify the associations among racial discrimination experiences, parenting practices, and subsequent adolescent development; 3) whether culturally-specific and universal parenting practices promote or protect adolescents' academic achievement and mental health in the face of race-related stressors; 4) if parents' anticipation of discrimination influences parenting and mental health even after accounting for previous perceptions of racial discrimination experiences; and 5) the relationship between racial discrimination experiences and Black adolescents' and emerging adults' educational, psychological, and behavioral trajectories.

- a) Hurd, N., Varner, F., Caldwell, C., & Zimmerman, M. (2014). Does perceived racial discrimination predict changes in psychological distress and substance use over time? An examination among Black emerging adults. *Developmental Psychology, 50*, 1910-1918. doi: 10.1037/a0036438
- b) Varner, F., Hurd, N., Ross, L., Williams, A., Smalls-Glover, C., & Rowley, S. (2016, April). Pathways between racial discrimination experiences and parenting in families with Black youth. In F. Varner (Chair) *Links between Racial Discrimination and Black Adolescents' Academic Experiences*. Paper Symposium presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Baltimore, MD.
- c) Varner, F. (2014, November). Racial discrimination concerns and African American mothers' academic expectations: The role of maternal efficacy. Poster presented at the 2014 SRCD Special Topic Meeting: New Conceptualizations in the Study of Parenting-At-Risk, San Diego, CA.
- d) Varner, F., Hodzic, T., & Rowley, S. (2013, August). Racial socialization and parental involvement as contributors to positive development among Black youth. Poster presented at the American Psychological Association Convention, Honolulu, HI.

Complete List of Published Work in MyBibliography:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/myncbi/1z9O8j5ZQklkX/bibliography/49753517/public/?sort=date&direction=descending>

D. Research Support

Ongoing Research Support

None

Completed Research Support

Faculty Research Grant at Fordham University

2013-2014

Racial Discrimination Concerns and African American Mothers' Parenting Practices

The goals of this project were to examine whether African American mothers' concerns about the impact of racial discrimination on their children differed by the age of their children and identify links between mothers' discrimination concerns and parenting practices.

Role: Principal Investigator

Responsibilities: To design a survey, recruit African American mother participants, analyze data, and draft manuscripts.