

Postdoc Profile: Dr. Erica Coates

University of Central Missouri (B.S. Psychology); University of South Florida (M.A. and Ph.D. Clinical Psychology)

Faculty Mentor: Mia Smith-Bynum, Ph.D. and Kevin Roy, Ph.D.

What is the secret to raising successful, well-adjusted children? For the past several decades, an expansive body of research has focused on the relationship between parent involvement and the well-being of children, particularly in households where the parents live separately. Parents who are deeply involved in their child's life, regardless of whether they live under the same roof, overwhelmingly result in better, more successful outcomes for their kids in relationship building, academics, and health. Much of this has to do with the "protective" aspects of parenting—not just engagement, but the importance of a parent's own mental health and the quality of the collaborative relationship with the other parent. And while research has focused for years on those "protective" attributes of mothers—primarily because children more often reside in single-mother households—there has been little examination on the importance and influence of those attributes in nonresidential fathers.



This is the research focus of Dr. Erica Coates, a Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Family Science in the School of Public Health. A native of Missouri who completed her Ph.D. at the University of South Florida, Erica is using her time at UMD to publish the extensive work she's completed on how the quality of nonresidential fathers' involvement and co-parenting affects the outcomes of children, particularly black youth. Working closely with mentors Dr. Mia Smith-Bynum and Dr. Kevin Roy, Erica is also working to deepen and develop her research agenda, secure grant funding, and eventually spur interventions that support healthy, thriving families. Below, Erica talks more about her research, and how, historically, the literature has only told half the story:

Why did you choose UMD for your post-doc?

UMD's President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program was extremely appealing to me because it allowed me the opportunity to focus solely on enhancing my scholarship and further establish my program of research. I am also fortunate for the opportunity to work with my co-mentors, Mia Smith-Bynum and Kevin Roy, Associate Professors in the Department of Family Science in the School of Public Health, who are experts in African American families and nonresidential fathers, respectively.

Your dissertation examined the psychosocial adjustment of black adolescents living in single mother

households, particularly in relation to the involvement of their (nonresidential) fathers. Do you remember the moment that sparked your interest in this topic?

I wanted to delve deeper into the connection between nonresidential father involvement and youth outcomes. The benefits of positive father involvement to youth outcomes is well documented, yet little is known about the aspects of fatherhood that are protective for youth in contrast to the extensive research on mothers. I wanted to see whether the same attributes of mothers and the mother-child relationship that are protective for youth held true for fathers as well. I remember being overjoyed when my advisor approved the topic!

What determines a positive outcome for children in a single-parent household? Was there anything in your research that you found surprising?

My research found that, similar to research on mothers, when nonresidential fathers have better mental health (i.e., less depressive symptoms) and more positive parent-child relationships, adolescents have fewer emotional and behavioral problems. Supportive co-parenting relationships was also related to better youth adjustment.

Your current research continues to focus on fathers, specifically, the father-infant relationship, but also in a broader sense—how fatherhood is perceived in the black community. What are you learning from your research?

There are a considerable number of Black nonresidential fathers who are meaningfully involved in their children's lives, especially when their children are young (media coverage tends to highlight their absence rather than their presence). A father's mental health and the quality of the co-parenting relationship are key to how involved nonresidential fathers are with their children and to their children's adjustment.

How do you hope your work will impact others?

I hope to use this research to develop culturally-sensitive family based interventions designed to increase positive involvement of nonresidential Black fathers and improve co-parenting relationships to improve youth outcomes.

What's the last great book you read or show you binged?

I really enjoy watching *This is Us*.

What are your plans for 2018 and life after the post-doc?

I expect to complete my post doc by fall 2019 and transition to a tenure-track academic position at that time.

When not under a mountain of work, where's your favorite spot (campus or off-campus) to decompress?

On my floor enjoying tummy time with my six-month old baby girl.

Article by Maggie Haslam

Recognition & Awards

Campus Awards

A call for nominations has been issued for the following awards:

2018 Kirwan Awards

Kirwan Faculty Research and Scholarship Prize

Nomination Deadline: February 28, 2018

Kirwan Undergraduate Education Award

Nomination Deadline: February 28, 2018

Faculty Development



Call For Nominations

The Office of Faculty Affairs is seeking applicants for the 2018–2019 Big Ten Academic Alliance's [Academic Leadership Program](#) (ALP) and [Department Executive Officers](#) (DEO) Program. Each year the Office of the Provost provides funding for a select number of tenured faculty members to

participate in these [leadership development initiatives](#). We encourage deans to nominate current chairs for the DEO program, and deans and chairs to nominate tenured faculty members who may have an interest in and potential for leadership on campus at any level for ALP. The nomination deadline is Friday, April 13. For more information on the eligibility and nomination process, [click here](#).



University of Maryland Emeritus/Emerita Association

On February 6, UMEEA held a Movie Panel Discussion on the film, *The Post*, the history it represents and its relevance to the current moment. The event featured panelists Maurine Beasley, Professor Emerita, Journalism; James B. Gilbert, Professor Emeritus, History; and Carl Sessions Stepp, Professor, Journalism, who led a lively audience discussion.

Faculty Tips and Resources



Managing Tensions in Graduate Student-Faculty Relationships

Graduate student-faculty relationships typically involve: (1) mutual assistance with research projects around shared interests or concerns about issues needing theoretical and/or empirical attention; (2) mutually-shared positive recognition for their work via the receipt of competitive grants, best paper awards, and acceptances on refereed conference programs and/or in refereed journals; and (3) mutual respect and interpersonal support resulting from these positive experiences. For these reasons, graduate student-faculty relationships can be mutually beneficial on many dimensions—career-long—and it thus behooves graduate students and faculty members to cultivate good working relationships with each other. Indeed, the university itself also benefits—via higher quality performance, higher organizational commitment, and lower turnover—when a climate that is nurturing, or “developmental,” characterizes members’ working relationships. (Note 1)

Sometimes, however, conflicts arise. These conflicts can be particularly challenging when the parties involved differ culturally, speak different languages, and have different cultural practices around discussing disagreements. (Note 2) There are different ways to face such a challenge, but I recommend taking an “interest-oriented” approach. Empirical findings by conflict management- and negotiation-scholars show that using an “interest-oriented” approach, which aims to address the concerns of both sides, will be more likely than approaches focusing on the concerns of only one side (such as a “rights-oriented” or “power-oriented” approach) to enable disputants to achieve a continually good relationship as well as a mutually satisfying outcome. (Note 3)

For two reasons, taking an interest-oriented approach is easier said than done, however. First, when disputants are angry (as is likely when they perceive injustice), they tend to express themselves in ways that are not conducive to using an interest-oriented approach. These expressions can include statements of deservedness, threats of conflict-escalation, or even personal attacks. For this reason, I, like other conflict management scholars, recommend that all parties agree on process norms for discussing conflict as soon as the conflict occurs in order to help expedite the speed with which any tensions can be resolved. This way, tensions are less likely to fester and grow into emotional conflicts. (Note 4)

The second challenge to an “interest-oriented” approach is that its direct nature will probably be uncomfortable for those from cultures that practice a more indirect communication-style. (Note 5) This is why I believe that the strategies for resolving conflict in graduate student-faculty relationships, especially (but not only) when these entail culturally-diverse exchanges, need to include making all parties feel safe to express, or “voice,” concerns that may emerge during their work. This may take the form of enabling parties to express themselves in ways most comfortable to them. A more indirect way of resolving conflict, for example, could be identifying a neutral and mutually trusted informal or formal third party who might assist in the resolution of disagreements. (Note 6) UMD faculty members and graduate students may wish to turn to the graduate or faculty ombudsperson for such assistance.

Discussing at the outset not only the expectations that each party has for the other, but also the norms (direct or indirect) they will use to address conflict, including possibly identifying a person who they mutually agree on as a facilitator if ever they need help, can help prevent disagreements from growing out of control and, if/when conflict arises, help resolve it quickly and integratively. This is why I believe that faculty members and graduate students working together should practice interest-oriented communications to determine not only how to best thrive, but also how to survive the occasional bumps along their shared journey.

Debra L. Shapiro (Ph.D., Northwestern University) is Clarice Smith Professor of Management at UMD's Robert H. Smith School of Business, Associate Dean of Doctoral Programs at U of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School (1998-2001), and Director of Doctoral Programs at UMD's Smith School (2008-2011).

Endnotes

1. Dobrow, S.R., Chandler, D.E., Murphy, W.M., & Kram, K.E. 2012. A review of developmental networks: Incorporating a mutuality perspective. *Journal of Management*, 38(1): 210-242.
2. Brett, J.M., Behfar, K., & Kern, M. 2006. Managing conflict in multicultural teams. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(11): 84-91.
3. Brett, J.M., Shapiro, D.L., & Lytle, A. 1998. Breaking the bonds of reciprocity in negotiations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41(4): 410-424.
4. Jehn, K. A. 1997. A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42: 530-557.
5. Von Glinow, M.A., Shapiro, D.L., & Brett, J.M. 2004. Can we talk, and should we?: Managing emotional conflict in multicultural teams. *The Academy of Management Review*, 29(4): 578-592.
6. Shapiro, D.L. & Burriss, E. 2014. The role of voice in managing conflict. In N. Ashkanasy & K. Jehn's (Eds.), *Handbook of Conflict Management Research* (pp.173-192). UK: Edward Edgar Publishing.

Diversity & Inclusion Campus Climate Survey

The Campus Climate Survey is currently underway. This is an important assessment about how each member of the UMD community experiences different aspects of our campus, such as equity, inclusion, belonging, safety, and perceptions of diversity--both positive and negative.

We are interested in hearing about the experiences of all faculty, staff, and students.

[Click here](#) to take the survey by February 28.

After completing the survey, you will have a chance to register for the following prizes:

- A parking pass for 2018-2019

- Tickets for two to several athletic events
- Basketball signed by the head coach
- And others

Findings from the survey will be an important foundation for specific ways to improve the climate for equity, diversity, and inclusion on campus, and make important revisions to the strategic plan for the campus. For more information, [click here](#).

News

UMD Researchers Find Gene that May Greatly Increase Strawberry Production

UMD Receives Grant to Develop Cultural Literacy Curriculum

UMD Researchers Develop Breakthrough Technique to Combat Cancer Drug Resistance

UMD Researchers Create Super Wood Stronger Than Most Metals

Events

Feb. 28 Interdisciplinary Forum – Sex & Gender In Academia

March 1 Preparing for Activity Insight: Telling Y(our) Story Using Google Scholar and ResearcherID to Track Publications (co-sponsored with UMD Libraries)

March 5 & 13 Town Hall: Annual Activity Reporting for PTK Faculty

March 7 Sexual Misconduct: A Panel Discussion for Chairs and Department Leaders

March 28* UMD @ Home and in the World: Disaster and Disaster Response

April 17 Preparing for Activity Insight: Telling Y(our) Story Using Google Scholar and ResearcherID to Track Publications (co-sponsored with UMD Libraries)

*Registration opens soon. Check our website for additional details.

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