

2020-2021 Carolina Seminar Series Application

Seminar Title

DUAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND SYSTEMIC RACISM AND INEQUITY ON CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORIES IN THE EARLY YEARS: INTERDISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF A RESEARCH-POLICY AGENDA.

Proposal submitted by:

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UNC Conveners

Name	Institute/Department	Email address
Betsy Ayankoya	FPG Child Development Institute	betsy.ayankoya@unc.edu
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Non-UNC Conveners:

Name	Institute/Department	Email address
Iheoma Iruka	HighScope Educational Research Foundation	iiruka@highscope.org

Expected Participants (Core Faculty):

Name	Affiliation – Institution/Department
Kirsten Kainz	UNC Chapel Hill – School of Social Work
Barthi Zvara	UNC Chapel Hill – Gillings School of Public Health
Meghan Shanahan	UNC Chapel Hill – Gillings School of Public Health
Hudson Santos	UNC Chapel Hill – School of Nursing

Ali Calikoglu	UNC Chapel Hill – Pediatrics
Keith Payne	UNC Chapel Hill - Psychology and Neuroscience
Shauna Cooper	UNC Chapel Hill - Psychology and Neuroscience
Daniel Gitterman	UNC Chapel Hill - Public Policy
Dorothy Espelage	UNC Chapel Hill - School of Education
Harriet Able	UNC Chapel Hill – School of Education
Doree Laforet	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG/Child Trends
Noreen Yazejian	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Child Development Institute
Ximena Franco	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Development Institute
Allison DeMarco	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Child Development Institute
Mary Bratsch-Hines	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Child Development Institute
Cathi Propper	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Child Development Institute
Christina Kaszprzak	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Child Development Institute
Megan Vihn	UNC Chapel Hill - FPG Child Development Institute
Sharon Loza	North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, NC Department of Public Instruction
Kristi Snuggs	North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education
Kenneth Dodge	Duke University – Sanford School of Public Policy
Keisha Bentley Edwards	Duke University – School of Medicine
William A. "Sandy" Darity	Duke University – Sanford School of Public Policy
Phillip Graham	Research Triangle Institute, International (RTI)
Jonathan Livingston	NCCU – Education
Lorraine Taylor	NCCU - Juvenile Justice Institute
Nigel Pierce	NCCU – Education
Jennifer Coffman	UNC Greensboro – Human Development and Family Studies

This series will be open to UNC faculty and investigators with affiliated interest including students and postdocs. The series will also be open to outside organizations and institutions including The Carter Clinic, Duke University, and stakeholders from the NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Instruction and others.

We will also build associations with community partners, such as Durham CAN (Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods) to enable community engaged discussions. And we will engage early childhood partners and funders (e.g., Smart Start, NC Early Childhood Foundation, NC

Child, Prevention Child Abuse NC, Institute of Medicine) in the construction of the seminar agenda and attendee list.

Seminar Description

- Seminar Description*

Describe the intellectual inquiry of the field of work upon which the proposed seminar will focus (approx. 500 words).

This Carolina Seminar Series will convene scientists and policymakers around the topic: “Dual Impact of Covid-19 and Systemic Racism and Inequity on Children’s Developmental Trajectories in the Early Years: Interdisciplinary Conversations and Development of a Research-Policy Agenda”. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black and African-American Communities relative to Caucasian groups. In our own backyard, 11.8% of Orange County is Black or African-American (AA), yet 37% of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Orange County were Black or AA. This disproportionate effect of COVID-19 is likely to impact numerous facets of child development during the critical early period of birth-age 8, exacerbating existing health, education, and economic disparities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly impacted the social emotional well-being of children, both through first- and second-hand trauma related to the impact of the pandemic on outcomes for their families, households and communities. This dire scenario of disproportionate incidences of COVID-19 cases in minority communities has particular relevance for children from disadvantaged households and communities, who already struggle to advance academically and socially because they are already “at-risk” due to disadvantaged conditions that are further exacerbated—e.g., food insecurity, poorly resourced school systems, maltreatment, and community violence. These conditions adversely impair brain function and other aspects of development.

A seminar series of informative lectures that bring together scientists and child advocates across disciplines is needed to build a bidirectional translational bridge between research and public policy. These conversations have the potential to improve the lives of children and families within North Carolina, as well as affect research and policy beyond our borders. The seminar series will increase awareness about the impact of disparities that contribute to children’s ability to keep pace, which have broad dire effects on the neurodevelopmental trajectories of children growing in disadvantaged households and communities. The seminar will further inform science-based policy measures that compel action within our local and state governments to drive initiatives that combat disparities impacting early childhood learning and well-being. Research findings establish the critical need for access to high-quality and equitable early care and education and health services that support developmental trajectories of neurological, social, mental and behavioral health.

The proposed collaborative will have multiple components: incubating new transdisciplinary research collaborations, fostering new transdisciplinary seminars, and catalyzing public and policy outreach with the help of local and state policy liaisons. The Carolina Seminar provides a unique platform to foster intellectual exchange by engaging faculty, scientists, graduate students and other stakeholders from diverse disciplines to discuss key findings, literature, methods, and approaches that impact child development. This seminar series will facilitate interdisciplinary interactions between scientists, child advocates, educators, community leaders and policymakers as we explore opportunities to address and mitigate disparities that impact educational, social-emotional and neurological development. With the knowledge and expertise housed across UNC—including education, public health, Medicine, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Allied Health, Nursing, nutrition, epidemiology and others with which FPG has connections—are highly relevant for understanding, analyzing, and disseminating science on children’s development, health and wellbeing due to inequities, disadvantage, trauma, and racism, exacerbated by COVID-19.

Seminar Type

Will the proposed seminar be a problem-focused seminar, or traditional?

Problem-focused seminar

Does your proposal address the focus theme for 2020-2021?* (COVID-19 theme)

Yes, this proposal does fit the focus theme.

Seminar Plan

Describe what goals you hope to achieve through the proposed seminar, and how you plan to achieve them.

GOALS of the Dual Impacts of COVID-19 and Inequality on Child Development Carolina Seminar Series:

The seminar series will foster strong interactions between the community and scientists, and act as a hub of knowledge for policy-makers, families, and community leaders working on pressing issues in the age of COVID-19 that impact all children but particularly those with social and economic disadvantage, many due to systemic inequities, racism in particular.

The Overarching goal of this Child Development Seminar Series is to advance interdisciplinary research and education to understand complex factors that impact childhood disparities birth-8 years of age specifically exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to translate findings into innovative solutions for policy and society. The seminar series will catalyze an interactive transdisciplinary community of scholars—faculty, students, postdoctoral fellows, staff, and community leaders—to pool their talents to achieve a new level of excellence in understanding the impact of disparities in the early years on developmental trajectories through integrative bio-psycho-social approaches, and to foster new policies and actions to improve societal growth.

We will engineer a unique intellectual environment for fostering transdisciplinary collaborations and education, enabling participants to get out of their comfort zones and explore new bridging ideas to develop unique pilot projects designed to identify opportunities for solving complex social problems, strengthening neurodevelopment and other aspects of child health and wellbeing, and eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps. The seminar series supports the development of a community of transdisciplinary community stimulating conversations guided by a common interest in understanding the impact of disparities on developmental trajectories further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its interface with key pillars of society, including justice, health, arts, education. It will also foster interdisciplinary engagements and conversations by faculty from different departments, and will be open to faculty across the Triangle Academic institutions. The immediate specific aims are:

- To support intellectual changes around a broad spectrum of the social and developmental sciences.
- To build an infrastructure for transdisciplinary developmental sciences, connecting faculty from different Schools/Departments to address complex bio-psycho-social issues and intractable social problems and challenges that shape human well-being.
- To foster the engagement of new research networks and collaborations that can be deployed as rapid response teams to new multidisciplinary, multi-site funding initiatives.
- To cultivate a current and emerging workforce capable of understanding the key drivers of systemic racism as well as implementing research and policy recommendations that have strong potential to improve conditions affecting children
- To provide a gateway for community outreach and policy through courses/seminars.

PLAN to achieve the goals of the Dual Impacts of COVID-19 and Inequality on Child Development Carolina Seminar Series:

Seminars will occur six times during the academic year. The series will be broadly advertised across the campus via the websites of the NCTRACS and UNC Vice Chancellor for Research Offices, as well as our collaborations across UNC-G, NCCU, Duke. We will also advertise on the listservs of Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the UNC Office for Diversity and Inclusion. The seminar will be open to faculty, graduate and undergraduate students interested in participating in these model transdisciplinary approaches, to inform about future research study designs and broader collaborations. In addition, we will encourage attendance by policy-makers, families and community stakeholders via media streams through UNC and other regional outlets. Sessions will be recorded and archived for later viewing. And sound bites” will be created that can convey key findings, core principles and recommendations. Collaboration with the UNC Department of Government Affairs will facilitate the transference of information with implications for policies formulated by the General Assembly.

In Year 1, The seminar series will initially involve information sharing by the seminar ‘conveners’ and other invited campus and community leaders (e.g., Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dean of Global Public Health, Vice Dean for research in School of Medicine,

School of Government) with regards to evidence of impact of COVID-19 on existing disparities and inequities on children birth-8 years of age. The series will progress to a more 'focus group' informational gathering format with faculty from different disciplines sharing their research expertise, and areas where they are seeking collaborations to advance their core research focus. Specific activities will include:

- A core reading, the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine Consensus Report entitled “Vibrant and Healthy Kids”, co-authored by convener Dr. Iheoma Iruka, that will serve to direct and structure discussion around recommendations delineated in the report to align science, practice, and policy to advance health equity, with a particular review and tracking of data and outcomes gathered around the COVID-19 pandemic. These discussions will lead to the formation of new transdisciplinary working groups that will include diverse faculty and students across disciplines.
- A systematic review of key policies, briefs, and reports that impact early childhood education and child health and wellbeing (including early childhood education) in NC, including the Leandro Report and other briefs, reports and recommendations that will be produced by Governor Roy Cooper’s new DRIVE Task Force established through [Executive Order 113](#), to focus on [improving equity and inclusion in education](#) and submit a report to the Governor with recommendations to reach the proposed goals.

In Year 2, we will identify a series of collaborative projects to begin designing transdisciplinary studies exploring biological, psychological, social and systemic factors that contribute to the emergence of disparities, and explore initiatives that will expand and strengthen programs that can mitigate these early learning and well-being disparities that are already present by kindergarten, including school-based, home-based, and policy-based interventions. In addition to our regularly scheduled meeting, we will form working groups to focus on specific problems, where each group will have representations across disciplines to formulate questions and share approaches for understanding convergent risk factors. These working groups will lead different aspects of the data gathering and analyses. The groups will also provide mentoring opportunities for postdoc and graduate students interested in developing research and policy work to promote awareness around early childhood disparities. These working groups will generate specific research questions that can be implemented in pilot projects.

Pilot projects/grants formulated at the end of Year 2 will explore the following questions and address the following examples of programmatic transdisciplinary themes and topics that will be discussed with expert panels.

In Year 3, the working groups will prepare pilot grants (to both internal and external targets, including National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institutes of Child Health and Development (NICHD), Institute for Educational Science (IES), and private foundations and State contracts), and develop publications and policy-briefs to high-impact sources, both journals, but

also white papers and policy briefs that may impact policy change. We will work with the UNC Department of Government Affairs and the National Prevention Science Coalition and other non-profit partners to identify opportunities for policy action.

HOW TO SUSTAIN AND LAUNCH the Dual Impacts of COVID-19 and Inequities on Child Development Seminar Series?

The proposed Seminar Series will seek funding for seed grants to support the development of educational and collaboration-building programs such as journal clubs, guest speaker series, workshops, and larger-scale meetings with policymakers. In close collaboration with the National and State, local and community partners, the Consortium will identify funding from target foundation(s), to continue supporting transdisciplinary seminars, plenary lectures, open-to-the-public educational lectures, catalyst meetings, and incubator grants that will open the University to the community and foster new collaborations. We will also seek funding for research and evaluation projects, through the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institutes of Child Health and Development (NICHD), Institute for Educational Science (IES), and private foundations and State contracts.