Interventions designed to produce positive changes in parents and families usually test change with assessments at baseline and post intervention. However, the relatively long intervals between baseline and post intervention make detection of mechanisms of change difficult and miss the micro timescale trajectory of change. This dissertation consists of three interrelated studies focusing on more frequent assessment during this period of change.

Study I used data from the Strengthening Families in Pennsylvania Project (SFP in PA), an RCT of the Strengthening Families Program (SFP 10-14). Study I aimed to elucidate whether mothers’ attendance and engagement in the intervention, assessed weekly, predicted their post-intervention benefit. Results showed no significant effect of mothers’ attendance or engagement on their program benefit and this did not vary by fathers’ attendance. Future research should use
more thorough measures of parents’ daily engagement with more immediate measures of change to better understand how parents influence this change process.

Study II presents a rationale for using intensive longitudinal methods (ILM) in the evaluation of family interventions. ILM are assessment protocols with rapid in situ measurement that capture aspects of participants’ daily lives and momentary experiences. ILM are sensitive to micro timescale change and provide valid assessments of momentary experiential constructs. Thus, ILM are particularly suited to investigating patterns and processes of change as well as interaction-level or daily-level family functioning outcomes. Study II suggests future research questions that can be informed by ILM.

Study III examined the trajectories of micro timescale change in parents’ outcomes for a subset of parents in the SFP in PA trial. Parents completed daily assessments of mindful parenting and affective quality of the parent-youth relationship throughout the intervention. Using heterogeneous variance multi-level models, Study III tests two hypotheses: incremental increase in functioning, indicating behavior change, and increased day-to-day variability, indicating disruption in homeostasis of the family system, for parents experiencing more exposure to intervention sessions (i.e., attendance). Affective quality showed evidence of both patterns of change for more-exposed parents. Future research should explore the relation of the micro timescale patterns of change to macro timescale change.