

Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 1998 Research Scholars

Sandra Barruecco

Project Title:

A Longitudinal Analysis of the Linguistic and Academic Development of Latino Children: Effects of Early Childhood Education and Bilingual Education

Grantee:

Sandra Barruecco

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

University of Denver

Department of Psychology

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of Head Start participation on subsequent school experiences of Latino children with Limited English Proficiency using databases maintained by the Denver Public Schools. Specifically, the study focused on the linguistic, academic, and cognitive development of Latino English Language Learners (ELL). Latino students enrolled in any bilingual education program in Denver Public Schools from 1992 to 1997 were included in the study, including children from former Head Start and city or state early childhood education programs. The development of three groups of children were compared: (1) former Head Start graduates; (2) former graduates from city- or state-funded early childhood education programs; and (3) children who did not attend preschool. In addition, the development of children in the three groups was compared across two forms of bilingual education: Transitional Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language. Analyses included cross-sectional comparisons of group differences, taking into account type and length of preschool experience, parental social class, and ELL instructional modes.

Sample:

n=Latino pupils enrolled in bilingual education programs in Denver from 1992-1997

Measures:

Child

Review of School Records from 1992 through 1997

Language Assessment Scales (LAS) - Short Form, Oral, Level 1

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices

Barbara Conboy

Project Title:

Cross-Linguistic Influences in Early Bilingual Development

Grantee:

Barbara Conboy

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

Program in Language and Communicative Disorder

San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego

Project Abstract:

The main purpose of this study was to research typical language development in children learning two languages simultaneously. One goal of this study was to increase the current knowledge of typical language development in low-income bilingual children under age three. A second goal was to provide the Head Start community with information about bilingual development to ensure cutting edge language services to children raised in bilingual environments. This project involved a collaboration between San Diego State University, University of California (San Diego), and the Neighborhood House Association Head Start Program in San Diego.

This two-year research project consisted of three experiments that were conducted with Spanish-English bilingual children at 20 and 28 months of age. The ways in which growth in one language influences growth in the other language at the lexical (vocabulary) and morphosyntactic (grammatical) levels were investigated. The first experiment studied lexical processing using an electrophysiological approach. The second experiment compared vocabulary scores obtained at one time point with grammatical complexity scores obtained eight months later. The third experiment compared grammatical development in the two different languages at the same time point. Eligible children for these studies were contacted through the Southwest Area Head Start and Early Head Start programs run by the Neighborhood House Association.

Sample:
n=40 bilingual children

Measures:

Child

MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory

MacArthur Inventario del Desarrollo de Habilidades Comunicativas

Spanish and English Sentence Repetition Tests (Experimental)

Bilingual Questionnaire

Bilingual Complexity Measure

Event-related Brain Potentials

Bilingual Comprehension Book

Mary J. deVries

Project Title:

Caring Relationships with Families: Interpretations of Head Start Family Involvement in a Diverse Community

Grantee:

Mary J. deVries

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

University of Michigan

Project Abstract:

This ethnographic study explored the evolution of family involvement in Head Start, focusing on an ethnically diverse community. The two main purposes of the study were to identify those aspects of a Head Start program and its staff that are responsive and beneficial to multicultural families, and to determine the reciprocal response by these families to the Head Start program.

Data was collected from multiple sources over a two-year period using two primary methods: participant observation and in-depth interviewing. The researcher participated in and observed a Head Start classroom and office activities two days a week. Full field notes were recorded and transcribed for analysis. In addition, the researcher conducted multiple in-depth interviews with families, teachers, and staff. The number and frequency of the interviews was adjusted depending on the emerging themes and patterns in the data. A computer software program was used to organize the data and to assist in textual and conceptual analysis.

Sample:

n=16 families (10 families in Year 1 and 6 families in Year 2)

Measures:

Classroom

Participant Observations

Family / Teacher and Staff

Three Interview Series

Deborah Froelich

Project Title:

Project FRAMES (Family Relationships of Asian-American Minorities and the Educational System)

Grantee:

Deborah Froelich

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

Wichita State University

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine the frames, or unstated rules built by culture and life experience, of Asian American families and Head Start staff to determine the reason that Asian American children with learning difficulties may not be identified. The study also provided information about the effect of Asian family culture on child development, Asian families' interpretation of child development, and Asian families' expectations for their children's future education. From the Head Start perspective, the study examined the organizational culture of Head Start, staff values and beliefs about child development, and the nature and purpose of early education and parents' roles in their children's education. Asian families were selected from a Head Start program in Wichita, Kansas. Teachers and health services workers were selected based on the criteria that they work directly with the Asian subject children.

Data source triangulation was conducted through interviews, home visit observations, and Head Start document reviews. Two subject families received home visits from teachers, and two different subject families received home visits from health services workers. Data themes and patterns were identified using a constant comparative method of analysis.

Transcriptions of field notes and interviews were coded and analyzed using ethnographic computer software.

Sample:

n=10 Southeast Asian children (5 boys; 5 girls), 2 Head Start teachers, 2 Health Services Workers

Measures:

Child

Review of Individual Student Files
Observation of child communication
Child learning task

Family

Interviews
Videotaped Observations of Home Visits
Review of all Head Start literature sent to parents

Head Start Program, Teacher and Health Services Worker

Interviews
Review of Health Services Workers' Notes
Head Start Program Document Review
Observation of Head Start staff during home visits and parent-teacher conferences

Judith Guerrero

Project Title:

The Effects of Acculturation, Demographics and Child-caregiver Interactions on Children's Early Language Development in Bilingual Environments

Grantee:

Judith Guerrero

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

University of Kansas
Juniper Gardens Children's Project

Project Abstract:

This Head Start research project was part of a larger, longitudinal Early Head Start (EHS) study being conducted in the Juniper Garden Children's Project of the University of Kansas and the EHS Program, Project EAGLE, in Kansas

City, Kansas. This quantitative research study examined the language development of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant children and explored factors that influence their language growth in their bilingual-bicultural environments. Project participants were selected from the longitudinal EHS sample, including 30 children, from 10 to 36 months of age, and their families. All participants had previously been randomly assigned to either an EHS group or a comparison group.

The objectives of the study were to examine (1) the trajectories of children's English and Spanish vocabulary development in bilingual home environments; (2) the relationships among parents' level of acculturation, their expectations for their children's bilingual language development, and their observed language interactions with their children in English and Spanish; (3) the relationships among family factors, primary caregivers' amount and quality of interactions in English and Spanish, and children's language outcomes; and (4) the effect of EHS program participation on caregiver-child interactions in English and Spanish and children's outcomes in both languages. Child and family measures were administered every 4 to 6 months until children reached 36 months. The study examined children's language development, and the factors that influence this development, over 3 years.

Sample:

n=30 children

Measures:

Child

MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories (CDI)

Preschool Language Scale (PLS-3)

Caregiving Interactive Recording of Caregiving and Learning Environments (CIRCLE)

Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID-II)

Family

Head Start Family Information System (HSFIS)

Parent Services Interview (PSI)

Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans- II (ARSMA-II)

Home Environment

Home Observation for Measurement Environment (HOME)

CIRCLE

Questionnaire on Early Childhood Bilingualism

Parent-Child Interaction

CIRCLE

HOME

Rena Hallam

Project Title:

Maternal Self-Efficacy in Mothers of Toddlers Enrolled in an Early Head Start Program

Grantee:

Rena Hallam

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

University of Delaware

Department of Individual and Family Studies/Center for Disabilities Studies

Project Abstract:

Based on a social learning perspective, the construct of parental self-efficacy is explored within a small sample of low-income, culturally diverse mothers of toddlers enrolled in an Early Head Start program in New Castle County, Delaware. The intent of this study was threefold: (1) to determine relevant factors in the lives of low-income mothers that influenced mothers' parental self-efficacy; (2) to examine the relationship between maternal self-efficacy and behavioral interactions between mothers and their toddlers; and, (3) to examine possible associations between parental self-efficacy and participation in an Early Head Start program. Using questionnaire, observation, and interview methodologies, assessment of twenty mothers' parental self-efficacy was examined along with depression, knowledge of child development, perception of child temperament, life stress, and parenting stress. Mother-child interaction was also assessed. In general, mothers reported a high level of efficacy in the parenting role. However, mothers reported higher task-specific efficacy (e.g., efficacy regarding daily caregiving events) than more generalized notions of parental self-efficacy. Qualitative results indicate that many daily events that are particularly salient for low-income mothers, such as neighborhood safety and being the sole caregiver for their child, often more accurately reflect their feelings of efficacy. These issues are not typically included within current parental self-efficacy measures. Surprisingly, both the task-specific and generalized measures of parental self-efficacy were negatively correlated with maternal behavior. Thus, mothers reporting the highest levels of parental efficacy tended to demonstrate less positive, emotionally responsive behavior in their interactions with their toddler. Qualitatively, all of the mothers reported receiving child development and parenting information from the Early Head Start program. However, mothers who reported having an emotional

relationship with their Early Head Start service provider were more likely to describe the program as influencing their feelings of confidence as a parent. Implications for intervention and future research are discussed.

Sample:

n=20 mothers

Measures:

Demographic Survey

Life Events Checklist

Childhood Information Questionnaire

Toddler Care Questionnaire

Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

Parenting Stress Index

Observed Mother-Child Play Scenario

Semi-structured Mother Interview

Megan Noone

Project Title:

Contextually Relevant Assessment of the Emotional and Behavioral Adjustment of Head Start Children

Grantee:

Megan Noone

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

University of Pennsylvania

Graduate School of Education, Psychology in Education Division

Project Abstract:

The primary purpose of this two-year research project was to develop an assessment tool to identify Head Start children with adjustment problems. The first objective was to develop a preschool version of the Adjustment Scales for Children and Adolescents (ASCA), which assesses emotional and behavioral adjustment. The appropriateness of situations addressed on the ASCA was examined and new suggestions were considered for inclusion on the preschool version. The second objective was to examine the validity of the preschool measure for use in Head Start. Age and/or gender differences in Head Start children's problem behaviors were investigated. The final objective was to explore the usefulness of the measure in identifying at-risk children and determining effective interventions. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through interviews, surveys, and focus group meetings.

Sample:

n=850 children (425 boys; 425 girls)

Measures:

Child

Adjustment Scale for Children and Adolescents

Conner's Teacher Rating Scale

Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale

Sandra Vargas Perez

Project Title:

Improving the Social Behavior of At-Risk Students in Head Start Using Functional Assessment

Grantee:

Sandra Vargas Perez

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

University of Oregon

School Psychology Program

Project Abstract:

This study evaluated the effects of a functional assessment in-service training and mental health consultation with Head Start teachers on the aggressive-disruptive behavior of preschool children. Subjects included eight Head Start children exhibiting high rates of aggressive-disruptive behavior and eight teachers who had difficulty managing problem behaviors and little knowledge of functional assessment of problem behavior. All eight teacher-child dyads were observed between three to nine times to collect data on target behaviors. Four of the eight participating teachers attended the functional assessment in-service, during which time a behavior support plan was developed. During implementation of the behavior support plan, trained observers collected data for 30 minutes three times a week, until three to nine data points were obtained. Following this phase, all eight teacher-child pairs were observed by coaches who collected data for 30 minutes, 3 times a week and met with each teacher for about 20 minutes to provide feedback.

Sample:

n=8 teacher-child pairs

Measures:

Teacher

Brief Functional Assessment Interview (BFAI)
Antecedents-Behavior-Consequences (ABC) Observation Form
Behavior Support Plan Analysis Checklist (BSPAC)

Child

Early Screening Project (ESP)
Antecedents-Behavior-Consequences (ABC) Observation Form

Abigail Thorman

Project Title:

An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Anti-Bias Teaching Practices in the Reduction of Prejudice Among Children Attending Head Start in Kansas

Grantee:

Abigail Thorman

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

Kansas State University

Project Abstract:

This research study assessed the perceptions of children who attended rural, suburban, and urban Head Start programs regarding race. A total of twelve classrooms (2 control and 2 experimental in each site) in three Head Start regions agreed to participate in the project: (1) Northeast Kansas Community Action Project (Atchison and Brown Counties); (2) Riley County; and (3) Johnson County. In order to assure that appropriate anti-bias techniques were employed, teachers in the experimental group received 9 hours of training, on-site technical assistance, and \$1200.00 of materials to augment their classrooms. Classrooms were randomly assigned to a control or experimental group after a brief classroom assessment, completed both by the Head Start Program Director and each classroom teacher. Children in both groups completed the Multi-response Racial Attitude Measure (MRA). Teachers in the experimental group implemented at least two anti-bias activities a week for 20 weeks, after which the MRA was re-administered to children in both the experimental and control groups. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS statistical analysis program.

Sample:

n=123 children in 12 classrooms in 3 sites

Measures:

Child

Multi-response Racial Attitude Measure (MRA)

Teacher

Classroom Assessment of Environment and Daily Practices

Questionnaire to Assess Anti-Bias Experiences with Children

Marilyn Anita Vestal

Project Title:

How Teacher Training in Conflict Resolution and Peace Education Influences Attitudes, Interactions, and Relationships in Head Start Centers

Grantee:

Marilyn Anita Vestal

Project Funding Years:

1998-2000

University Affiliation :

Nova Southeastern University

Project Abstract:

As the 21st century begins, most programs in early care and education have not yet integrated peacebuilding strategies into their preschool settings, although conflict resolution programs are finding acceptance in schools. While a growing body of literature on social and emotional learning points to the advantages of early exposure, research-based models for the preschool educator are lacking. This study focused on the key role of the teacher in facilitating conflict resolution in Head Start. The study assessed changes in teachers' conflict knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors after a training intervention that exposed them to theory and practice of conflict resolution, violence prevention and peace education for young children. The study also measured the impact of training four- and five-year-old children in interpersonal problem solving based on the I Can Problem Solve (ICPS) model.

The methods were mixed; a qualitative design addressed teachers' changes and a quasi-experimental test measured children's problem solving abilities. Six Head Start teachers participated in a 40-hour college course, received pre-post interviews, and completed a self-assessment of conflict style (Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Inventory). The children in classrooms of the six experimental teachers were trained for approximately two months using the ICPS model. 37 experimental and 27 control group children were

tested for problem solving ability using the Preschool Interpersonal Problem Solving Test (PIPS).

Findings demonstrate an expanded understanding of conflict and improved use of conflict resolution strategies. Teachers reported an increased level of comfort with handling conflicts after the course. In addition, they reported changes in the way they involved themselves in children's conflicts. Instead of using directive strategies to resolve the issue for the children, after training they used more questioning strategies which centered on helping the children to think of ways to resolve the conflict. Results of the PIPS showed that children who were trained in conflict resolution could resolve interpersonal problems better than children who were not trained. In addition, trained children were better able to come up with non-forceful solutions to a peer conflict than were the control children. The study extends research on appropriate models for preschool conflict resolution and contributes to teacher development and peace education policy.

Sample:

n=64 children, 11 teachers

Measures:

Child

Preschool Interpersonal Problem Solving Test (PIPS)

Teacher

Interviews

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument