Zhe Gigi An  
**Project Title:** Reducing Expulsion & Suspension by Coaching Early Educators (RESCUEE)  
**Mentor:** Eva Horn, Ph.D.  
**Project Funding Years:** 2017-2018  
**University Affiliation:** University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc.  
**Project Abstract:**

The proposal responds to the Child Care Research Scholars Funding Opportunity Announcement focused on supporting research addressing “increasing access to high quality care,” particularly for “diverse low-income families.” Specifically, the aim of this proposal is to increase access by equipping early educators who work with children from low-income families with competence and confidence in addressing early challenging behaviors.

Preschoolers, particularly those from low-income families and with challenging behaviors, are experiencing high rates of expulsion and suspension (Gilliam, 2005; Skiba et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). To address this concern, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education (2016) issued a joint policy statement recommending that early educators should have a strong set of skills to promote children’s social-emotional and behavioral health and appropriately address challenging behaviors.

The goals of this project are to: 1) Gain an understanding of the current status of preschool exclusionary discipline practices (i.e., exclusion and suspension) and thus the need for professional development and support; 2) Build early educators’ competence and confidence in facilitating children’s social-emotional development and addressing challenging behaviors; 3) Promote social-emotional and behavioral health of preschoolers with challenging behaviors; and 4) Reduce the use of expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings.

The research questions guiding this project are: 1) What are the program, teacher, and child characteristics to which teachers attribute their use of exclusionary discipline practices? 2) What supports and professional development areas do teachers need to implement more proactive and preventive behavior management practices? 3) Does professional development improve teachers’ competency and confidence in addressing children’s challenging behaviors preventatively and positively? 4) How does professional development affect teachers’ stress level? 5) Does professional development provided to early educators improve children’s behavioral and social-emotional outcomes? 6) Are teachers less likely to use exclusionary discipline practices after professional development? and 7) What are teachers’ experiences of having professional development?

To address these questions, this project will use mixed methods, including qualitative and single-case designs. Data collected from interviews, observations, questionnaires, and rating scales will be qualitatively, quantitatively, and visually analyzed. The outcomes of this project will further the field’s understanding of professional development as a cost-effective way to prevent, reduce, and eliminate preschool expulsion and suspension.
Krystal Bichay

**Project Title:** Examining the Role of Varying Levels of Classroom Quality for Toddlers in Early Head Start and Subsidized Child Care Programs: Understanding Threshold Effects  
**Mentor:** Rebecca Bulotsky-Shearer, Ph.D.  
**Project Funding Years:** 2017-2019  
**University Affiliation:** University of Miami  

**Project Abstract:**
High quality early care and education (ECE) experiences are critical for young children from birth to three, as they provide the foundation for future school success. However, there is national concern that classroom quality is low in toddler classrooms, particularly within early childhood programs serving children from low-income backgrounds. National policy initiatives, including Early Head Start (EHS) and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), have recently responded to this national need. Federal and local funding through these programs has increased substantially to support the improvement of classroom quality in ECE settings. To improve quality, assessments of classroom process quality that include the quality of teacher-child interactions are used. The Toddler Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS-T) is one of the most commonly used measures to assess process quality in toddler classrooms within EHS and QRIS. In addition, cut-points on the CLASS-T contribute to programs being rated as high or low quality in QRIS. Programs’ QRIS ratings have policy implications for program funding and for parent consumers. Despite widespread use of the CLASS-T for these purposes, few studies have examined the construct validity of the CLASS-T for use in EHS and subsidized child care programs serving low-income, ethnically and linguistically diverse children and families. In addition, no studies to date have empirically validated the a priori cut-points that QRIS use in practice. Research is needed to identify the point at which increases in classroom process quality contribute to children’s’ developmental outcomes within programs serving diverse, low-income families. The proposed dissertation project will address these gaps in the field by first validating the CLASS-T in a sample of classrooms comprised of ethnically and linguistically diverse toddlers attending EHS and subsidized child care programs. Then, associations between CLASS-T domains and child outcomes will be examined. Finally, the cut-points that are currently in use as part of the local Miami-Dade County QRIS, Quality Counts, will be examined empirically to determine whether the a priori cut-points used in practice identify thresholds of classroom quality that are differentially associated with toddler language and social-emotional outcomes. The findings of the proposed project will be shared with local partners and implications for policy and practice will be discussed. Resources will be co-constructed in collaboration with local partners and shared with program staff to support quality improvement efforts.

Abby Lane

**Project Title:** Balancing Work and Family: The Policy Problems and Opportunities of Child Care and Nonstandard Work Schedules  
**Mentor:** Cynthia Osborne, Ph.D.  
**Project Funding Years:** 2017-2019  
**University Affiliation:** The University of Texas at Austin  

**Project Abstract:**
For millions of workers participating in the U.S. economy, their regular or secondary work shifts largely take place outside of traditional hours, including evening, night, rotating,
irregular, and/or weekend shifts. Nonstandard and unpredictable schedules may have important implications for maternal well-being, work-family balance, and child care arrangements. However, knowledge on the association between nonstandard work schedules and indicators of maternal well-being is not consistent or comprehensive. More knowledge is needed on how nonstandard work schedules complicate the child care decision-making processes of low-income mothers, and little is known about the supply of child care at nontraditional times. The research approach of the three papers in this dissertation aims to address these gaps in the literature and is described below.

**Nonstandard Work Schedules, Maternal Parenting Stress, and the Moderating Role of Child Care**
This paper explores the association between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress, with particular attention to variation by: type of work schedule, mother’s relationship status, and family income. This paper also explores the moderating role of child care arrangements between nonstandard work schedules and maternal parenting stress.

**Child Care Preferences and Choices for Mothers Working Nonstandard Schedules**
This paper seeks to better understand the role and importance of social, economic, and structural factors driving child care decisions for low-income mothers working nonstandard schedules. This paper will focus on two subpopulations of low-income mothers working nonstandard schedules: (1) mothers with irregular schedules and (2) mothers not living with a romantic partner. In addition, this paper explores what factors would make center-based child care during nontraditional hours more accessible and appealing to mothers working nonstandard schedules.

**Availability of Center-Based Child Care at Nontraditional Times in Texas: Supply Over Time**
This paper will explore the availability of licensed, center-based child care at nontraditional times for children preschool age and younger in Texas over time, describing trends on the timing of nontraditional hours of care, as well as availability by age group, accreditation/Texas Rising Star status of the provider, and the provider’s acceptance of child care subsidies. To begin to explore the mismatch between supply and demand, this paper also compares trends in the supply of care at nontraditional hours to several relevant labor force trends.

To address these questions, this dissertation takes a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Child Care Market Rate Survey in Texas, and Bureau of Labor Statistics will be integrated with qualitative data from focus groups with mothers in Austin, Texas. Analytical techniques will include ordinary least squares, difference-in-difference, and multinomial logistic regression models. Qualitative data will be analyzed using themes from existing literature as well as identifying new emerging themes.