

Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2002 Research Scholars

* 2002-2003 ** 2002-2004

Tonia N. Cristofaro**

Project Title:

Talking About the Past: Personal Narratives of Children from Low-Income Families

Grantee:

Tonia N. Cristofaro

Project Funding Years:

2002-2004

University Affiliation:

New York University
Steinhardt School of Education
Department of Applied Psychology

Project Abstract:

New York University will examine personal narratives of preschool-age children and explore the role of mothers and teachers in supporting children's narrative skills. The study's goals are to: (a) describe the nature of children's personal narratives about a past event, (b) examine mothers' roles in supporting children's narratives, (c) examine whether maternal language predicts children's later narrative skills, (d) observe the sharing of personal narratives between teachers and children and examine teachers' support of such narratives, and (e) describe children's stories with their Pre-K teachers, as well as with their mothers. Researchers will analyze existing data on 70 mother-child dyads collected as part of the Early Head Start National Evaluation Project. This includes an analysis of maternal and child language when children were 36-months-old, and children's personal narratives about past events with their mothers, collected during a PreK visit. In addition, researchers will conduct naturalistic observations of a new sample of approximately 107 children and 16 teachers in Pre-K Head Start classrooms. These observations will allow qualitative data collection of teacher-child interactions and personal narratives. In order to describe children's narratives with teachers, based on the naturalistic observations in the classrooms, teachers will be videotaped and asked to engage in a

personal narrative with each child. When possible, conversations between the children and their mothers will also be videotaped. This element of the study is included to describe the styles of both adult conversational partners. Moreover, teacher workshops about topics of interest to teachers and the meaning of children's personal narratives for their development will be held during both years. Data analysis will focus on predictive relations between child and maternal language, context and content of child narratives, and comparison of the styles and structures of teacher and mother narratives. The researchers aim to identify features of children's personal narratives that contribute to their language and literacy competencies, as well as to highlight how Head Start teachers can incorporate the sharing of children's personal narratives into their daily classroom activities.

Sample:

N=70 Early Head Start mother-child dyads; 107 Pre-K Head Start children and their mothers; 16 Head Start teachers.

Janese Kerr Daniels*

Project Title:

Families Read! Exploring Literacy Practices in Head Start Families

Grantee:

Janese Kerr Daniels

Project Funding Years:

2002-2003

University Affiliation:

University of Maryland at College Park
College of Education
Department of Human Development

Project Abstract:

The University of Maryland will explore nontraditional literacy practices in families and their relation to emerging literacy in preschool children from low-income backgrounds. Four sets of factors will be examined, including child characteristics, parental characteristics, parent-child interactions, and environmental factors. One hundred and ten African American children attending a Head Start program in Washington, DC will be assessed to determine their level of literacy, language functioning abilities, and level of participation in traditional and nontraditional literacy-related behaviors. In addition, the children's primary caregivers will participate in a home interview addressing their literacy level, nontraditional and traditional literacy related behaviors, and parenting factors. Home and environmental

characteristics related to literacy will also be observed. Finally, caregivers and children will participate in an interactional activity, which will be coded for its display of literacy behaviors. Potential benefits of this project include documentation of traditional and nontraditional factors in African American Head Start families that support literacy development and use of the data to develop family literacy programs for this population.

Sample:

N=110 African American Head Start children

Measures:

Child

Test of Early Reading Ability-3 (TERA-3)

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-3 (PPVT-3)

Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT)

Caregiver

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-3 (PPVT-3)

Home Environment

Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME)

Home Literacy Environment Interview

Caregiver-Child Interactions

Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME)

Home Literacy Environment Interview

Elana Helfenbaum **

Project Title:

Parent Training for Fathers of Head Start Children: An Investigation of Its Impact on Intra-Familial Relationships and Child Behavior

Grantee:

Elana Helfenbaum

Project Funding Years:

2002-2004

University Affiliation:

Long Island University

Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program

Project Abstract:

Long Island University will investigate the effects of group parent-training interventions with fathers on the prevention and treatment of externalizing

problems in Head Start children aged 3 to 5. Participants will be 60 father-mother-child triads. Fathers will either be married to and residing with the mother, or will be unmarried but residing with the mother for at least six months. Fathers are not required to be biological but must be integrally involved in the child's well-being. After a 3-week pretest screening, fathers will be randomly assigned to either a 12-week parent-training group or a control group. The training will consist of a videotape program showing desirable and undesirable parenting behaviors, as well as discussions and role plays led by therapists. Topics will include positive parenting interactions, handling misbehavior, and problem solving. The pre-post-intervention design will assess the parent-training group's effects on parenting behaviors, child care responsibility, marital/relationship satisfaction, and child behavior. The researchers hypothesize that those fathers participating in the intervention will take on more child rearing responsibilities, increase their use of positive parenting behaviors, use more effective discipline techniques, and experience higher rates of marital or relationship satisfaction.

Sample:

N=60 Head Start father-mother-child triads

Measures:

Fathers

Parenting Scale (PS)
Parenting Dimensions Inventory (PDI)
Index of Clinical Stress (ICS)
Social Support Index (SSI)
Therapy Attitude Inventory (TAI)

Marital/Cohabiting Relationship

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)
Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS)

Child Care Responsibility

Child-Care Task Checklist (CCTC)

Child

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI)
Parent Daily Report Cards (PDR)

Lucia Lopez*

Project Title:

Parent-Child Relations Most Affected By Poverty: A Study of Impoverished Mothers and Their Children

Grantee:

Lucia Lopez

Project Funding Years:

2002-2003

University Affiliation:

Alliant International University
California School of Professional Psychology

Project Abstract:

Alliant International University will investigate parent-child relationships in low-income Latino families. Specifically, the associations among child temperament and behavior, maternal expectations and discipline styles, and parent-child relations will be addressed. Participants will include 90 Latino mothers and their preschool-aged children. Thirty of the mother-child dyads will be selected from Los Angeles's Corazon de la Familia Infant/Child Intervention Program, and the remaining 60 will be recruited from Los Angeles Head Start programs. Researchers will interview the mothers at the Head Start program or at home in order to assess child temperament and behavior, maternal expectations, maternal discipline, and maternal nurturance. The researchers hypothesize that mothers whose children exhibit difficult temperaments and behavior will have more inappropriate expectations of their children's behaviors, will be harsher in their discipline, and will exhibit fewer nurturing strategies. The researchers aim to help build a foundation of knowledge regarding maternal-child interactions within impoverished Latino families.

Sample:

N=90 Latino mother-child dyads

Measures:

Child

Pictorial Assessment of Temperament (PAT)-Infant and Toddler Scale
Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC)

Mother

Parent Behavior Checklist (PBC)
Demographic Questionnaire

Blanca Quiroz**

Project Title:

The Effect of Home Literacy Factors on English and Spanish Linguistic Proficiency and Pre-Literacy Skills of Spanish-Speaking Children

Grantee:

Blanca Quiroz

Project Funding Years:

2002-2004

University Affiliation:

Harvard University
Graduate School of Education

Project Abstract:

Harvard University will describe the home language- and literacy-related experiences of Head Start children growing up in bilingual (English/Spanish) or Spanish-dominant families and the effects of these experiences on children's literacy-related skills. The primary research questions will be (a) How is language used during mother-child activities in bilingual or Spanish-dominant families? (b) Do bilingual families also use some of the language techniques previously found in English-speaking homes that influence literacy and language development in English? and (c) When controlling for family demographics and school factors, what is the effect of mothers' language use and behaviors on children's literacy-related skills? Participants will be 51 families in which Spanish is spoken at home (n=12 bilingual, n=39 Spanish-dominant) with a 4-year-old Head Start child. The data will consist of a home interview, an audio recording of three mother-child activities, and maternal vocabulary tests. Mothers will be observed reading to their children, completing a "homework" type activity, and interacting with their children during mealtime. A vocabulary test will also be administered to the mothers in both Spanish and English. The data will then be transcribed and coded using the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). The researchers expect to further Head Start's mission of serving underprivileged children by discovering the specific needs of Latino bilingual children. A further result will be the development of the Home-Language Status Scale, which will provide a measure of language status that can be used by other Head Start researchers.

Sample:

N=51 bilingual or Spanish-dominant Head Start families

Measures:

Mother

Home Language and Literacy Exposure Index (HLLEI)

Book-Sharing Task

Homework Activity Task
Mealtime Audiotaping
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R)
Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (TVIP)

Child

Woodcock Language Proficiency Batter: Picture Vocabulary
Narrative Production Task: The Picnic

Mariana S. Rocha*

Project Title:

Project PASS: The Development and Validation of the Proactive Assessment of Social Skills

Grantee:

Mariana S. Rocha

Project Funding Years:

2002-2003

University Affiliation:

University of Oregon
School Psychology Program

Project Abstract:

The goal of the proposed study is to develop and validate an assessment tool to inform decision-making about social competence development in children. The Proactive Assessment of Social Skills (PASS) will consist of a brief and efficient direct measure of social competence in young children to chart the social growth and development of preschool children. This will include (a) screening all children for potential social/behavioral problems, (b) identifying children at risk for development of social/behavioral problems, and (c) evaluating the effectiveness of interventions for individual children and groups of children. The following research questions will be examined: (1) How well do scores on the PASS measure correlate with other measures of social competence (e.g., teacher ratings and naturalistic observations)? (2) Is the PASS a more sensitive measure of change in social skills than the PKBS as indicated by the production of a larger effect size over time? (3) Is the PASS able to discriminate between children ranked as low and high risk for social skill deficits? (4) What is the stability of children's performance on the PASS 2 weeks apart? and (5) What is the stability of children's performance across two activities?

PASS is comprised of two components: an observational code and

cooperative problem-solving activities. The observational code will encompass a frequency count within specific time intervals recording technique to code several key social skills that are acquired during the preschool years. The behaviors include: amount and quality of social turns, goal-oriented behaviors, on- and off- task behavior, and negative verbal and non-verbal behaviors. In addition, PASS consists of two 10 ½ -minute cooperative problem-solving activities (e.g., Legos©, blocks, Playdoh©, or puzzles) with same-age classroom peers in groups of three children. Three children will be assessed within each activity, rotating every 30 seconds for a total of 7 intervals (i.e. 3 ½ minutes) per child. The two activities will be comparable and equivalent to control for variability.

Participants will include 60 four-and five- year old children, their parents, and teachers recruited from Head Start programs in Lane County, Oregon. Trained observers will use the PASS to conduct eight observations during PASS cooperative activities to provide data regarding the reliability, validity, utility, and sensitivity of the PASS. Additionally, naturalistic observations, using the PASS observational code, will be used across 30 children from the Head Start sample. Head Start teachers will complete rating scales at the beginning and end of the study. Lastly, parents will be invited to participate in two parent focus groups. The focus groups will serve as a medium for parents to provide input and feedback at key points during the project (i.e. at beginning and at end).

The researchers intend for the results of this project to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on effective identification of children at risk and prevention of the development of antisocial behavior. In addition, the PASS and training in using the PASS will be made available to Head Start teachers for identifying children at risk for developing social skills deficits.

Sample:

N=60 Head Start children

Measures:

Child

Proactive Assessment of Social Skills (PASS) (e.g. Cooperative Activity and Naturalistic Observations)

Teacher

Preschool and Kindergarten Scales of Behavior (PKSB)

Adaptation of Early Screening Project, Stage 1: Ranking (ESP)

Classroom

Demographic Information Questionnaire

Yumiko Sekino**

Project Title:

The Relationship Between Interactive Peer Play Competencies in Head Start and Academic Achievement and Social Adjustment in Primary Grades

Grantee:

Yumiko Sekino

Project Funding Years:

2002-2004

University Affiliation:

University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education
Psychology in Education Division

Project Abstract:

The University of Pennsylvania will study the relationship between Head Start interactive peer play behavior and later academic achievement and social adjustment in the primary grades. Subjects will include 210 former Head Start children who will be followed longitudinally through the 1st and 2nd grades. While the students were enrolled in Head Start, data regarding peer play behaviors were collected via the Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale-Teacher Version (PIPPS-T), which assesses three underlying dimensions of play behaviors: Play Interaction, Play Disruption, and Play Disconnection. These data will be compared via multiple logistic analyses to measures of social adjustment and academic achievement assessed during the children's primary grades. Teachers will complete the Adjustment Scale for Children and Adolescents (ASCA), and children's grades and scores on the Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition (SAT-9) will provide measures of academic achievement. Researchers will also assess the relative influence on peer play of contextual characteristics such as family, classroom, and neighborhood. The researchers' ultimate aim is to determine the protective and risk influences of preschool peer interaction on Head Start children's later school adjustment and achievement in order to promote school readiness and future success.

Sample:

N=210 former Head Start children

Measures:

Child

Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale-Teacher Version (PIPPS-T)
Adjustment Scales for Children and Adolescents (ASCA)

Report Card Grades
Stanford Achievement Test- 9th Edition (SAT-9)
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)
Data from the Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System (NIS)

Jessica E. Woods*

Project Title:

An Examination of Parental Attributions and Intervention Preferences in African American Mothers with a Disruptive Child in Head Start

Grantee:

Jessica E. Woods

Project Funding Years:

2002-2003

University Affiliation:

University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Department of Psychology

Project Abstract:

This study will examine causal and responsibility attributions for disruptive behavior in a community sample of African American mothers who perceive their Head Start children as having behavioral challenges. The relationship between attributions and treatment acceptability will also be examined for common interventions offered to families with a disruptive child.

Approximately seventy-five participants will be recruited through a current partnership with the Head Start program in Guilford County, North Carolina for this correlational investigation. Mothers will complete a packet of questionnaires regarding their children's behavior, parenting attributions, intervention preferences, and demographic variables. It is predicted that parental attributional style will account for a significant proportion of the variance in treatment acceptability ratings. Specifically, it is predicted that mothers who show more negative attributional styles will prefer strategies that are immediate and aimed at reducing negative behaviors, rather than inductive teaching strategies, when compared to mothers without this attributional style.

Sample:

N=75 African American Head Start mothers

Measures:

Control Variables

Demographic Questionnaire
Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC)

Parenting Attributions
Attributional Style Measure for Parents (ASMP)

Treatment Preferences
Treatment Evaluation Inventory-Short Form (TEI-SF)