

Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2003 Research Scholars

* 2003-2004 ** 2003-2005

Heather Cohen**

Project Title:

Learning Behaviors as Protective Factors for Early School Readiness

Grantee:

Heather Cohen

Project Funding Years:

2003-2005

University Affiliation:

University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education
Psychology in Education Division

Project Abstract:

The University of Pennsylvania will investigate how preschool learning behaviors impact school success at the end of Head Start and in kindergarten. The study has three objectives: (a) to determine the unique contribution of evidence-based dimensions of preschool approaches to learning to reading outcomes in Head Start and kindergarten; (b) to determine the unique contribution of evidence-based dimensions of preschool approaches to learning to mathematics outcomes in Head Start and kindergarten; and (c) to determine the degree to which instruction in learning behaviors is an explicit part of Head Start teacher's curriculum and whether the amount of classroom instruction is associated with children's level of learning behaviors. There will be two samples of participants. The first sample will consist of 200 Head Start children from 20 classrooms due to enter kindergarten the following year. The second sample will consist of 200 children from 50 Head Start classrooms. The first sample will be used to study the unique protective benefit of preschool learning behaviors on achievement in Head Start and kindergarten. The second sample will be used to evaluate the extent of explicit teacher instruction in learning behaviors, and the relationship of these practices to children's learning behaviors. The researchers expect results from this study will indicate

whether learning behaviors contribute to the resilience of children in high risk, urban areas. Researchers intend to use the findings to alter the Head Start curriculum and provide opportunities for Head Start leadership to reconsider the prioritization of learning behaviors in the existing curriculum.

Sample:

N=400 Children (200 from Sample 1, and 200 from Sample 2)

Measures:

Teacher

The Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS)

Child

Test of Early Reading Ability, third edition (TERA-3)

Test of Early Mathematics Ability, second edition (TEMA-2)

Parents/Caregivers

Child & Family Demographics

Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ)

Gina A. Cook**

Project Title:

Early Environmental, Cognitive, and Social Indicators in Infancy: Relations to Second-Grade Reading Comprehension

Grantee:

Gina A. Cook

Project Funding Years:

2003-2005

University Affiliation:

Utah State University

College of Education and Human Services

Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development

Project Abstract:

Utah State University will explore the influence of early environmental supports and other cognitive and social factors on literacy and reading comprehension. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions: (a) What early environmental supports predict reading comprehension scores; (b) What early cognitive indicators in language, cognition, and emergent literacy predict reading comprehension scores; (c) Which early social indicators predict reading comprehension in second-graders; and (d) What combinations of early environmental and

developmental factors predict later reading comprehension? Participants will include 120 second grade children from low-income families, who previously took part in the national Early Head Start study. Developmental data from the children at 10, 14, 18, 24, 36 months and in kindergarten will be used to investigate the impact of early environmental supports, and other cognitive and social factors on later reading comprehension. By incorporating longitudinal data with more recent data from standardized measures, interviews, and self-reports, researchers hope to provide a better understanding of the factors that influence literacy development from infancy through second grade.

Sample:

N=120 Second-Grade Children

Measures:

Parent

The Head Start Family Information Survey (HSFIS)

Attachment Q-Set

Middle Childhood Home Observation for the Measurement of Environment (HOME)

Family Reading Survey

Parenting Stress Index Short Form (PSI/SF)

Family Crisis Orientated Personal Evaluation Scales (F-COPES)

Adult Attachment Style scale

Child

Bayley Scales of Infant Development

Sustained Attention/Staying on Task subscale (Leiter-Revised Sustained Attention Task)

Woodcock Johnson Revised (WJ-R)

Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)

Connor's Rating Scale-Revised (CRS-R)

Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance

Lizanne DeStefano*

Project Title:

Evaluating School Readiness Outcomes in a Local Head Start: An Empowerment Approach

Grantee:

Lizanne DeStefano

Project Funding Years:
2003-2004

University Affiliation:
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Bureau of Educational Research

Project Abstract:

The University of Illinois will work with the Champaign County Head Start (CCHS) program of Illinois to evaluate school readiness outcomes in a manner that is responsive to the local program, its staff members, families, and children. The study will address two questions: (a) How can local Head Start programs use multiple measures to evaluate school readiness outcomes in a way that addresses both national and local evaluation needs, and (b) How can scientifically-based information be generated in a way that is useful for program improvement and empowers Head Start staff and participants? This fall the National Reporting System (NRS) will be implemented to measure school readiness outcomes related to literacy and numeracy. CCHS will use the results of these measures, as well as results from the Creative Curriculum Progress and Outcomes Reporting Tool (CC-PORT), to guide program improvement. CCHS will send two staff members to receive NRS training, who will then train additional staff. Approximately 125 children will be assessed with the NRS in the fall. After assessments are completed in the fall, focus groups will be conducted to identify aspects of the process that may need improvement, and how to interpret the results of the assessments. The CC-PORT will be validated using the same analyses as the NRS. Focus groups will be conducted with parents and teachers about their experiences with the CC-PORT. The use of both measures will help CCHS staff guide program improvement and expand its transition programming.

Sample:
N=125 Head Start children

Measures:
Child
Creative Curriculum Progress and Outcomes Reporting Tool (CC-PORT)
National Reporting System (NRS)

Iheoma U. Iruke**

Project Title:
The Impact of Family Involvement on Head Start Children's School Readiness

Grantee:
Iheoma U. Iruke

Project Funding Years:
2003-2005

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this project is to better understand the effects of parental involvement and parental self-efficacy on Head Start children's approaches to learning and school readiness. The first goal is to develop a specific questionnaire that measures parents' involvement and their self-efficacy in enhancing their children's approaches to learning and other school readiness domains. This measure of parent's self-efficacy will capture global competencies, in addition to specific competencies relating to approaches to learning and children's school readiness. The second goal is to determine the impact of parental self-efficacy on parents' involvement. The third goal is to test a path model which will focus on parental involvement and self-efficacy and how each component relates to children's outcomes of school readiness, and specifically approaches to learning and broad school readiness areas. This project will use the partnership model, which gives a "voice" to participating Head Start centers and parents and enables them to be active leaders as opposed to passive participant in the project. In addition to data gathered from parents, we will also collect data on children through a multi-method and multi-informant approach, including direct assessments of children and teacher reports of children's behaviors.

Lisa Knoche**

Project Title:

Learning Outcomes for Head Start Children: Child Care Quality and Social Knowledge

Grantee:
Lisa Knoche

Project Funding Years:
2003-2005

University Affiliation:

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Department of Psychology

Project Abstract:

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, partnering with Lincoln Action Program and Lincoln Public Schools, will study the relationship between child care

quality in Head Start classrooms, child social knowledge and competence, and child learning outcomes. The researcher intend to: (a) investigate the effect of child care quality on children's social knowledge, competence, and learning outcomes; (b) distinguish social knowledge from social competence; (c) examine how social knowledge and competence influence learning outcomes, and (d) determine if social knowledge mediates the relationship between child care quality and learning outcomes. Participants will include 72 English-speaking children from twelve Head Start classrooms. Lead teachers from each classroom will also be assessed. Observational data will be collected using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised and Caregiver Interaction Scale. Child assessments will include a Classroom Model Task, the Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test, Third Edition, and Story and Print Concepts task. Teachers will complete an Asset Questionnaire, Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey, Classroom Behavior Checklist, and Social Map. The researchers expect that results from the study will help inform Head Start teachers and administrators about strategies to improve the overall success of children in their care.

Sample:

N=72 Head Start Children

N=12 Head Teachers

Measures:

Classroom

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)

Caregiver Interaction Scale

Child

Classroom Model Task

Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test, Third Edition (PPVT-III)

Story and Print Concepts task

Teacher

Asset Questionnaire

Teacher Beliefs and Practices survey

Classroom Behavior Checklist (CBI)

Social Map

Katie Sellers**

Project Title:

Measuring Shared Kinship Caregiving

Grantee:

Katie Sellers

Project Funding Years:
2003-2005

University Affiliation:
Tulane University
School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

Project Abstract:
Tulane University, in partnership with the Promoting Adolescents to Change Children's Health (PATCCH) project, will test the efficacy of two parenting interventions in which teen parents participate as "primary caregivers." This project uses in-depth interviews with young mothers and grandmothers to explore shared kinship caregiving in a sample of low-income, African-American families living in Baton Rouge. The interviews provide rich qualitative data combined with more quantitative information. To examine dimensions such as household task-sharing, decision-making and child care, questions were adapted from the Who Does What? and the Social Networks in Adult Attachment Questionnaire. The data is linked to child outcomes measured for the PATCCH project. The research is intended to improve child outcomes through a better understanding of the children's sociocultural context.

Sample:
N=50 (37 mothers, 13 grandmothers)

Measures:
Parents
Who Does What?
Social Networks in Adult Attachment Questionnaire

Child
Child Behavior Checklist
Infant Toddler Social/Emotional Assessment

Jill B. Sprague*

Project Title:
Enhancing Young Children's Social Development: The Role of Early Head Start Programs

Grantee:
Jill B. Sprague

Project Funding Years:
2003-2004

University Affiliation:

Purdue University

Department of Child Development and Family Studies

Project Abstract:

Purdue University, in collaboration with Lafayette, Kokomo, and Marion Early Head Start (EHS) programs, will assess the social and emotional development of children enrolled in EHS. The study will work to answer the following questions: (a) Is the quality of EHS child-caregiver relationship associated with the level of child's social competence and behavior problems over time; and (b) How is EHS program service delivery type related to children's level of social competency, behavioral problems, and attachment to the EHS staff person? Participants will include 70 infants and their primary EHS child care providers. Data will be collected from EHS staff and children over a 6 month period. Data will include parent-child home visits and staff-child center or home visits. EHS parents and primary staff will complete questionnaires providing information about age, ethnicity, education level, family income, and current child care arrangements. Staff and parents will independently describe the child's behavior using a 3-point scale, and staff will rate their relationships with the child's parent using a 5-point scale. The Brief Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) will be used to measure child social competence, and the Safe and Secure Scale will be used to assess attachment to primary EHS staff. The researchers expect results from the study will help determine the long-term impact of EHS programs on infant mental health, and in infant/toddler social emotional competence.

Sample:

N=70 Infants and their primary caregivers.

Measures:

EHS Staff

The Brief Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment (BITSEA)

The Safe and Secure Scale

Christine M. Wade*

Project Title:

Two-Session Group Parent Training for Bedtime Noncompliance in Head Start Children

Grantee:

Christine M. Wade

Project Funding Years:
2003-2004

University Affiliation:
Long Island University
Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program

Project Abstract:

Sleep difficulties, especially night waking and bedtime struggles, are some of the most common childhood behavior problems. Sleep disruptions are associated with children's daytime behavior problems, impaired social functioning, poorer school performance, and even an increased probability of child abuse. Additionally, these disruptions have a number of negative consequences for members of the child's family, such as parental fatigue, marital discord, and detrimental effects on siblings. Of the evidence-based treatments for bedtime problems in young children, graduated extinction is the most widely used by clinicians. A number of studies have demonstrated its effectiveness. However, the generalizability of these findings to children from ethnic minority and low socioeconomic backgrounds has not been established. Additionally, the vast majority of studies in this area have examined interventions that are delivered individually. Given the potential advantages of group treatments, it seemed prudent to examine the efficacy of an intervention delivered to groups of parents. In an interrupted time series design, 5 parents of children aged 4 - 5 enrolled at a Head Start preschool site participated in one of two groups that received group parent training on the use of graduated extinction. Parents reported that their children demonstrated large reductions in both bedtime and daytime behavior problems from pretest to posttest, and parents reported decreased depression and stress during this period. At 2-month follow up, gains in the children's bedtime behavior were maintained. Parents also reported that improvements in their children's daytime behavior as well as their own depression and stress remained significantly improved from baseline, although there was some regression toward baseline levels. Overall, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the intervention.

Sample:

N= 5 Head Start parents and their children

Measures:

Parent

Early Childhood Inventory-4
Children's Sleep Habits Questionnaire (CSHQ)
Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI)
Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)

Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II)
Therapy Attitude Inventory (TAI)