

# Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2014 Research Scholars

## Allison West

**Project Title:** The Benefits and Costs of Caring: A Mixed-Methods Study of EHS Home Visitors

**Mentor:** Dr. Lisa J. Berlin

**Project Funding Years:** 2014-2015

**University Affiliation:** University of Maryland

**Project Abstract:** The proposed mixed-method study will build on and expand an ongoing Early Head Start (EHS)-University Partnership addressing the prevention of toxic stress through attachment-based intervention. Guided by a strengths-based, developmental-ecological framework, the proposed study will examine the influence of individual, occupational, and organizational factors on compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue in EHS home visitors. Home visitor compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction data will also be examined as predictors of home visitor turnover and family engagement. In the first, quantitative phase, in collaboration with current EHS program partners, a Home Visitor Survey will be designed. Approximately 70 EHS home visitors, representing all EHS home visitors in the state of Maryland, will be recruited to complete the survey. Survey data from a subsample of 28 home visitors will be linked with family-level data from the Buffering Toxic Stress study in order to examine effects of family risks on home visitor wellbeing. Home visitor wellbeing will also be linked with home visitor job turnover at 6 to 9 months post-survey and with several indicators of EHS family engagement, including mothers' perceptions of their working alliance with their home visitor, and EHS program participation. Data will be analyzed using multilevel modelling techniques. In the second, qualitative phase, 4 to 6 EHS home visitors with different degrees of wellbeing will be selected to complete an interview addressing occupational stress. Thus, findings are anticipated to contribute to EHS research, practice, and policy, particularly by addressing the large gap in knowledge about the wellbeing of home-based staff and its relation to family risk engagement.

### **Sample:**

All home visitors (approximately 28) from five local EHS programs that are currently participating in the Partners for Parenting will be invited to participate in this study additionally; up to 40 home visitors from nine EHS programs in Maryland will be recruited.

### **Measures:**

Home Visitor Survey

- Demographics
- Educations and Experience
- Physical Health and Mental Health
- Trauma History
- Personal Resources

Occupational Characteristics (Home Visitor Survey, Partners for Parenting Project)

- EHS Family Cumulative Risk
- Job Characteristics
- Perceived Working Conditions
- Home Visitor Perception of the Working Alliance

Organizational Characteristics (Home Visitor Survey, Program Administrators' Reports, Program Information Reports)

- EHS Program size, urban/rural, overall client demographics, frequency of supervision, other supports

Proximal Outcomes (Home Visitor Survey)

- Professional Quality of Life
- Intent to Leave/Job Withdrawal

Distal Outcomes (Program Administrators' Reports, Partners for Parenting Project)

- Home Visitor Turnover
- Family Engagement

## Alayna Schreier

**Project Title:** Early Head Start Home Visitors' Identification of Risk for Maltreatment

**Mentor:** Dr. David Hansen

**Project Funding Years:** 2014-2016

**University Affiliation:** University of Nebraska Lincoln

**Project Abstract:** Little is known about whether home visitors recognize the association between risk factors (e.g., parental mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence) and maltreatment. There is a critical need to understand how home visitors identify the behaviors that constitute maltreatment and the factors that place families at increased risk for experiencing maltreatment. The primary objectives of the proposed study are to: (a) identify how Early Head Start (EHS) home visitors understand maltreatment, determine risk for maltreatment, and refer families identified as at-risk to relevant EHS program and community-based services; and (b) identify the association between presence of risk factors and court-substantiated child maltreatment in order to develop the model that best predicts maltreatment occurrence. Archival data on approximately 600 EHS families will be utilized in this study. Records include EHS services received, mental health services received, and juvenile court records of substantiated instances of maltreatment. In addition, qualitative interviews exploring identification and determination of risk for maltreatment will be conducted with all EHS home visitors and supervisors employed by the program. Analyses will utilize mixed methodology in a sequential design to identify the presence of risk factors and predict occurrence of maltreatment. The findings will inform EHS researchers, practitioners and policy makers on how to better serve families within the context of an ongoing intervention; provide information about the role that home visitors play; conduct effective training for staff to successfully assist and engage families in services; and engage families and deliver services that reduces risk for and prevents maltreatment.

**Sample:**

Approximately 600 families enrolled in EHS home-based services between 2008 and 2015. All EHS home visitors and supervisors (n=17) employed during the identified recruitment periods will be invited to participate in the qualitative component of the study.

**Measures:**

- Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)
- Behavioral, Emotional, and Social Screening (BESS)
- Semi-Structured Program Interview
- EHS Records
- Mental Health Clinical Records
- Nebraska JUSTICE Records

## Kimberly Davidson

**Project Title:** Divergence or Convergence of Home and School Racial-Ethnic Socialization: Effects on Preschool Children's Racial Attitudes, Socioemotional and Cognitive Development

**Mentor:** Dr. Jaipaul Roopnarine

**Project Funding Years:** 2014-2015

**University Affiliation:** Syracuse University

**Project Abstract:** As the US population continues to diversify, early childhood programs serving the nation's youngest citizens strive to meet the needs of culturally diverse families. The current study seeks to examine the racial-ethnic socialization of preschool-age children in home and school contexts by multiple caregivers. Using cultural-ecological models as a guide, the study looks at four components within each socialization setting: parents/teachers, family/peers, physical environments, and the racial-ethnic composition of neighborhoods/child care programs. Utilizing a proposed sample of approximately 200 three- to five-year-old children and their families that participate in Head Start programs in Upstate New York, the effects of match or mismatch of home and school racial-ethnic socialization on children's racial attitudes, and socioemotional and cognitive development will be examined. The racially and ethnically diverse population of Head Start families will allow for the definition of typologies of socialization between groups and will speak to the variation of child care needs by cultural orientation. Structural equation modeling techniques will allow for examination of the latent constructs of home socialization and school socialization via multiple informants and measures and will determine the pathways of influence between these multidimensional constructs and young children's development. The study's findings have the potential of laying bare the importance of ethnic socialization, regarded as a protective factor, in Head Start children's early academic and social development and for informing early childhood practices.

**Sample:**

A minimum of 200 families and teachers of three- to five-year-old who participate in Head Start programs and child care partnerships in Upstate New York.

**Measures:**

Demographic information

- Parent Demographic survey

Home racial-ethnic socialization

- Parental Racial-Ethnic Socialization Behaviors
- Family Socialization
- Africentric Home Environment Inventory
- Neighborhood Racial Composition

School racial-ethnic socialization

- Teacher Demographic information
- Teachers will complete a modified version of the Parental Racial-Ethnic Socialization Behaviors measure
- Peers - observation of free play
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised [ECERS-R]
- Head Start Administrator School Racial Composition

Racial Attitudes

- Intergroup Attitude Measure

Socioemotional Development

- Child Behavior Checklist [CBCL-1 ½ -5]

Cognitive Development

- Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children [KABC-II]

## Maria Cristina Limlingan

**Project Title:** More than Words: The Relations between Teacher-Child Interactions, Classroom Context and Latino DLLs' School Readiness

**Mentor:** Dr. Christine McWayne

**Project Funding Years:** 2014-2016

**University Affiliation:** Tufts University

**Project Abstract:** To better serve Dual Language Learners (DLLs), research needs to focus on how having access to two languages uniquely affects their learning and development. The overarching purpose of this project is to increase the understanding of classroom factors and processes that can support the language and socio-emotional development of DLLs. Toward this end, this project will examine teacher-child interactions occurring with Spanish- English DLLs and their relations to children's school readiness. The proposed project will be guided by the following objectives: 1) To employ a mixed-methods approach using both primary data and a secondary dataset, the Head Start Family and Child Survey (FACES) 2009 cohort, to better understand the relations between teacher-child interactions, classroom context, and DLLs' school readiness; 2) To describe associations between Spanish use by Head Start teachers in the classroom and measures of classroom quality on DLL children's school readiness using secondary data from the FACES 2009 cohort study and a local sample; 3) To examine whether the associations between teacher-child interactions and DLL children's school readiness differ depending on classroom setting and DLL classroom composition, controlling for child and family characteristics using secondary and primary data; 4) To describe teachers' language ideologies and understand possible links to classroom practice and DLLs' student success through collection of primary qualitative data and analysis using qualitative methodology. Findings from this study will inform ways to support the language and socio-emotional development of DLLs.

### **Sample:**

Primary Data: East Boston Head Start, a program consisting of 12 preschool classrooms with 221 children enrolled. The predominant language and culture is Spanish/Central and South American (73% of families identify as Hispanic). Observations of teacher-child interactions, DLLs' English and Spanish proficiency, and teacher ratings of children's socio-emotional competence will be collected for 120 -140 Latino DLLs. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with at least 12 teachers and/or teacher assistants.

Secondary Data: Participants in the FACES 2009 cohort which included 60 programs, 129 centers, 486 classrooms, and 3,149 children. Included were 919 children whose first language was Spanish.

### **Measures:**

Child-level assessments of school readiness

- English and Spanish language abilities
- Socio-emotional skills
- Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS)

Teacher-child interactions

- Classroom quality at the individual level (Primary Data)
- Global classroom quality (Secondary Data)
- Teachers' use of Spanish in the classroom

Classroom context

- DLL classroom composition
- Amount of time spent on activity setting (Primary Data); Language used by activity setting (Secondary Data)

#### Family and child demographics

- Demographic questionnaire(Primary Data)Child gender, age, special education status (Secondary Data)
- Child's initial level of English and Spanish proficiency (Secondary Data)
- Family Socioeconomic Status [SES] (Secondary Data)

## Andres Bustamante

**Project Title:** Measuring Motivation in Children Served by Head Start

**Mentor:** Dr. Daryl B. Greenfield

**Project Funding Years:** 2014-2016

**University Affiliation:** University of Miami

**Project Abstract:** A long standing research partnership between the University of Miami and one of the largest Head Start (HS) programs in the nation, serving an urban population of at-risk young children in Miami-Dade County, has facilitated collaborative research focused on narrowing the academic achievement gap between children from low- and middle-income families. This project leverages the Miami partnership's focus on improving domain-general school readiness skills, such as motivation, persistence, and preference for challenge, which are critical for improving school readiness, and support learning regardless of content area. Interventions targeting motivation orientation (encompasses mastery and performance motivations) have successfully improved academic outcomes in older children; however, attempts to extend this research downward to early childhood have yielded mixed results due to the absence of developmentally appropriate measures. The current study will build upon prior research to fill a gap in this literature by assessing a newly developed measure of motivation orientation specifically designed to be sensitive and appropriate for pre-school children from low-income families. Results will allow for evaluation of early childhood interventions that aim to close the national school readiness achievement gap by targeting this powerful domain-general skill.

#### **Sample:**

350 children across 35 HS classrooms from the Miami-Data County Head Start program will be randomly selected, stratified by age and gender.

#### **Measures:**

##### STEM

- Lens on Science assessment (Lens)

##### Language

- The Preschool Computerized Language Assessment (PCLA)

##### Approaches to learning

- The Learning-to-Learn Scales (LTLS)

##### Motivation orientation

- The Computer Administered Battery of Observable Motivation (CABOOM)

## Christopher Vredenburgh

**Project Title:** Developmental Predictors of Preschoolers' Peer Collaboration

**Mentor:** Dr. Tamar Kushnir

**Project Funding Years:** 2014-2016

**University Affiliation:** Cornell University

**Project Abstract:**

Through employing a bio-ecological systems approach, this project examines two plausible developmental mechanisms of Head Start (HS) preschoolers' peer collaboration. Given the ubiquity and importance of preschoolers' peer collaboration (i.e. the coordination of actions and verbalizations to achieve a shared goal) in classroom settings, this research seeks to identify environmental, physiological, and social- cognitive factors that support low income preschoolers' ability to collaborate. Specifically, the project investigates two primary research questions. The first question is whether measures of children's home environments (i.e. caregiving practices, home chaos, family demographics) and preschool environments (i.e. caregiving practices, student-teacher relationship, classroom demographics) relate to child factors (i.e. physiological arousal and social cognition). The second question concerns whether children's arousal and social cognition support their ability to collaborate with a peer to overcome cognitive and motoric challenges. It is anticipated that the results of this project will support the development of improved Head Start classroom and teacher practices in addition to informed interventions.

**Sample:**

60 dyads of HS preschoolers from Tompkins County, New York aged between 48 and 66 months (i.e. 120 children). Dyads will consist of unfamiliar children within 6 months of age of one another.

**Measures:**

Children's Home Environment and Social Experience

- Parental Background Sheet: Income, Education, Crowding, etc.
- Child Background Sheet: Duration in Preschool, etc.
- Home Chaos
- Parental Sensitivity and Responsiveness

Children's Preschool Environment and Social Experience

- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)
- Classroom Demographics

Children's Arousal

- Skin Conductance (SC)
- Cortisol and Nerve Growth Factor (NGF)
- Children's Sustained Attention and Attention Shifting

Children's Social Cognition

- Theory of Mind
- Sociability- Parental Report
- Sociability- Observational Coding