

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