

Child Development Faculty Research Projects: 2011 - 2012

Ann Easterbrooks, Ph.D.

Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation Research Assistant Opportunities

The Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation project, directed by Professors Ann Easterbrooks, Francine Jacobs, and Jayanthi Mistry, has opportunities for students to become involved in the process of conducting applied research and evaluation. There are numerous opportunities for students on this project, which focuses on the evaluation of a statewide family support program that aims to reduce rates of child abuse and neglect, and promote optimal child development and family well-being among young families (for more information view website ase.tufts.edu/mhfe).

The evaluation is a randomized control trial (RCT) of mothers receiving/not receiving services through Healthy Families Massachusetts. The program evaluation has several parts, including information gathered from records of service providers, and from interviews and observations with mothers and their young children in their homes over the course of two years. Opportunities are for course credit (CD independent study, directed research) or volunteer; students may be interested in developing a subproject for a thesis or course paper.

Sample of subprojects in need of research assistants include the following:

- a) parenting stress and coping

Although teen parenting is a known risk factor for non-optimal parenting, there is variability in adolescent mothers' caregiving. Positive parenting despite the prevalence of risk may be explained by individual differences in response to stress, i.e., coping.

To date, coping has most frequently been assessed using self-report questionnaires, which have been found problematic. This study takes a different approach to the study of coping and utilizes interview data from a large pool of adolescent mothers. Participants were asked a number of questions (adapted from an existing measure of daily coping by Stone and Neale, 1984) about a recent stressful situation involving their child. The questions were designed to assess various aspects of coping with parenting stress, for example (a) the types of stress, (b) coping strategies, (c) degree of perceived controllability over the situation, (d) perceived effectiveness of coping actions.

Students will be trained on a coding system, will review audiotapes and/or transcripts of the research interviews and will assign codes for the various aspects of stress and coping.

Possible topics for independent research:

1. A descriptive analysis of various stressors that beset this population of parents.
 2. A descriptive analysis of various aspects of coping (coping strategies, degrees of perceived controllability, mothers' representations of self and the child during stressful situations, etc.).
 3. What aspects of coping predict positive parenting (optimal emotional availability and parenting attitudes)?
 4. What aspects of coping predict poor parenting (e.g., child abuse, low emotional availability)?
 5. Is coping related to the mother's own childhood history (e.g., does history of child abuse predict how mothers will cope with parenting stress)?
- b) mother-child interactions during play and teaching situations at home

Mothers and children are videotaped in their homes in brief freeplay and teaching situations. Interactions are coded for Emotional Availability (EA) (Biringen et al, 1998), which assesses qualities of affect, hostility, responsiveness, intrusiveness, etc. Students will be trained on the coding system for either mother or child behavior and will view digital records of interaction. One goal of the training is to promote sensitive and emotionally available interactions among mothers and children. We are interested addressing questions such as:

1. When mothers receive HFM services are mother-child interactions more emotionally available compared to mothers who do not receive these services?
2. Is EA related to mothers' histories of childhood maltreatment or to their child's maltreatment?
3. Is EA related to mothers' attitudes about parenting, or parenting stress and coping?
4. Are there differences in EA according to whether mothers show symptoms of depression?

c) mothers' perceptions of their children

The ways in which mothers view their children can be powerful influences on the kinds of care they provide for them, and the ways in which they interact with them. We've asked mothers to describe their child in an open-ended interview. A coding scheme for Maternal Mind-Mindedness (MMM) (E. Meins) will be applied to mothers' descriptions. In past research, MMM has been predictive of attachment security, emotional availability, and children's theory of mind.

Research assistants will listen to maternal interviews, and will transcribe and code for MMM.

Possible research questions:

1. Is MMM related to mother-child interaction (EA)?
2. Do mothers receiving HFM services view their children differently than do mothers in the control group?
3. Does MMM predict child maltreatment?
4. Is MMM different for mothers with a history of maltreatment?
5. Is MMM different for mothers who have more/less social support for parenting?

For more information, or if you are interested in research possibilities, please contact:
Prof. Ann Easterbrooks (ann.easterbrooks@tufts.edu).

Marina U. Bers, Ph.D.

Early childhood technology: Tangible K robotics. We are looking at the role of computational technologies that are developmentally appropriate for young children and that help them learn about new things in new ways. We are re-examining the notion of what is "developmentally-appropriate" in the light of the opportunities for inquiry and active construction of knowledge offered by robotics. During this academic years we will be working in several kindergarten classrooms implementing our robotics-based curriculum. No previous knowledge of computer programming or robotics is needed. However, the student needs to be willing to learn. Experience working with Kindergarten-aged children is a plus. Several opportunities for independent study, senior honor thesis or directed research projects exist within these projects.

More information about all of Prof. Bers' research projects can be found on line at her DevTech research group's website: <http://www.ase.tufts.edu/devtech/>. If interested, please contact Prof. Bers at marina.bers@tufts.edu <<mailto:marina.bers@tufts.edu>>

Kathleen A. Camara, Ph.D.

Several opportunities are available for students who wish to participate in research and/or program evaluation related to the development of children and youth through the arts. Interested students may participate in data collection (interviews and observations of youths, families and teachers); engage in qualitative and/or quantitative data analyses and prepare reports for conference presentations and publications, and engage in independent analyses that may lead to theses or dissertations. Students also have the opportunity to participate in a research-based applied theater project on microaggressions. Anyone interested in working for 10-20 hours per week on any of the projects described below for course credit or as a paid R.A. may contact Dr. Camara at kathleen.camara@tufts.edu.

1. YouthBEAT Research and Evaluation on Music and Youth Development: Resiliency, Identity, Leadership, Self-Concept, and Achievement of Youth in Underserved Communities. Data Analysis and Preparation of Reports. Graduate or undergraduates are invited to apply as research assistants on YouthBEAT, a collaborative longitudinal mixed-method project, funded by the Boston Foundation and Berklee College of Music. Data for the project are being gathered from over 600 youths, their

families and teachers from Boston and from over 30 national network sites across the U.S. who are participating in “Berklee City Music,” an outreach program focused on contemporary music for youths ages 9-18. The YouthBEAT research project, now in its fourth year of operation, is directed by Dr. Camara and examines students’ perceptions of the role music plays in their lives; explores neighborhood and family contexts for learning; and analyzes the effects of the City Music program in promoting resilience and achievement among urban youth from underserved communities. We are also looking at “best practices” in teaching and examining the development of specific musical skills and behaviors, such as improvisation, practice and preparation, and how these relate to other academic areas of achievement. Research assistants will be involved in various aspects of the research which may include: recruitment of participants, interviewing youths ages 9-18, interviewing teachers and musicians; conducting observations of youth music ensembles and theory and musicianship classes; coding of interview and questionnaire data; quantitative and qualitative analyses of interviews and observations; and participation in on-site and on-line collection of data from sites in Boston, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, New York City, Newark, Milledgeville, GA, Albuquerque, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, La Mirada, CA, and throughout the U.S. YouthBEAT research assistants are provided extensive training in research methods and analysis and participate in a weekly seminar. While some knowledge of music is helpful, it is not required for all research positions. Specific projects for analysis within the YouthBEAT Project for 2011-12 include:

- **Children's Concepts of Study and Preparation.** The focus of this project is to examine children's understandings and behaviors related to preparation for academic and musical learning. Children and youth ages 9-18 have been interviewed about strategies and behaviors they use to study and practice as they attempt to learn musical and other academic subject matter. Analysis of children's meta-cognitive, rehearsal, and social-cooperative strategies, task analysis, focus, and time-on-task, responses to challenges and errors and achievements are conducted within the context of ability and performance.
- **The Role of Music in Enhancing Resilience Among Youths.** Looking at various stress factors relating to individual, family, neighborhood and community contexts, (including family change and instability, parental loss, unsafe neighborhoods, inadequate social and educational services), this project examines the contextual factors influencing youth development and the role that participation in music plays in fostering resilience in youth.
- **Musical, Racial and Ethnic Identity.** This project focuses on the relationship between racial and ethnic identity and identification with and participation in music that reflects the cultural heritage of youths and their families.
- **Youths’ Perceived Competence and Attributions for Successful and Non-Successful Learning in Music, Mathematics, Reading and Sports.** This project examines the data gathered from 9-18 year olds on their perceived competence and attributions relating to achievement in four areas of learning and

other measures of academic achievement in school, standardized testing, and music performance.

- **The Development of Leadership and Sense of Community in Youth Contemporary Music Ensembles.** This project involves the analysis of videotapes of participation by youths in 47 semester-long youth music ensembles starting with first meetings and covering over approximately 22 hours of rehearsals through performance concerts for each ensemble. Analysis will focus on leadership, development of community, and teaching strategies.
- **Best Practices in the Teaching of Contemporary Music to Youths in Underserved Communities.** This project is focused on the examination teachers' perceptions of teaching practices. Based on over 1000 hours of videotaped recordings of teachers working with 47 youth ensembles and interviews with the teachers, the project will identify best practices in teaching.

2. National City Music Network Site Data Collection

- **National Case Study Research and Evaluation of Out-of-School Programs Designed to Foster Child and Youth Development Through Music and Other Arts.** This research and program evaluation project, funded by the Music Empowers Foundation, is designed to evaluate program sites across the U.S. that are part of the Berklee City Music Network. Research teams of trained research assistants will travel to each of 15-20 sites over the course of two years to gather data for case study reports for each of the programs. Data will include measures focusing on music and other academic achievement, resilience, leadership, and identity. Analyses of the case studies will yield data for the development of generic models of arts/child and youth development programs in a variety of settings. On-line interviews and surveys will be gathered from over 600 youths from 15-20 after-school program sites throughout the U.S. The sample will include students who participate in the Berklee City Music National Network. Data will also be collected from youths in other after-school programs located at the same sites who will serve as a comparison group for the YouthBEAT study. Knowledge of music is required for some, but not all of the team members.
- **The Development of Improvisational Skill in Music.** This project focuses on the collection of interview data on the development of music improvisational skills and will examine the cognitive and expressive development of students' instrumental and vocal improvisation, as well as the teaching and learning strategies and approaches that are used to develop improvisational artistry in music. Youths ages 9-18 and teachers participating in the Berklee City Music Programs in Boston and throughout the national network sites will be interviewed about experiences and ideas about the development of improvisational skills. Selected vignettes taken from actual video-recorded improvisations played by students will be used to generate discussion. Knowledge of music is required.
- **Academic Achievement Among Participants in After-School Music**

Programs. This part of the YouthBEAT project focuses on the collection and analysis of school data (achievement tests, standardized state assessment exams, attendance, learning needs, graduation and college attendance) among students who have participated in the YouthBEAT Study and a comparison group of students who are participating in after-school programs in Boston and throughout the U.S.

3. Diversity Dialogues: A Research-Based Applied Theater Project

The Diversity Dialogues Project is designed to reveal and explore “micro-aggressions” that occur at Tufts through the medium of research-based applied theater. Micro-aggressions are defined as brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or non-intentional, that communicate negative or denigrating messages to others and which reflect assumptions, biases and stereotypes that are ingrained in society. The project is supported by the Tufts AS&E Diversity Funds, and directed by Dr. Camara, with the collaboration of artistic consultant, Dr. Monica Ndounou, Associate Professor in the Tufts Department of Drama, and the directors of the Group of Six (culture houses at Tufts), and over fifty students and staff who have participated in the project. The project goals are to create an awareness of our own cultural identities, biases, attitudes and behaviors; to cultivate learning, an awareness, and appreciation for others in our community; and to encourage a continued dialogue on the significance of multicultural fluency and an orientation to social justice within our community. In this project, actual accounts of micro-aggressions are collected from students, faculty, staff and administrators at Tufts through individual interviews or anonymous online submissions, and through focus group discussions. The stories gathered will be used as a basis for the creation of vignettes and composite characters that will become part of a play that is performed before an audience. Students are invited to participate in this project by gathering stories, assisting in the writing of vignettes, or by participating in various aspects of the theater production scheduled for 2012. For more information, please write to Kathleen.Camara@tufts.edu or go to our website: sites.tufts.edu/diversitydialogues/home.

David Henry Feldman, Ph.D.

1. I will be continuing to work on a new project on the origins and development of knowledge as it is found in domains of expertise (initially ballet, science education, computer programming). A small grant was secured to fund some pilot work. The project reported preliminary results on the three domains in June, and plans are underway for studies to be conducted on these and other domains this year. The goal of the project is to conceptualize knowledge domains as developmental entities and build “signatures” for each, as well as to identify common patterns of development across domains. Opportunities for independent research, thesis or volunteer projects are available.
2. I will also be starting work on a major review of universal and non universal, domain general and domain specific development as part of the new Handbook of Child Psychology project edited by Rich Lerner.

3. I continue to do research and theory on the development of expertise, creativity, and exceptional talent. These areas have proven to be good choices for theses and dissertation research.

Calvin L. Gidney, Ph.D.

Children's Television Project. (CTV) The CTV project is an on-going investigation of the sociolinguistic dimensions of children's animated television. In the first two phases of the project our research team watched and coded several episodes of 36 cartoons. Our sample included well-known shows such as Arthur and The Simpsons as well as more obscure offerings such as Samurai Pizza Cats or C. Bear and Jamal. In the third phase of our research, we will investigate what cues ? linguistic or visual ? children use to determine a cartoon character's status as hero or villain. We are looking for interested and motivated graduate or undergraduate students to work as researchers on this project. Researchers will engage in many aspects of the project including (1) research design, (2) piloting of research protocols on children at the Eliot-Pearson Children's School, (3) administration of protocols to children in our sample, (4) production of video tapes, or other research-related work and (5) library research. Researchers will meet biweekly (every other week) for 90 minutes for training and discussion. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Prof. Gidney (ext. 7-2213 / Calvin.Gidney@tufts.edu) or Prof. Dobrow (Julie.Dobrow@tufts.edu).

Francine Jacobs, Ed.D.

I am in the midst of two multi-year evaluation projects: The Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation (MHFE) and the Touchpoints Early Childhood Care and Education Evaluation (ECCE). Healthy Families Massachusetts is a statewide teen parenting program; MHFE (for which Professors Ann Easterbrooks and Jayanthi Mistry are co-investigators) has been in operation since 1998. We are now in its final stages, conducting secondary analyses of data we collected over the period of the study.

The ECCE program trains early childhood professionals in an approach to establishing partnerships with parents of young children that builds on the clinical work of pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton. This evaluation began in April, 2005, and will be gathering pre-test data in infant and toddler child care centers during the fall, 2005. Professor Ann Easterbrooks is also the co-Principal Investigator of this study.

Debbie LeeKeenan

Eliot-Pearson Children's School

The Children's School has two major research projects for student involvement. Independent course study credit is available for work on either project.

1. Antibias Education

The faculty of the Eliot-Pearson Children's School is engaged in a multi-year, classroom-based inquiry project on antibias education. We are actively engaged in the process of documenting the antibias and inclusive education work and curriculum we implement at

the Children's School. Opportunities are available to practice documentation, participation in a professional learning community, literature search and review, project and provocation design, data collection and analysis, and writing and dissemination.

2. Critical Friends Groups (CFG) and Professional Learning Communities

EPCS is launching a community based early childhood professional development learning group this year, where practitioners for the community can meet on regular basis to share instructional practices, student work, and observations of classrooms within a supportive environment in order to improve teaching practice and student learning. We will document and analyze the process of the community meetings, and create a guidebook on what counts as student work in early childhood education. Opportunities will be available to collect, transcribe and analyze data as well as participate in writing and dissemination.

Richard M. Lerner, Ph.D.

The Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development was developed to create research projects that use the theory involved in applied developmental science to frame studies seeking to understand how to promote healthy, positive development among diverse children, adolescents, families, and communities. Richard M. Lerner, Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science, is the Director of the Institute. Heidi Johnson is the Managing Director of the Institute. The Institute is the home of several research, training, and outreach projects:

4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, funded by the National 4-H Council

The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is in the last year of its currently-planned eight years of data collection. In this study, we longitudinally assess across adolescence the key characteristics of positive youth development, that is the "5 Cs" of positive development -- Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, and Caring (or Compassion). The research also evaluates the impact on positive youth development of key ecological assets -- found in families, schools, and community-based programs, such as youth development (YD) programs. YD programs are marked by the "Big 3" characteristics of positive and sustained adult-youth relations; life skills-building activities for youth; and opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of valued community activities. We have found that YD programs are key assets in the promotion of PYD. We have also found that the factors representing the "Five Cs" of PYD lead to a 6th C -- Contribution. Both PYD and participation in YD programs independently relate to Contribution. In turn, longitudinally, PYD predicts both community contributions and lessened likelihood of risk/problem behaviors. For example, PYD in Grade 5 predicted higher youth contributions and lower risk behaviors and depression at Grade 6. However, the pattern of PYD across time indicates that both promotion of strengths and prevention of risks need to be undertaken when working with youth.

Project GPS - Building Goal Management Skills in Young People, funded by the Thrive Foundation

The Institute has joined forces with the Thrive Foundation to develop and test strategies and assessment rubrics, anchored to exemplars, that will increase the capacity of mentors to assist youth in the growth of SOC (Selection of goals, Optimization of choices, and Compensation). The work will capitalize on the Institute's past thriving/SOC research and Thrive Foundation efforts – by framing tool development efforts within the Foundation's "Theory of Change" and by augmenting and measuring the impact of the Thriving Conversation Aid.

Collectively, this effort will provide tools to mentors that will introduce youth to a discussion of his/her sparks; the importance of a commitment to positive growth (i.e. "growth mindset"); the identification of positive purposes/goals; and the importance of goal management through Selection, Optimization and Compensation (SOC) actions and strategies in order to successfully undertake a thriving journey that attains the development of the Cs (Competencies, Confidences, Connections, Character, Caring, and Contribution) – proven indicators of reaching one's optimum potential. The Thrive Foundation's goal is to help youth live up to their potential and move on track towards a hopeful future. They look at the nature of thriving: what's worth strengthening in youth, what tools are available to track and support conditions of thriving, and who's out there for young people.

Constructing a Positive Youth Development Short Form Measure, funded by the Thrive Foundation

The Five Cs are a means to operationalize the developmental characteristics that a youth need to become a successful and contributing member of society. These Five Cs were linked to the positive outcomes of youth development programs reported by Roth and Brooks-Gunn. In addition, these "Cs" are prominent terms used by practitioners, adolescents involved in youth development programs, and the parents of these adolescents in describing the characteristics of a "thriving youth". Empirical evidence indicates that this construct has good psychometric properties (e.g., Bowers et al., 2010).

However, despite its strong psychometric characteristics, many practitioners find it difficult to use the existing PYD measure as a gauge of the status of, or changes in, thriving among program participants or as a tool in program evaluation. The obstacle preventing such use is the length of the PYD measure. In Grades 5 to 7, 77 items are used to index the Five Cs; in Grades 8 to 12, 78 items are used.

Accordingly, the Institute, with support from the Thrive Foundation, will develop a Positive Youth Development Short Form (PYD-SF) measure. Our goal is to develop a measure that will be useful for practitioners and program evaluators and, as well, that will have strong psychometric characteristics.

The YES Project, funded by the John Templeton Foundation

The Young Entrepreneurs Study (YES) is a joint project with the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) at Tufts University and the Stanford Center on Adolescence. Made possible through the support of the John Templeton Foundation, the YES project is a longitudinal study of the development of entrepreneurial purpose, achievements, and character attributes among diverse adolescents and young adults in the United States. Specifically, we are interested in identifying the cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and ecological bases of entrepreneurship development.

We define entrepreneurship as “the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the risks, and receiving the resulting rewards.” Among young people, entrepreneurship refers to the application of enterprising qualities within both new and existing organizations, and using the appropriate skills necessary for success in that environment and culture. Accordingly, we are interested in both traditional perceptions of entrepreneurship, such as starting a business, and the more novel pathways that young adults take to build a career. Entrepreneurship affords promising opportunities to people in low-income communities, and has the potential to contribute in positive ways to economic well-being and positive social change in society. Therefore, we believe that fostering entrepreneurship will significantly enhance our business and social communities.

The quantitative and qualitative findings from this study will provide scientifically validated information needed for creating effective educational programs and policies designed to foster entrepreneurial capacity. In addition, this project will provide a theory of youth entrepreneurship, as well as a model for future entrepreneurship research on this essential but under-studied area of American life.

Evaluating the Williamson Model: Promoting Character Development and Productive and Engaged Citizenship among Young American Men, funded by the John Templeton Foundation

Most educational programs focus separately on either character, moral, or civic education. The Williamson School (WS) is one prominent exception. Across its more than 120 year history, the WS, a three-year junior college located in Media, PA, fosters among deserving but socioeconomically disadvantaged young men the values of faith, integrity, diligence, excellence, and service, character attributes that correspond with many of those included by Sir John in the Foundation’s charter (e.g. diligence, entrepreneurship, future-mindedness, generosity, honesty, purpose, and reliability). Thus, the model has the potential to have a positive enduring impact on socioeconomic sectors of our society often bereft of hope and positive purpose. Accordingly, we proposed to conduct a cohort sequential longitudinal evaluation of the integrative WS model. The results of this research will address two Big Questions (about the role of character development in academic and life achievement, and about how to enhance the educational achievements of American men), and potentially have enduring impacts on enhancing the education of young men, on promoting the role of character-education in enhancing life success, and on formulating a potentially powerful means to break the cycle of social dependency among lower-income American families.

Tama Leventhal, Ph.D.

Project # 1: *Neighborhood Influences on Adolescent Development: Timing, Gender, and Processes*. This study, using a mixed-methods approach that draws on experimental and non-experimental data, addresses several issues related to adolescent development in neighborhood contexts. The importance of the timing of neighborhood socioeconomic effects on development and whether adolescence is a particularly sensitive period will be investigated. This study also focuses on gender differences in neighborhood effects on adolescent development and the generalizability of findings across income groups. Mechanisms of transmission of neighborhood socioeconomic effects will be explored as well.

Student Opportunities: Assist with data analysis and manuscript preparation. Some data sets are also available to students wishing to collaborate on various writing projects per above.

Project # 2: *Neighborhood Context and Immigrant Young Children's Development*. Neighborhoods historically have played a central role in the lives of immigrant families who typically settle in communities comprised of other immigrant families with a shared language, values, practices, and social ties. However, efforts to explore neighborhood effects on immigrant children's development remain largely theoretical. The primary goal of this study is to expand and apply to children from immigrant families a conceptual framework that I developed to explore how neighborhood context contributes to child development in ways that both promote and inhibit well-being. To address this topic, the study will use data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago neighborhoods, a multilevel, longitudinal study; 3,248 children first seen at birth, 3 or 6 years of age were sampled from 80 diverse neighborhoods and followed over six years.

Student Opportunities: Assist with data analysis, literature reviews, and manuscript preparation.

Project #3: *NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development*. Recruited from hospitals in 10 geographically diverse sites at the time of their births, 1,346 children and their families were followed intensively and extensively through 15 years of age. Originally, the study was designed to examine early child care and its effects on children's development. Researchers also collected information on multiple contexts of children's development, including home, school, and after-school environments.

Student Opportunities: Coding of articles for content analysis of newspaper articles on the study. Data are available for students wishing to collaborate on writing projects, including independent studies, and to write theses and qualifying papers on this longitudinal data set.

Student Opportunities: Assist with data analysis and manuscript preparation.

Project #4: *MacArthur Network on Housing and Families with Children*. The main network purpose is to conduct a new longitudinal data collection effort in four cities to

investigate how housing and the social contexts in which it is embedded together affect children from birth through 8 years of age at the study's inception.

Student Opportunities: Assist with measure development, pilot testing, and various aspects of data collection.

Christine M. McWayne, Ph.D.

Project #1: Latino Family Involvement in Young, Low-Income DLL Children's Education, with Co-PI Gigliana Melzi (Applied Psychology, NYU)

This collaborative research project examines family involvement with Latino families of young children in New York City and Boston Head Start programs. The goal of this study was to create two versions (English and Spanish) of a paper-and-pencil measure of family involvement that could be used widely by early childhood programs serving low-income, Latino children and families and then to link these culturally-grounded family involvement dimensions to children's school readiness in the areas of language development and social-emotional competency. We are currently in the measurement validation and data analysis stage. Presentations and manuscripts about this work are ongoing.

Opportunities: Because the work is focused on Latino families, if students are Spanish-speaking and bilingual that's a plus, but not a requisite. The project is in the data analytic and dissemination phase, with opportunities for both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, as well as opportunities to be involved with manuscript preparation, presentation at local and national conferences, and grant-writing.

Project #2: Project P.E.A.R.L.S. (Parents Enhancing Academic Readiness through Lessons About Strengths), with Co-PI Jacquie Mattis (Applied Psychology, NYU) and Collaborator Linnie Green Wright (Grad School of Social Work, Boston College)

This project is in the data analysis phase and explores what Black (African American, Black Caribbean, and African immigrant) parents in New York City Head Start programs think about parenting. Specifically, we wanted to learn about parents' beliefs, values, goals, and practices with respect to their preschool aged children. Unfortunately, a lot of the work that has been done to learn about parenting and the effects on children's achievement in the black community has focused on the negatives and challenges that families face. So, we set out to learn from parents through parent conversation groups, individual interviews, and videotaped observations of them with their children about parenting strengths and intentionality. The ultimate goal being to develop tools to assess parenting that are grounded in the beliefs and values of families living in low-income communities. As we learn more about the positive parenting across communities, we learn more about how we can influence positive outcomes for children, like school readiness.

Opportunities: Undergraduate and graduate students may become involved in coding of observational video-taped interactions, helping to develop heuristics for a new observation coding system informed by both parents' conceptualizations and their actual

behaviors with their children, and data analysis related to the creation of a new paper-and-pencil measure, with the latter tasks requiring more statistical and qualitative data analytic knowledge and skill.

Project #3: Partnerships for Early Childhood Curriculum Development: Readiness through Integrative Science and Engineering (RISE), with Co-PIs Marina Bers, Jayanthi Mistry, Daryl Greenfield (U Miami), and Kim Brenemann (Rutgers)

The primary goal of the RISE project is to improve school readiness for dual language learners (DLLs) by strengthening connections between home and school and by fostering positive approaches to learning through hands-on science, technology, and engineering (STE) content. We focus on STE because this knowledge is a marker of later success but is an area of curriculum in which early childhood education falls short. Our target population is low-income, DLL children who tend to be underrepresented in curriculum development studies. A third focus of RISE is on helping teachers to access families' funds of knowledge, because theory and research suggest that building on children's prior knowledge and fostering home-school connections improves student outcomes. Therefore, the project team will develop an integrative STE curriculum that has high potential to access and activate the learning potential in low-income, DLL preschoolers.

Participants will be educators, children, and families who are part of ABCD Head Start and Children's Services (ABCD) Head Start programs in Boston, Massachusetts. Family and child participants will be drawn from two Head Start sites that represent various subgroups of Latino and Chinese populations in Boston.

Opportunities: For the coming academic year, our efforts will be focused upon continuing to build relationships with particular Head Start sites, and students will have opportunities to volunteer in Head Start classrooms on a weekly basis to interact directly with children, their families, and their teachers. This could be particularly interesting to students who want to get some hands-on experience in a preschool classroom and working with low-income, DLL children. We will continue piloting aspects of the ethnographic component of the study, which involves conducting naturalistic observations of the classroom, neighborhood walks, and interviewing parents and teachers about their daily routines with children. For students interested in learning about the beginning stages of a research project from a partnership-based perspective, this could be an incredible learning opportunity with the potential for longer-term involvement.

Project #4: The City of Somerville's SomerPromise Initiative
Projects under development include:

- 1) SomerPromise Initiative in Somerville

Opportunities. This is an exciting opportunity for students to work alongside faculty in the E-P Department as we chart our partnership with the City of Somerville in a replication (of sorts) of the Harlem Children's Zone, specifically constructing a pipeline of service coordination to support children prenatally through high school graduation. There will be multiple opportunities for student involvement that will evolve over the

course of the year, including opportunities for internships, volunteer activities that involve both direct service activities, helping with planning and coordination among multiple agencies as well as contributing to the information-sharing capacity of the involved community organizations.

2) Helping to develop an Integrated Data System for the City of Somerville

Opportunities. This work is currently underway, supported by internal funding from Tufts and involving multiple Co-PIs from across the University and within the City. Students interested in participating in meetings with City Officials and community agencies, learning about policy and data management decisions, or interested in data development and coordination should inquire about opportunities.

Lynn Meltzer, Ph.D.

SMARTS Leadership and Mentoring Program (ResearchILD).

The **SMARTS Leadership and Mentoring Program** is a ground breaking peer-to-peer mentorship program designed to build a supportive community of student leaders who want to make a change in their school environment. Students are taught research-based executive function strategies that focus on planning, organizing, prioritizing, shifting approaches, and self-monitoring. Students also participate in metacognitive activities to build awareness of their own individualized learning styles. Through a project called the “Initiative for Positive Action and Change” (IPAC), students develop questions about an important problem they observe in their school, hypothesize about why it exists, develop methods for testing their hypothesis, draw conclusions and suggest solutions based on the results of their investigations. The SMARTS program fosters the development of student mentors and leaders who can succeed in school due to their increased *motivation, effort, positive self- concept, effective strategy use, persistence and resilience.*

After three waves of data collection we are now focusing on further refining our curriculum and implementation of SMARTS in different school systems. Beginning in the fall, we will be assessing program efficacy using quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. We will also be involved in the design and pilot testing of **SMARTS Online**, an interactive website comprising training materials, videoclips of mentors and mentees, photo galleries, and curriculum materials for use by after-school programs and schools.

We are looking for qualified graduate students who are interested in gaining experience in any of the following: website design, website programming, quantitative and qualitative data collection, data entry and analysis, curriculum design, program evaluation, and manuscript preparation. A *minimum* of a *six month* commitment is required.

For more information, please see our websites (www.researchild.org and www.ildlex.org) and/or contact Dr.Lynn Meltzer at lmeltzer@ildlex.org or mimiballard at m Ballard@researchild.org.

Jayanthi Mistry, Ph.D.

NAVIGATING MULTIPLE CULTURAL WORLDS AND IDENTITIES

This ongoing research project is designed to investigate the processes and circumstances under which children gain expertise in navigating between multiple worlds and identities. The underlying assumption is that navigating multiple identities is a critical component of the development of self and identity – especially for children of immigrants and those from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities who experience life as minorities in the U.S.

Current Opportunities:

The data set on this project consists of survey data and interview data. There are opportunities for mixed methods analysis of data. I invite students who are interested in assisting with the next steps in interpretive/qualitative analysis. Participation will include designing and implementing a plan of analysis for specific research questions as driven by the overarching research objectives of the study. There are rich possibilities for student theses or directed research projects.

MASSACHUSETTS HEALTHY FAMILIES EVALUATION 2ND COHORT (MHFE2)

MHFE-2 is a large-scale, multi-year evaluation study of the MA Healthy Families program being led by Profs. Jacobs, Easterbrooks and Mistry. The study consists of two main components:

- Impact Study: designed as a randomized control trial to evaluate program effects;
- Integrative Study: designed to enable a more concentrated and comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors that influence participants' trajectories as they transition both to parenthood and adulthood.

The Integrative Study uses a mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative data) approach with a sample of 276 participants from the program group and 200 participants from the control group. It is designed as a multi-method study with data gathered through standardized measures, structured survey questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Data is gathered at three points in time beginning at the start of participants' enrollment in the HFM program.

Current Opportunities:

I am coordinating the analysis of data from an open-ended research interview that is conducted as part of the Integrative Study. We have completed coding of over 400 interviews. Features of participants' childhood history, their educational history, pregnancy stories, their relationships with family members, and their representations of parenting have been coded using a qualitative analysis program (Atlas-ti). We are now inviting students who are interested in assisting us with the next steps in interpretive/qualitative analysis. Participation will include designing and implementing a plan of analysis for specific research questions as driven by the research objectives of the overarching evaluation study, and may include the integration of qualitative data from the research interview, with data collected through surveys/questionnaires and standardized

scales, as well as with GIS based data. There are rich possibilities for student theses or directed research projects.

Ellen Pinderhughes, Ph.D.

Adoption and Development Project (ADP): The ADP examines how families who are raising children adopted internationally and transracially navigate cultural and racial differences. Data collection, which has reached 45+ families to date, includes interview, questionnaires and the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Our analyses to date have focused on cultural socialization activities, children's understanding of adoption, ethnic identity and self-image and children's public discourse experiences. Analyses underway are examining parent-child conversations about race, and how parents manage public discourse experiences for manuscript preparation. In addition, we are conducting a follow-up data collection with a small subgroup of this sample. Finally, grant applications will be prepared for outside funding. **Opportunities for students** (course credit or volunteer) include participation in data coding and analyses, preparation of conference presentations and assist in preparing manuscripts. Graduate students also will be considered for training as interviewers in the follow up data collection. If interested, contact ellen.pinderhughes@tufts.edu.

Parents as Effective Educational Partners: This project examines the experiences that parents of preschool-age children with special needs have in working with educators on their child's behalf. The project involves a collaboration with Tufts early childhood programs (EPCS, TEDCC), and Medford and Somerville Public Schools special education and early childhood programs. The study currently underway, Current Preschool Parents Project (CPPP), involves an interview of educational providers about culturally diverse parents of children with special needs and a follow-up interview of some parents about their experiences working with educators. Interview and questionnaire data are combined in analyses that will identify common themes across educators and across parents regarding educational partnerships. Grant applications are being developed for external funding. **Opportunities for students** (course credit or volunteer): include participation in data coding and analyses, preparation of conference presentations and manuscripts. Interested graduate students can be trained as interviewers, as well. If interested, contact ellen.pinderhughes@tufts.edu.

Lives of Gay Fathers and their Children. With Ellen Perrin, M.D. of the Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at Tufts Medical Center and other colleagues. We are initiating an internet-based study of gay fathers in five states, with the goal of gathering a broadly representative sample using the recruitment methodology, "response-driven sampling." We will examine the following themes: demographics, pathways to parenthood and parenting experiences, challenges and discrimination experiences and relationships with extended families and friends. **Opportunities for students** (course credit or volunteer): include participation in recruitment process, data scoring and coding, analyses and preparation of conference presentations and perhaps manuscripts. If interested, contact Ellen Pinderhughes at Ellen.pinderhughes@tufts.edu.

International Adoption Project (IAP): In collaboration with Professor Ann Easterbrooks (here in E-P) and Laurie Miller, M.D., Director of the Center for Adoptive Families, Tufts Medical Center. Our project aims to examine how infants who are internationally adopted regulate their behaviors and emotions in a new environment as well as investigate the life of the adopting families. We are currently collecting pilot data of these internationally adopted infants and families as well as comparison domestically adopted infants/families and non-adopted infants/families at the Tufts Medford campus through interviews, observations, and psychophysiological measures (saliva samples and heartrate measures). Research assistants participate in data collection and coding of the observations and completed questionnaires. **Opportunities for students** involve participation in data collection and coding. If interested, please contact Chie Kotake at chie.kotake@tufts.edu. *Note: openings for new RAs are uncertain at this time and will be determined by early September, however if you are interested, feel free to contact Chie.*

Fast Track Fast Track is a long-term randomized clinical trial designed to prevent the onset of serious conduct disorder and other problematic outcomes in adolescence. Initiated in 1991, the study is ongoing in 4 sites in the country with 445 intervention youth, a matched group of 446 controls, and another more normative comparison group of 387 youth. Services were delivered to intervention youth from grades 1 through 10. Yearly data collection provides opportunities to examine the effect of the intervention and the development of children living in high-risk communities. **Opportunities for students** here at Tufts, students could participate in qualitative and quantitative analyses that are being conducted from the data set. For more on Fast Track, go to www.fasttrackproject.org. If interested, contact Ellen Pinderhughes at Ellen.pinderhughes@tufts.edu.

Note: Course credit is available for students working on these projects (CD 143-17, Research Seminar: Families and Children in Diverse Contexts). This is a research seminar that will meet on Mondays from 3:30-5. Students who enroll in this course also will work on one of my research projects for about 8-9 hours per week (including a separate lab meeting - time/date TBD). In the class we will discuss research issues both generically and as they apply to studying families in diverse contexts.

The benefit for enrolling in this class is that one not only gets course credit for working with the project, but also, one gets exposure to other research on families in different situations (including adoptive families, gay dads, families raising youth in high risk communities, parents of children with special needs).

W. George Scarlett, Ph.D.

Project # 1: Parents own Methods for Managing Behavior Problems: This is a brand new project involving collecting methods that parents, not professionals invent and use to manage their children's behavior problems. The goals are to (1) show how creative parents can be when pressed, and (2) provide a way to help parents evaluate their own home-grown methods.

Project # 2: Religious and Spiritual Exemplars Before beginning study of religious and spiritual development, it is always good to have an understanding of endpoints or models

of perfection and maturity. This is a writing project to do just that – a book whose chapters deal with individuals and communities who are considered to be religious or spiritual exemplars by most. The book looks at positive examples as well as negative (pathological) examples. This project can use the help of anyone interested.

Maryanne Wolf, Ed. D.

We have opportunities this year for 3 to 5 Masters level and Ph.D. students.

The Center for Reading and Language Research is one of several interdisciplinary reading-research centers around the country that bring together cognitive neurosciences, linguistics, child development, and education. The Center offers a variety of theoretical and applied experiences for undergraduate, Masters and Ph.D. students: for example, undergraduates and graduate students may become involved in tutoring at-risk impaired readers in community schools in the Tufts Literacy Corps with Dr Cindy Krug. Trained graduate students may become involved in an extensive range of research activities , including assessment experiences, curriculum development, and preliminary data collection and entry tasks. Examples of collaborative projects are: 1) the design and implementation of activities and short stories included in an ongoing, innovative reading intervention program that includes a computerized component, 2) an analysis of reading and language skills of African-American children who speak vernacular English (this project in conjunction with Professor Chip Gidney); and 3) the study of different patterns of genetic markers and behavioral, cognitive, linguistic, and emotional differences in children with a range of reading issues. Volunteers are a welcome part of the operation of the Center. Potential volunteers are to contact Stephanie Gottwald or Wendy Galante at 627-3815.