

SOFINA K SHEKHAR

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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Newark, DE

Ph.D. Human Development and Family Science (in progress) August 2023- Present

Concentration: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Critical Consciousness

Advisor: Roderick Carey, Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh, PA

B.S. Psychology

December 2021

Minor: Natural Sciences

Magna Cum Laude

Senior Thesis Topic: Colorblind Racial Ideology in Schools

Advisor: Diana Leyva, Ph.D.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Newark, DE

Graduate Research Assistant for Roderick Carey Ph.D., HDFS

(8/2023 – Present)

Graduate Research Assistant for New Directions Early Head Start

(6/2024- Present)

Analyzed Family Map data for New Directions Early Head and created Fall 2024 Nutrition Report

Developed protocol for focus groups exploring youth insights into the creation of practices, lessons, and curriculum materials aimed at fostering teachers ability to create context where students of color matter

Assisted in writing support exploring recent educational research on Black boys, focusing on modes, measures, meanings, behind the shift from school achievement to self-actualization.

Provided writing support for literature review on the conflation of mattering and belonging constructs in K-12 education research.

Designed and organized The Association for the Study of Play conference program and schedule using Canva. PI Myae Han, Ph.D.

Wrote manuscript sections and literature review on early childhood homelessness experiences regarding play and development. PI Myae Han, Ph.D.

Observed preschool classrooms and identified applicable mechanisms for the incorporation of multicultural curriculum. PI Myae Han, Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Project Coordinator, Food for Thought Lab

Pittsburgh/ Philadelphia, PA
(September 2022 – September 2023)

Organized and facilitated focus group and intervention sessions at a local community center in Oxford Circle, Philadelphia where parents were instructed in early literacy and language techniques using cooking and food activities. This initiative targeted families with preschool-age children from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds with the aim of enhancing their literacy development. PI Dr. Diana Leyva Ph.D.

Responsible for recruitment of participants, organizing meetings, creating intervention materials, contacting participants, creating reports of meetings, transcribing, coding, and analyzing data via SPSS.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Research Associate, Behavioral Medicine Research Group

Pittsburgh, PA
(January 2022 – August 2022)

Conducted participant visits in a behavioral cardiovascular research laboratory. Assisted participants in setting up ambulatory monitoring equipment to acquire physiological data in the natural environment. Provided 24/7 support to participants in the field. PI Dr. Tom Kamarck, Ph.D.

Trained other research staff on study protocol and procedures. Analyzed and cleaned data.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Research Assistant, Food for Thought Lab

Pittsburgh, PA
(June 2021 – June 2022)

Transcribed, checked, and coded over 100 videos of parent-child interactions, using datavyu, examining the relationship between parental math talk and children's math skills under PI Diana Leyva Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Research Assistant, Cambiar Collective

Pittsburgh, PA
(December 2020 – January 2022)

Developed protocols for the We Stories Study which examined White family's anti-racism actions. Adjusted protocols to fit the needs of the participants and RA's. Trained graduate research assistants on protocols and procedures.

Coded over 160 qualitative interviews for the GenZ study, investigating after school opportunities for adolescents of color, under PI Josefina Bañales Ph.D. and Tom Akiva Ph.D.

Facilitated participant communication for the FAMSTUDY project investigating school and parent ethnic-racial socialization.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Research Assistant, Frieze Lab

Pittsburgh, PA
(October 2020 – April 2021)

Developed a coding scheme for several survey questions for the Home and Coronavirus study which investigated how first-year college students' feelings of home were affected by Coronavirus, under PI Irene Frieze, Ph.D.

Trained RA's on coding schemes and calculated reliability. Assisted in conducting literature review for the study. Conducted in-person interviews for the Home and Coronavirus study.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Lab Manager, Ross Lab

Pittsburgh, PA
(October 2019 – June 2020)

Led and organized lab ordering spreadsheet, handling all ordering, and receiving for the lab.

Designed website features and kept the lab website up to date, via WordPress.

Completed weekly checklist to keep the lab running smoothly including disposing of mice and biohazard waste, refilling distilled water, making agar plates, sanitizing glassware, and testing eye wash stations.

GRANTS AND ASSISTANTSHIPS

2023-Present Graduate Assistantship
University of Delaware; Newark, DE

Human Development and Family Science
Advisor: Myae Han Ph.D.
Role: Graduate Research Assistant

2022-2023

Project Title: Empowering parents to use cooking as opportunities to develop children's literacy
William Penn Foundation; Philadelphia, PA
Literacy Eats Study
PI: Diana Leyva Ph.D.
Role: Project Coordinator

AWARDS AND HONORS

TASP Student Travel Award, \$500, The Association for the Study of Play (TASP), 2024
Magna Cum Laude, University of Pittsburgh, 2021
Mary Gregg Settle Scholarship, University of Pittsburgh, 2019-2021
Dean's List, University of Pittsburgh, 2018-2021

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
Critical Consciousness
Racial-ethnic Identity Development
Racial Equity in Education
Adolescent Development
Literacy and Language Development

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION

Pic, A., Han, M., **Shekhar, S.**, Strickland, L. M., & Maurer, N. (2024). *Exploring the role of play and family engagement among families experiencing homelessness* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. *Child & Family Social Work*.

PRESENTATIONS

Pic, A., Han, M., **Shekhar, S.**, Strickland, L., & Maurer, N. (2024, March). Play and learning among families experiencing homelessness: In their words. The Association for the Study of Play, Rochester, NY, USA.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant, Psychology

Pittsburgh, PA

(August 2021 – December 2021)

Teaching Assistant for undergraduate level Research Methods course, oversaw 300 students, graded homework and exams, provided office hours to answer questions for students, assisted in class activities.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

R, SPSS, Dedoose, Datavyu, Jamovi, Minitab, Microsoft office, Canva, WordPress

SERVICE

Volunteer, Free Food for All Delaware, Mutual aid organization providing free halal food, Wilmington, DE, 2022- Present

Member, University of Pittsburgh, Alpha Phi Omega Co-Ed Service Fraternity, Member for 3 years, Volunteered on multiple community service projects throughout Pittsburgh, Totaling 50+ hours of service every semester, 2019-2021

Research Assistant Volunteer, University of Pittsburgh, Frieze Lab, Developed Coding scheme, Trained RAs, conducted literature review, 2020-2021

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2024 The Association for the Study of Play

CERTIFICATIONS

2023 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program