

Award winners of the 2013 Patrice L. Engle Dissertation Grant in Early Child

Development: Eva Diniz Bensaia dei Schirò and Nardos Tesfay



Eva Diniz is a doctoral (Ph.D.) candidate in Psychology at the Instituto de Psicologia, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Her advisor is Professor Silvia H. Koller. Her project will be conducted in Brazil and is entitled, “From pregnancy to motherhood among adolescents: A longitudinal study on factors associated with mother-infant interaction.” Eva completed her undergraduate training in Portugal and then worked as a clinical psychologist in maternity with adolescent mothers prior to enrolling in a doctoral program. During her doctoral training, she also worked with Dr. Volling at the University of Michigan to learn methodological options in studying parent-infant interactions. Her plans are to continue to be involved with research to contribute to the

identification of factors affecting the quality of parent-infant interaction. Her research aims to improve the life of those who live in at-risk contexts. She also would like to be part of an organization in which she could integrate her learning experiences as a researcher focusing on interventions to promote the quality of parent-infant interactions in the first years of life.



Nardos Tesfay is currently working towards a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Education at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. Her advisors are Professor Lars-Erik Maimberg and Professor Maria Evangelou. Her project will be conducted using data from Ethiopia and is entitled, “What moderates the effects of poverty on children’s learning outcomes in Ethiopia?” Nardos holds an MSc in Educational Research Methodology (Oxford) and an MA in Economics (Saskatchewan). Before pursuing the doctorate, Nardos spent six years working as a social policy officer with UNICEF in sub-Saharan Africa. During this time, she led research on childhood poverty and advocated for social and economic policy reforms.

Nardos hopes that her research will lead to a better understanding of children’s developmental and learning processes in contexts of poverty and risk, and will further contribute to an improvement in the measures and models used to assess and address these challenges in low-income countries.