

# Graduate Research Day 2013

## Florida Atlantic University

**Charles E. Schmidt College of Science**

### **Socio-Emotional Regulation and Physiological Regulation in Preschoolers during Emotionally-Evocative Stories**

Kathryn Marsh, Dr. Nancy Aaron Jones, Dr. Krystal Mize, Dr. Nancy Aaron Jones

Psychology; Florida Atlantic University

The purpose of the study is to examine physiological and behavioral components of emotional regulation and the development of empathy in preschoolers. It also examines how the parents play a role in their child's development of socio-emotional competence. 65 preschool children (M age = 4.16, SD= 0.60) and both of their parents participated. Behavioral and physiological activities were assessed for the children during stories chosen for emotional content (one happy and one sad story).

A repeated-measures MANOVA was performed. There was a significant difference in emotion-type with more empathetic behavior from the child occurring during the happy conditions compared to the sad conditions,  $p < .01$ . However, there were no significant differences in child responses when interacting with their mother versus their father during these emotionally-laden stories. Another MANOVA was run to examine the effects of parents and emotion-type on the child's IBI during the baseline, happy, and sad story,  $F(3,29)=4.0$ ,  $p < .05$ . IBIs of the children differed during the mother-read stories (happy and sad) and the baseline, but did not show differences during the father-read stories. Another MANOVA was conducted to examine whether the emotionally-evocative story tasks would result in lower HPV than the baseline condition. A significant difference was found between HPV and story type for mother-read stories,  $F(2,43)=6.78$ ,  $p < .01$ , but not father-read stories, with HPV lowest during the mother-read sad story. Although the parental effects on the child's empathetic behavior were not as strong as predicted, the child's HRV did differ for parents during the emotionally-laden stories.