Research in children’s career development has made clear that children are making judgments about the suitability of careers for them and their future place in the world as young as age 4 based on factors such as gender and social class. While these judgments are malleable, they create the foundation for future career development and can needlessly steer children into low-wage and low-skill jobs until developmentally-appropriate career interventions are offered. In my model of Children’s Concepts of Career Development (Howard & Walsh, 2010, 2011) six developmental levels of career reasoning are detailed. Results indicate that 1) early notions of career choice and attainment are reorganized and transformed as children grow older such that career reasoning that was once grounded in fantasy and magical thinking shifts to one that rests on a dynamic consideration of personal interests, abilities, and job requirements, and 2) changes in social cognitive and perspective-taking abilities can help us conceptualize the shifts that occur in reasoning about careers. By extending this model into other career related processes and examining its relationship to academic achievement it will be possible to design and validate a school-based intervention strategy that could support early and on-going efforts to prepare youth to be college- and career-ready.

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Kimberly A. S. Howard received her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology in 2001 from Boston College. She completed a predoctoral clinical internship at the Outpatient Behavioral Health Center at Sinai Samaritan Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Prior to joining the faculty at Boston University she ran a prevention program in a Milwaukee public high school and was an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Howard’s research has appeared in journals such as The Counseling Psychologist, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, and the Peabody Journal of Education. She has written chapters in books such as Handbook of School Counseling; Handbook of Psychotherapies with Children and Families; and Transforming Social Inquiry, Transforming Social Action: New Paradigms for Crossing the Theory/Practice Divide in Universities and Communities.