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Eighteen Early Career Scholars Receive Small Grants in Support of Projects

As part of its commitment to support emerging child development scholars, the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) is pleased to announce 18 small grant awards to early career scholars around the globe.

“The years immediately following completion of the terminal degree are critical for scholars launching their own independent programs of research,” said Laura L. Namy, Executive Director of SRCD. “Supporting the next generation of scholars is fundamental to building capacity for the future of developmental science. These small grants, along with SRCD’s dissertation funding awards, reflects SRCD’s commitment to supporting the scholarship of tomorrow’s leaders.”

The funding priorities for these small grants included a proposed project that exemplifies exceptional scientific merit, contributes to the applicant’s competitiveness for external funding and/or career development, and furthers SRCD’s strategic priorities including support for diversity across ethnicity/race, internationality, and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Applicants were required to be SRCD members conducting child development research who completed their terminal degree no earlier than 2013 and/or will have completed the degree no later than June 1, 2018. Proposals were accepted form eligible applicants regardless of the nature of their appointment (faculty, post-doc, research scientist, etc.), type of institution, or country of residence.

2018 SRCD Early Career Scholar Small Grant Recipients



Riana Elyse Anderson, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan

Reducing Racial Stress in Black Families: Improving Racial Socialization Competency through a Culturally- Informed Familial Therapeutic Intervention

The EMBRace intervention seeks to facilitate Black parents' attentiveness to their adolescent's racial stress while also reducing their own trauma via racial coping knowledge and racial socialization strategies. As families learn to negotiate these racially tense experiences and conversations with each other and become assertive and efficacious in maintaining their racial self-esteem, they have reported feeling more competent in their abilities to face difficult familial, interpersonal, and societal challenges.



Kristin Bernard, Assistant Professor
Stony Brook University
Theodore Waters, Assistant Professor,
New York University - Abu Dhabi
Or Dagan, Graduate Student,

The New School for Social Research

Links Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Cellular Damage: The Moderating Role of Attachment Security

Exposure to adverse childhood experiences, such as being physically abused or witnessing domestic violence, threatens physical well-being across the lifespan. One biological marker that offers insight into pathways by which childhood adversity may affect physical health is accelerated cellular aging, measured via telomere length. In this project, we aim to examine whether secure base script knowledge, at attachment-related schema about close relationships, buffers individuals from the negative effects of childhood adversity on accelerated cellular aging.



Erin Bogan, Vice Provost Postdoc Fellow, University of Pennsylvania

Parenting Strengths: An Exploratory Examination of Low-Income Caregivers' Strategies for Promoting Young Children's Self-Regulatory Competencies

This project will explore the ways in which low-income parents support their young children's self-regulatory competencies in the home context.



Natalie Brito, Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology, New York University

Examining associations among home environment, gut microbiome, and language skills during infancy

Understanding the gut-brain axis has important implications for early brain and cognitive development. This project will examine connections between the gut microbiome and language skills during infancy, and how this link is impacted by both maternal stress and the home linguistic environment.



Ji Young Choi, Assistant Professor, Iowa State University

Early language use and experience in preschool classrooms: A focus on children's dual language learning status and classroom activities

The purpose of this pilot study is to examine quantitative characteristics of children's language use and experience in preschools using a novel technology, the Language ENvironment AnalysisTM (LENA) system. Children's language experience (i.e., frequency of expressive vocabulary use, ratio of expressive vocabulary use in English as compared to home language(s), and frequency of adult-child conversational turns) will be

examined among three groups of children with varying DLL status (i.e., bilinguals, emergent bilinguals, and English monolinguals) as well as across classroom activity settings (e.g., whole group activities and free play).



Ernestina Dankyi, Research Fellow, Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana

Street Children in Ghana and the Sustainable Development Goals

The harsh conditions under which street children live daily continuously dispose them to risks that prevent them from fulfilling their fullest potentials. Efforts have been made by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) to provide assistance to these children, however, limited information is available about the existing services and their effectiveness. The proposed study will, therefore, examine the existing institutions and programmes for street children and how these are positioned to meet the sustainable development goals.



Guadalupe Espinoza, Assistant Professor, California State University, Fullerton

Longitudinal Links between Daily Witnessed Cyberbullying Experiences and School Adjustment: Do Patterns Differ for Asian-American, Latino and White Adolescents?

The current study will examine how daily cyberbullying experiences, both personal and witnessed, are related to school adjustment outcomes (e.g., school safety, engagement) among ethnically diverse adolescents.



Karrie Godwin, Assistant Professor Department of Educational Psychology, Kent State University

Optimizing the Classroom Visual Environment to Bolster Learning and Minimize the Effects of Children's Off-Task Behavior

This study will investigate how children's learning environments can be optimized to promote attention and learning. Prior research suggests decorated classroom environments can increase children's off-task behavior and thus reduce learning. Godwin will use this grant to investigate whether the detrimental effects of off-task behavior directed toward the visual environment can be attenuated, if the visual environment aligns with the learning objectives. In this work, Godwin will create an adaptable classroom visual environment using interactive projectors.



Noa Gueron-Sela, Lecturer, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Parental Mobil Use (PMU): Exploring the Behavioral and Physiological Implications for Mother-child Interactions

This study aims to examine whether maternal mobile device use in the presence of young children is related to disruptions in mother-child interactions. We will specifically test whether maternal texting is related to reductions in mother-child behavioral and physiological synchrony (i.e., the matching of attention, affect, and biological rhythms).



Kelsey Lucca, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Washington

Parental Predictors of Persistence during Infancy

Persistence is a key predictor of successful life outcomes: the harder you try, the further you get. One critical predictor of persistence is how parents and teachers talk about and evaluate persistence. This study will examine parental predictors of persistence during infancy. Specifically, it will investigate how linguistic input influences persistence in a mechanistic, fine-grained way and how verbal support operates synergistically with, or independently from, other forms of parental support.



Erika Manczak, Assistant Professor (beginning Fall 2018), University of Denver

Fetal Embedding of Depression Risk: Investigating the Role of Cellular Inflammation

Maternal depression is robustly associated with child depression, with growing evidence that such risk may occur through biological exposures encountered by the fetus during gestation. This project will examine the role of cellular inflammation as a key biological risk pathway by assessing inflammatory markers in the blood of pregnant women with and without depression and then relating these markers to child internalizing behaviors when infants are 12-months old.



Jessica McKenzie, Assistant Professor, California State University, Fresno

Globalization and Youth Development: Past, Present, and Future Selves in Northern Thailand

Employing longitudinal ethnographic methods, this project will investigate the developmental implications of globalization among Thai youth. SRCD Small Grant funding will support follow-up data collection in northern Thailand, where 40 young adults (who were adolescents during initial data collection) will be

interviewed about their lives at present, their envisioned futures, and their conceptions of morality and of the moral self.



Anilena Mejia, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Institute for Scientific Research and High Technology Services, INDICASAT AIP

Pilot RCT of a Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Intervention to Prevent Violence in Panamanian Children from High Risk Schools

The study will determine pilot efficacy of a Socio-Emotional Learning intervention entitled Second Steps® to prevent violence in Panamanian children aged 9 to 11 years old. Violence is the main reason for reduced quality of life and mortality in children and adolescents in Panama and other countries in the region. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) need rigorous studies assessing efficacy of evidence-based intervention packages that have already shown efficacious in high-income countries This will be one of the few published pilot trials of a Socio-Emotional Learning intervention in a LMIC.



Diana Meter, Assistant Professor, Utah State University

Identity and Appearance-based Peer Victimization among High School Students

Peer victimization is a pervasive problem among youth, and groups at heightened risk include lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) and ethnic minority youth, youth with large or small body size, youth with disabilities, and atypical gender or gender expression. This study will test the effect of stigmatized group membership on identity and appearance-related peer victimization. We will further examine whether peer victimization predicts minority stress, and the effect of minority stress on adjustment problems. Last, we will test the buffering effects of school-level variables including defending, positive school climate, and inclusive curriculum at each step of the model aforementioned.



Jennifer Mortensen, Assistant Professor, University of Nevada, Reno

The Others Helping Mothers? Support Networks for Early Head Start Mothers with Toddlers

This study will examine the important individuals and relationships in the lives of Early Head Start mothers. The goal is to take a strengths-based approach to understanding how mothers with young children build networks of support that help foster positive home environments and child development.



Angela Narayan, Assistant Professor of Clinical Child Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Denver

Childhood Adversity and Benevolent Childhood Experiences as Predictors of Mental Health Problems in Ethnically-Diverse, Low-Income Fathers Expecting a Baby

Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) are experiences of childhood love, predictability, and support that have been found to counteract the long-term effects of child adversity on pregnant women's mental health problems and exposure to stressful life events. This study will examine whether higher levels of BCEs also offset the effects of childhood adversity on mental health problems and stress exposure, as well as negative caregiving practices, in fathers-to-be from the prenatal to the postnatal period.



Amy L. Pennar, Postdoctoral Fellow, Wayne State School of Medicine

Targeting Neurocognitive Functioning to Improve the Health Outcomes of Youth Living with HIV: Assessing Intervention Effects One-Year Later

Targeting prospective memory for medication adherence among youth living with HIV has demonstrated short-term positive effects on viral functioning. The goal of this study is to assess the long-term viral functioning of youth, ages 15-24, who participated in a proof-of-concept prospective memory intervention delivered in real-world settings, and to compare the acceptability and feasibility of utilizing dried blood spots relative to whole-blood to measure viral load.



Laura K. Taylor, Lecturer (Assistant Professor), School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast

Helping Kids! Promoting Positive Intergroup Relations and Peacebuilding in Divided Societies

The Helping Kids! project aims to understand and promote positive intergroup relations and peacebuilding among children growing up in divided societies. This study will answer new questions about (a) what age children in a post-accord generation develop ethnic self-identification, (b) which factors influence a shift from ethnic preference to ethnic prejudice, and (c) how future interventions can both decrease prejudice and promote outgroup prosocial behaviors, a key antecedent of peacebuilding, among children growing up in post-conflict settings.