2026 Founding Generation Summer Fellowship Faculty Hosts

Please feel free to reach out to the host faculty members to discuss their project. Note the deadline for submissions is **November 25, 2025.**

Sarah Berger
Affiliation: College of Staten Island, City University of New York
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Project: What drives the link between locomotor skill onset (e.g., crawling, walking) and sleep disruption in infancy? Students will code video of infants in their cribs at night to document movements, posture, and self-directed touch for several nights around skill onset. Understanding the nature of the activity associated with skill-onset-related night wakings is critical because it speaks to the causal mechanism(s) underlying the relationship between sleep disruptions and motor skill onsets during the first year of life.

Patricia Blasco
Affiliation: Institute on Development & Disability, Department of Pediatrics, Oregon Health & Science University
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Project: There are several opportunities. The first is to work with research assistants on the Healthy Brain and Child Development Project around the use of infant and toddler assessments. In January, if funded, we will have a research project on play assessment of executive function for infants and toddlers in authentic environments. The summer intern would help with that project as well. Last summers the intern helped with both the Bayley 4 practice testings, behavior team meetings, and NIH Baby Toolbox practice and training. Last year, we were not funded, however, the intern also participated in the publication of a research article by conducting the literature review.

Caitlin Canfield
Affiliation: NYU Grossman School of Medicine
Email: caitlin.canfield@nyulangone.org

Project: I have several ongoing research projects related to preventive interventions aimed at supporting early relational health and promoting early child development, as well as impacts of neighborhood and policy on young children. These would provide opportunities for a research student to be involved in every stage of the research process from assessment design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Marisa Casillas
Affiliation: University of Chicago
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Project: During summer 2026 our lab will be running projects on biases in early word learning in English and other languages. An intern can expect to take part in corpus- and in-person experiment-based research on word learning in English. More generally, in our lab, we explore how communicative needs impact the ways in which language is learned and used by both children and adults. To that end, we employ experimental and observational methods in multiple sites around the world to analyze the production and comprehension of conversational language.

Moira Dillon
Affiliation: New York University
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Project: The research project focuses on infants' sensitivity to two foundational categories of geometric forms: parallels and perpendiculars. Students will assistant with study design, data collection, and data analysis in looking-time experiments with and without language manipulations. There will also be opportunities to learn about the lab's other projects on social cognition and the relation between language and thought, which use behavioral and computational approaches. The lab is situated in a rich community of developmental and cognitive scientists.

Caitlin Fausey
Affiliation: University of Oregon
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Project: Student will contribute to one ongoing research project in the lab, as befits their interest. Options for summer 2026 include quantifying infant vocalizations, infant object holding, properties of infants' physical home spaces, and infants' activity contexts in audio and/or video recordings of infants' everyday lives at home.

Samuel Forbes
Affiliation: Durham University
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Project: How does night-time sleep and day-time tiredness affect infant language and cognitive development? As a Founding Generation Student you will join the TIRED project, examining how an infant's attentional state shapes their learning experiences. You will have the chance to be trained in and experience infant eye-tracking, fNIRS / HD-DOT and take part in testing and data collection

alongside an active team. Currently the TIRED project components examine sleep and tiredness from a variety of angles, ranging from language development and speech perception to working memory and executive attention, so there are plenty of opportunities to tailor the project to meet your interest.

Roberta Golinkoff
Affiliation: University of Delaware
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Project: There is a need for an early identification system for young children at risk for language delays. As it stands now, our ability to reliably identify signs of language impairment is limited (e.g. McGregor, 2020; Norbury et al., 2016), especially for children between ages 2-3. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgency for assessments that can be conducted remotely, enabling children to complete them from the comfort and safety of their own homes. Families living in rural settings or areas with extreme weather, as well as those without reliable access to transportation or inflexible schedules, can all benefit from a remote format of assessments that can identify potential language problems early in their child's life. Thus, it is important to establish a toolkit of assessments that can be administered virtually. We developed the Quick Interactive Language Screener for Toddlers (QUILS:TOD), which uses language comprehension and a tablet to assess the vocabulary, syntax, and word learning skills of children ages 24-to 36-months-old in a fun, game-like format. We aim to evaluate the reliability of the QUILS between remote (over Zoom) and in-person administration. We are also testing the convergent validity of the QUILS with another frequently used test for 2-year olds, the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (MB-CDI; Fenson et al., 2007). Research assistants would assist with various steps of the research process including recruiting participants, running studies and interacting with families, and potentially assisting with data analysis and write-up of this project.

Samantha Gott
Affiliation: Florida Atlantic University
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Project: Developmental neurophysiology, neurogenetics and neurochemistry, with a primary focus on infant temperament, biobehavioral processes, and neurophysiological development. My work integrates electroencephalography (EEG) coherence metrics, oxytocin, and cortisol measures to examine the interplay between neurological activity, temperament, and epigenetic programming across early development.

Kiley Hamlin
Affiliation: Faculty
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Project: The ability to distinguish between positive and negative actions and individuals is essential for navigating our social environment. At the Centre for Infant Cognition (CIC), our research focuses on the origins of infants' social and moral evaluative processes, such as our tendency to judge individuals actions as good or bad. Using electroencephalography (EEG), this line of research

investigates the neural mechanisms underlying infantsâ€™ understanding of prosocial and antisocial events and characters. Specifically, we examine neural signatures associated with social processing (e.g., P400 and N290 ERP components) and compare them with those linked to lower-level attentional processing (e.g., Nc ERP component). These distinct neural signatures enable us to determine whether infants' evaluations of sociomoral interactions are driven by social understanding or instead by low-level perceptual processes, offering valuable insight into the nature of infants' sociomoral evaluations. Additionally, in follow-up visits, we assess prosocial behavior in toddlers for whom we have infant EEG data. This longitudinal approach enables us to explore whether infants' neural processing of sociomoral events predicts emerging prosociality, such as helping, sharing, and affective perspective-taking. The student joining our team will participate in these projects and future EEG-based studies exploring related concepts. Their role will include: Assisting with the design and implementation of study protocols. Setting up and maintaining experimental equipment (e.g., EEG technologies). Recruiting and scheduling participants using a complex research database. Administering studies and assessments with infants and toddlers. Completing the consenting process with participating families. Entering, validating, and analyzing data using tools such as R, Matlab, and NetStation Acquisition. Assisting with OSF pre-registration documents and other aspects of project management. The student will work closely with the Principal Investigator, graduate students, research managers, and senior research assistants, contributing to a collaborative and dynamic research environment. Regular team meetings will provide opportunities for feedback, skill development, and active engagement in the research process. This role will offer the student invaluable hands-on experience in developmental research, advanced neuroscience techniques, and collaborative teamwork, fostering both academic and professional growth. No prior knowledge and experience with EEG equipment or neuroscience techniques is required for this position. Comprehensive training and supervision to use and maintain EEG equipment will be provided to ensure students learn the necessary skills during their commitment. Any experience using R, Python, or MATLAB or a willingness to learn is preferred, but not necessary.

Alexandra Hendry
Affiliation: University of Oxford & University of Birmingham
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Project: Executive function difficulties are linked to poor mental and physical health, poorer academic outcomes, and lower quality of life, across a range of populations (Diamond, 2013; Snyder, Miyake and Hankin, 2015; Wallace et al., 2016). In this project students will work with video and performance score data collected from 200 toddlers to consider how response styles interact with cognitive and regulatory skills to shape behaviour. By reconceptualising how to measure executive functions in toddlerhood we may be able to better chart the development of these important skills. Research students will be trained on behavioural coding, and basic statistical analysis, and will have the opportunity to join lab meetings across two universities (University of Oxford and University of Birmingham).

Melissa Horger
Affiliation: University of Massachusetts Amherst
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Project: The student will join our R01 grant investigating the impact of daytime naps on declarative memory consolidation in 9-15 month old infants. We measure sleep using polysomnography and quantify memory with the deferred imitation task. Students would be involved with data collection and take ownership of one piece of data specifically (e.g., behavioral coding, EEG scoring, survey management, etc.)

Eon-Suk Ko
Affiliation: Chosun University
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Project: Our lab investigates how infants learn language and communicate through everyday social interaction. Current projects involve analyzing long-form audio and video recordings of caregiver-infant interaction and eye-tracking data of infants' gaze. Fellows may help code naturalistic recordings, annotate behaviors, or analyze gaze patterns using tools such as ELAN, R, or Python. You'll gain hands-on experience with real developmental data and work closely with an international research team that values curiosity, rigor, and cross-cultural insight. You're welcome to work in person in Gwangju, Korea, or remotely.

Ye Li
Affiliation: Zhejiang Normal University
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Project: The prospective mentee will participate in a research study assessing home-based parent-child object play across two cultures " the American culture (families based in the United States) and the Chinese culture (families based in mainland China). Recently, video-recordings, majorly based on Western cultures, faithfully reveal young children's home environment - it provides valuable insights into their naturalistic learning opportunities (whom they interact with, how they play with objects, and where they initiate these play activities). Despite these recent advancements, systematic evaluation on young childrenâ€™s home environments remains largely understudied in other cultures that are distinctive from Western cultures in parenting practices, such as Chinese culture. Assessing these cultural differences and similarities in a child's everyday home environment thus provides key answers to what constitutes learning, and how individual experiences shape learning. In this study, we video-record parent-child interactions with familiar and unfamiliar objects from dyads home and in dyads home in the United States and mainland China. Children aged between two and four years and their parents participate in the study. The first aim of the study is to assess how object familiarity (novel versus familiar) shape parent-child behaviors and temporal coordination of their behaviors universally across cultures. The second aim of the study is to assess how culture modulates parent-child behaviors and temporal coordination during object play. As the principal investigator of the project, and an assistant professor in Zhejiang Normal University (Jinhua, China), I will guarantee that the prospective mentee will get extensive training on multiple stages of this project, including data collection, data coding, data analysis, protocol writing, and potentially manuscript writing across the 8-week period all stages will be conducted online. The summer program will enrich varying skills of the prospective mentee, including using Datavyu software to code moment-to-moment parent-child videos, applying and designing R scripts to effectively clean and analyze datasets, and improving writing skills. In addition, to improve the quality of the mentee's experiences in the lab, the mentee will meet with

me one-on-one once per week, attend lab meetings held by the lab regularly, and meet with other lab members for social support on demand. All these skills and experiences will be beneficial for the mentee's career development and the readiness for further studies if applicable.

Julie Markant
Affiliation: Tulane University
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Project: The Learning and Brain Development Lab at Tulane University (http://lbdlab.tulane.edu/), directed by Dr. Julie Markant, studies developing attention skills and their role in early learning. The ICIS Founding Generation Fellow will contribute to an ongoing study investigating the development of infants' attention to caregiver versus stranger faces. The current project uses a within-subjects design to determine how attention biases develop over the first year, exploring how these biases may be predicted by other factors such as infant-caregiver attachment, broader social contexts, and endogenous attention control. The Founding Generation Fellow will contribute to multiple facets of this project, including participant recruitment, assisting with data collection, and processing data. Through these activities, the Fellow will 1) engage with our New Orleans community partners to attend recruitment events and learn best practices in developmental/infant recruitment, 2) learn fundamentals of infant eye tracking, behavioral, and physiological data collection and best practices in data management, and 3) develop proficiency with data processing tools including Datavyu, R, Excel, Python, and MATLAB. The Fellow will also attend our lab meetings, where they will be able to develop oral presentation skills, read and discuss empirical papers, learn about other ongoing projects in the lab, and engage in professional development discussions (e.g., applying to graduate school). As desired, the Fellow will also be able to interface with the Tulane Undergraduate Research in Neuroscience (TURN) summer program, which holds weekly research seminars, professional development programs, and social activities for select Tulane undergraduate neuroscience majors who are conducting research over the summer. Dr. Markant is also committed to continue mentoring the Fellow after their summer experience. This will include supporting their ability to present at the Fellows virtual symposium in Fall 2026 and providing ongoing career mentorship.

Nicole Martin
Affiliation: Kennesaw State University
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Project: This project is examining parental book-reading, infantsâ€™ familiarity with repeated stories, and the rhythm parents create when they read to their infants. We will be examining infant behavioral response to familiar stories read by their mothers. This will be compared to hearing a stranger reading these books in the same rhythm and with the same inflection that they have heard their mothers use when reading. Further, we will be examining infant response when the familiar story is altered by the mother and by the unfamiliar adult. How do infants respond when the familiar becomes the unfamiliar? Behavioral measures and eye-tracking will be evaluated.

Daniel Messinger
Affiliation: University of Miami
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Project: Understanding how toddlers develop in complex real-world situations--like preschool! The project pairs spatial tracking and speech recognition to investigate how interaction with peers and with teachers facilitates the language and social development of children in preschool inclusion classrooms containing children with autism spectrum disorder, hearing impairments, children with other disabilities and delays, and children without disabilities and delays. Students will participate in activities such as transcribing child-specific audio recordings.

Lynn Perry
Affiliation: University of Miami
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Project: The fellow will work on a project that pairs spatial tracking and speech recognition in classroom contexts to investigate how infants' interaction with peers and teachers facilitates their language and social development. Participants include infants with and without developmental disabilities and delays including autism spectrum disorder, hearing loss, and language delays. The fellow will assist in administration of play-based behavioral assessments, audio processing of first-person audio from infant-worn recorders, coding and transcription of audio recordings, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination.

Rebecca Powell
Affiliation: Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
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Project: Pfizer bivalent RSVpreF vaccine was licensed in 2023 for prevention of RSV-associated lower respiratory tract disease (LRTD) and severe LRTD in infants 0-6 months of age via maternal immunization. Maternal immunization protects infants via transplacentally-transferred antibodies; additional benefits may be conferred via human milk-feeding, however milk samples were not collected during clinical trials. This post-licensure, observational, longitudinal study is characterizing RSVpreF vaccine-induced antibodies in milk of lactating individuals who did/did not receive RSVpreF during pregnancy. The student will participate in our planned analysis examining milk antibody titers and function as well as cellular assays analyzing the RSV-killing capacity of various immune cells.

Carolyn Quam
Affiliation: Portland State University
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Project: My team is developing a corpus of Mandarin (Chinese) infant-directed speech recordings. A student with experience in phonetic analyses and/or proficiency in Mandarin would be a good fit for this project. Students interested in word learning and speech-sound processing in

developmental language disorder should also reach out, as I have prior data and am pursuing funding on this topic.

Maheen Siddiqui
Affiliation: Birkbeck, University of London
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Project: This internship offers a unique opportunity to contribute to the BabyMIND study, an innovative project investigating how babies' brains use energy during early social and sensory development. The study uses a new cutting-edge imaging method called broadband near-infrared spectroscopy (broadband NIRS), which can measure changes in both brain oxygenation and the oxidation state of cytochrome-c-oxidase—a key marker of cellular energy metabolism.

The BabyMIND study aims to understand how differences in brain energy use might shape how infants respond to and learn from the world around them. This internship will provide hands-on research experience in data collection, experimental design, and basic data processing, offering valuable insight into developmental cognitive neuroscience and neuroimaging.

The student will:
1. Assist in new data collection using broadband NIRS with infants.
2. Gain an understanding of the principles behind optical brain imaging and how broadband NIRS measures metabolic activity.
3. Contribute to data organization and basic preprocessing (with guidance).
4. Conduct exploratory analyses (e.g., visualizing signal quality).

The student will receive:
• Training in infant testing, including participant interaction and task presentation.
• Step-by-step guidance on setting up and operating the broadband NIRS system.
• Introduction to NIRS data preprocessing and visualization using MATLAB or Python scripts (no prior experience required).
• Mentorship from the BabyMIND research team, including opportunities to attend lab meetings and discuss the broader goals of the project.
Regular supervision meetings (weekly or more frequently during data collection) will ensure progress and provide continuous feedback and support.

By the end of the internship, the student will have:
• Hands-on experience in developmental neuroscience data collection.
• A foundational understanding of how broadband NIRS captures brain metabolism.
• Experience with organizing and exploring real neuroimaging data.
• A short presentation or written report summarizing their contributions and key observations.

Sonya Troller-Renfree
Affiliation: Teachers College, Columbia University
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Project: Students in the Stroller Lab at Teachers College, Columbia University, will contribute to research examining how early family and environmental contexts shape children's neurocognitive and socioemotional development. The summer project will focus on both hands-on data

collection, cleaning, and anaylsis as a part of Dr. Troller-Renfree's NIH-funded study. Students will assist in testing families with young children, including behavioral and EEG sessions, and will receive training in EEG preprocessing, power spectral analysis, questionnaire coding, stress physiology, and data visualization using R and MATLAB. They will participate in weekly one-on-one mentorship meetings and lab discussions on interpreting findings and their work within the broader context of early learning and development. By the end of the internship, students will have gained direct, hands-on experience with developmental neuroscience methods and theory and complete a data analysis project of their own using data collected during the summer.

Ran Wei
Affiliation: Peking University
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Project: I am an Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Education, Peking University. My interdisciplinary, cross-cultural research agenda centers on understanding how contextual factors shape childrens language and executive functioning (EF) development. Situated at the crossroad of developmental psychology, psycholinguistics, cognitive neuroscience, and early childhood education, my research interests gravitate around three core themes. First, my research investigates how the family environment, especially caregivers communicative input and beliefs, shapes early language acquisition, EF, and the neural architecture supporting these foundational capacities. Second, my research examines how early language and EF development unfolds across diverse societies, cultures, and languages. Third, my ongoing studies aim to create and evaluate culturally authentic interventions aimed at empowering parents from diverse ethnocultural and socio-economic backgrounds. I am looking forward to working with students in China or abroad. Students are encouraged to develop their own project pertaining to the family environment and early development, leveraging my lab's unique resources and datasets to develop new skills and foster their academic and professional growth. Collaboration opportunities with other scholars at Peking University and beyond are available.

Annie Wertz
Affiliation: University of California, Santa Barbara
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Project: The student will participate in ongoing research projects investigating how infants learn about the natural world from other people, with a focus on plants. Specific projects include reaching studies investigating infants avoidance of, and preference for, different plants and plant parts; visual attention studies of food learning in infancy; and projects investigating cultural learning of plant properties in infants and young children.