Faculty Research Projects for Student Involvement: 2016 - 2017

Marina U. Bers, Ph.D.

The DevTech Research Group led by Prof. Marina Umaschi Bers has several exciting opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students during the upcoming 2014-2015 academic year. DevTech is a research group devoted to designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating technologies for early childhood education. We are currently working on two National Science Foundation funded projects: Scratch Jr. (ase.tufts.edu/DevTech/ScratchJr/ScratchJrHome.asp) and Ready for Robotics (http://ase.tufts.edu/DevTech/ReadyForRobotics/readyforrobotics.asp)

Both projects will provide opportunities for students to gain experience working with kids and teachers in PreK to 2 classroom settings, developing curricula, and working with data in a lab setting. Students will be exposed to all aspects of doing applied research with the ScratchJr app and the KIWI robot. Opportunities are available for volunteer placement, course credit, and paid positions (work-study not required). No previous technology experience is necessary.

If you are interested, please send your resume and a paragraph telling us why you’re interested to: marina.bers@tufts.edu

Cynthia Ballenger

My work is in the area of classroom discourse and teacher research. Teacher research in classroom discourse seeks to understand the role of talk, in its various formats, in teaching and learning. We focus our investigations as well on talk as a part of curriculum, as an intentional piece of the decisions teachers make as they seek to support thinking.

This research takes place in the classroom. Participants may be teaching themselves and wish to document talk in their classrooms and to make and explore decisions based on what they find in this documentation; or participants may be assistants and colleagues with teachers.

The major questions we ask are:

1. What is this child or that child thinking? In this question we often focuses on what we call “puzzling children”, children whose ideas or approach is hard to recognize as academically powerful or serious, children, as we say, that we can learn from.
2. What is the range of ways in which children talk and act their ideas out?
3. How do various formats for talk, small group, known answer questions, raising hands, etc., support children in thinking and sharing their ideas?
4. How are we addressing these various ideas and approaches as we respond with curriculum?
5. Who is our approach not working for, and what does this child have to offer us in the way of other ideas and other approaches.

Using transcripts and videotape as well as ethnographic field notes, teacher researchers seek to uncover children’s ideas and then to consider and to implement curricular decisions in response? This research is an iterative process of research – response – more research – new response.

Kathleen A. Camara, Ph.D.

The YouthBEAT Consortium for Research in Arts and Youth Development directed by Dr. Camara focuses on research and evaluation designed to explore the role of the arts in child and youth development. Based on the premise that participation in the arts is an essential part of child and youth development, YouthBEAT Consortium projects focus on questions related to the positive development of children and youth through their participation in the arts. Opportunities are available for research assistants to participate in data collection, to engage in qualitative and quantitative data analyses, to prepare reports for conference presentations and publications, and to engage in independent analyses that may lead to theses, capstone papers or dissertations. If interested in working on any of the projects described below for course credit or as a paid hourly research assistant, please contact Dr. Camara at kathleen.camara@tufts.edu.

Project 1: YouthBEAT Research and Evaluation on Music and Youth Development: Resiliency, Identity, Character, Leadership, and Achievement of Youth in Underserved Communities. YouthBEAT is a longitudinal mixed-method project, funded by the Boston Foundation, Fidelity Corporation, and donors to Berklee College of Music. Data for the project have been gathered from over 700 youths, and their families and teachers from underserved communities in Boston and from national network sites across the U.S. who are participating in an outreach program focused on contemporary music for youth ages 9-19. The YouthBEAT research project, now in its 8th year of operation, examines youth perceptions of the role music plays in their lives; explores neighborhood and family contexts for learning; and analyzes the effects of the program in promoting resilience and achievement among urban youth from underserved communities. We are also looking at “best practices” in teaching and are examining the development of specific musical skills and behaviors, such as improvisation, practice and preparation, and how these relate to other academic areas of achievement. Research assistants are involved in data analyses of interviews with youths, teachers and musician and of observational data on youth music ensembles, theory, and musicianship classes; quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and participation in on-site collection of data from participants in Boston and throughout the U.S. YouthBEAT research assistants participate in a weekly seminar that provides extensive training in research and program evaluation methods and data analysis. Some knowledge of music is helpful, but not required for all research positions. Specific databases and topical areas for analysis
include: The Role of Music Participation in Enhancing Resiliency Among Youths--contextual factors influencing youth development related to individual, family, neighborhood and community contexts, including family change and instability, parental loss, unsafe neighborhoods, inadequate social and educational services; Musical, Racial and Ethnic Identity--racial and ethnic identity and identification with and participation in music that reflects the cultural heritage of youths and their families; Youths’ Perceived Competence and Attributions for Successful and Non-Successful Learning in Music, Mathematics, Reading and Sports--youth perceived competence and attributions relating to achievement in four areas of learning and other measures of academic achievement in school, standardized testing, and music performance; Development of Character, Leadership and Community among Youth in Contemporary Music Ensembles--videotapes of participation by youths in 52 youth music ensembles; Promising Practices in the Teaching of Contemporary Music to Youths in Underserved Communities--a qualitative and quantitative analysis of over 2000 hours of videotaped recordings of teachers working with 75 youth ensembles and over 300 interviews with teachers from national sites to identify teaching strategies and approaches that are used to develop improvisational artistry in music and expressiveness in communication; and Music, Mindfulness and Inner Awakening--a qualitative analysis of how participation in collective music-making is related to the development of mind, purpose and spirituality.

PROJECT 2: National City Music Network Site Data Collection. The National Case Study Research and Evaluation of Out-of-School Programs Designed to Foster Child and Youth Development Through Music and Other Arts, funded by the Music Empowers Foundation, is in its 5th year of operation and is designed to evaluate program sites across the U.S. that provide after-school music education and which are part of the Berklee City Music National Network. Research teams of trained research assistants travel to each of 10-12 sites including Chicago, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, Phoenix, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Richmond, CA, and Anaheim, CA to gather data for case study reports for each of the programs. Analyses of the case studies will yield data for the development of generic models of arts/child and youth development programs in a variety of settings. Knowledge of music is required for some, but not all research assistants on the project.

PROJECT 3: Music Participation and the Development of Children on the Autism Spectrum This research and program evaluation project is being planned in collaboration with the Boston Conservatory of Music. The study will examine the impact of a music-learning program on the social, communication and behavioral challenges faced by children and youth who are on the autism spectrum. Research assistants are needed to assist with the development of research instruments, and conduct of observations of Saturday program classes and interviews with teachers and students. Students with prior experience in working or studying children and youth on the autism spectrum will be selected to work on this project. Some knowledge of music is helpful, but not required.

Julie Dobrow, Ph.D.

Project #1: Children’s Television Project. (CTV) The CTV project is an on-going investigation of the images of race, ethnicity, age, gender and sociolinguistic dimensions
of children’s animated programming. In the first two phases of the project our research team watched and coded several episodes of 36 cartoons. Our sample included the top twenty (most viewed) animated shows. Given that the children's media landscape is vastly different than when we began the project, in the third phase of our research, we are investigating a new selection of media content. The second phase of the project involves interviews with writers, directors, casting directors and actors to find out why they make choices even today that perpetuate stereotypes of gender, race, ethnicity and age. We're also starting to investigate what cues - linguistic or visual? - children use to determine a cartoon character’s status as hero or villain. We are looking for interested and motivated graduate and undergraduate students to work as researchers on this project. Researchers will engage in many aspects of the project including (1) research design, (2) coding of content, (3) piloting of research protocols, (4) administration of protocols to children in our sample, (5) production of video tapes, or other research-related work and (6) library research. Researchers will meet biweekly (every other week) for 90 minutes for training and discussion. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Prof. Gidney (ext. 7-2213 / Calvin.Gidney@tufts.edu) or Prof. Dobrow (ext. 7-4744/ Julie.Dobrow@tufts.edu).

Project #2: I write a blog on children and media issues for The Huffington Post. I'm always looking for new topics. Graduate or undergraduate students interested in issues of children and media could assist in background research on current topics ranging from Disney films to tv shows to issues of social media use by children.

M. Ann Easterbrooks, Ph.D.

The Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research (TIER) group is comprised of a team of independent researchers from the departments of Child Study and Human Development and Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University. TIER is committed to conducting high-quality, collaborative evaluation research that contributes to expanding usable knowledge in fields such as applied developmental science, policy science, and urban planning, and to improving policies and programs for children, families, and communities. Along with Francine Jacobs, Ed.D., and Jayanthi Mistry, Ph.D., I am one of the founders and Principle Investigators at TIER.

TIER has many applied research and evaluation projects under its umbrella. They include the Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation-2 Early Childhood project (MHFE2-EC) directed by Professor Ann Easterbrooks, (Dr. Jana Chaudhuri, Project Director), which has opportunities for students to become involved in the process of conducting applied research and evaluation. There are numerous opportunities for students on this project, which focuses on the evaluation of a statewide family support program that aims to reduce rates of child abuse and neglect, and promote optimal child development and family well-being among young families (for more information view website ase.tufts.edu/tier).

The wider evaluation is a randomized control trial (RCT) of families receiving/not receiving home visiting and additional services through Healthy Families Massachusetts. The program evaluation has several parts, including information gathered from records of
service providers, state agencies (e.g., Dept. of Children and Families, Dept. of Public Health, Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Dept. of Transitional Assistance) and from interviews and observations with mothers and their young children in their homes over the course of two years. MHFE2-EC is a longitudinal followup of these families when children are preschool and kindergarten age. We are collecting additional data from maternal interviews in 2016-2017.

Project foci include:

a) resilience in the context of adversity (e.g., trauma, intimate partner violence, intergenerational history of maltreatment);

b) long-term effects of early home visiting on maternal life course (e.g., educational attainment, depression, utilization of public services) and children’s development (e.g., school readiness, emotion regulation), and maternal and child health;

c) children’s executive functioning (cognitive flexibility, impulse control, memory) related to developmental context (e.g., child maltreatment, family instability);

d) attachment styles of mothers and children, and mother-child interaction.

Student opportunities: conduct phone interviews of participant mothers; assist in data reduction and data analysis; assist in reviews of the literature and report writing for funders; manuscript preparation. Students may have the opportunity to serve as co-authors of publications.

Opportunities for student work include: course credit (CD independent study, directed research) or volunteer; students may be interested in developing a subproject for a thesis or course paper. There may be limited paid opportunities, particularly if students qualify for Work Study funds.

David Henry Feldman, Ph.D.

1. I will be continuing to work on a project on the origins and development of knowledge as it is found in domains of expertise. The goal of the project is to conceptualize knowledge domains as developmental entities and build “signatures” for each, as well as to identify common patterns of development across domains. Opportunities for independent research, thesis or volunteer projects are available.

2. I continue to do research and theory on the development of expertise, creativity, and exceptional talent, including on child prodigies. These areas have proven to be good choices for theses and dissertation research.

Sasha A. Fleary, Ph.D.

The Child Health Equity Research Lab is dedicated to research and service focused on (1) improving the playing field in children’s health through empowering parents and children to engage in healthful behaviors; (2) encouraging adolescents to be masters of their health
through interventions, programming, and outreach, to reduce health risk behaviors and facilitate preventive health behaviors; and (3) supporting community health through community based participatory research, community-driven programming, and community outreach and advocacy. The Child Health Equity Research Lab has several exciting opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students during the upcoming 2015-2016 academic year. Students interested in working on the projects described below for course credit or as a volunteer may contact Dr. Fleary at sasha.fleary@tufts.edu.

**Project #1: Parent Health Literacy and Young Children’s Preventive Health**  
**Project Goals:** To determine if a customized, community-based intervention can improve caregiver health literacy and preventive health behaviors for caregivers and their children in an urban setting. In a community-based approach, caregivers and community stakeholders provide input on their needs, barriers, and protective factors for health literacy and preventive health behaviors, which is used to create an intervention responsive to the specific needs of the community with strong consideration of their social determinants of health.  
**Student Opportunities:** Assist with measure development, intervention development, pilot testing, data collection and analysis (qualitative and quantitative), and literature reviews; prepare reports for conference presentations and publications.

**Project #2: Health Literacy and Cancer-Related Health Behaviors Among Adolescents**  
**Project Goals:** (1) To explore the role of general health literacy on adolescents’ thought processes and decision-making regarding obesogenic behaviors in a school setting; (2) To determine if intervening on health literacy improves adolescents’ obesogenic behaviors.  
**Student Opportunities:** Assist with measure development, intervention development, pilot testing, data collection and analysis (qualitative and quantitative), and literature reviews; prepare reports for conference presentations and publications.

**Project #3: Critical Health Literacy in Adolescents**  
**Project Goals:** (1) To improve critical health literacy in adolescents.  
**Student Opportunities:** Assist with pilot testing intervention, data collection and analysis (qualitative and quantitative), and literature reviews; prepare reports for conference presentations and publications.

**Project #4: Family and Youth Resilience in Homelessness**  
**Project Goals:** (1) To conduct a program evaluation on a community organization that provides transitional housing for homeless families in Dorchester [to identify aspects of the organizational model, processes, and programming that are most responsible for the organization’s success, as well as aspects that should be improved, from the perspectives of the staff and families they serve]; (2) To identify major contributors to family and youth resiliency during and after homelessness.  
**Student Opportunities:** Assist with literature reviews and data collection and analysis (qualitative and quantitative); prepare reports for conference presentations and publications.
Calvin L. Gidney, Ph.D.

Children’s Television Project. (CTV) The CTV project is an on-going investigation of the images of race, ethnicity, age, gender and sociolinguistic dimensions of children’s animated programming. In the first two phases of the project our research team watched and coded several episodes of 36 cartoons. Our sample included well-known shows such as Arthur and The Simpsons as well as more obscure offerings such as Samurai Pizza Cats or C. Bear and Jamal. Given that the children's media landscape is vastly different than when we began the project, in the third phase of our research, we are investigating a new selection of media content. We’re also starting to investigate what cues - linguistic or visual ? - children use to determine a cartoon character’s status as hero or villain. We are looking for interested and motivated graduate or undergraduate students to work as researchers on this project. Researchers will engage in many aspects of the project including (1) research design, (2) coding of content, (3) piloting of research protocols, (4) administration of protocols to children in our sample, (5) production of video tapes, or other research-related work and (6) library research. Researchers will meet biweekly (every other week) for 90 minutes for training and discussion. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Prof. Gidney (ext. 7-2213 / Calvin.Gidney@tufts.edu) or Prof. Dobrow ( ext. 7-4744/ Julie.Dobrow@tufts.edu).

Francine Jacobs, Ed.D.

I am in the midst of two multi-year evaluation projects: The Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation (MHFE) and the Touchpoints Early Childhood Care and Education Evaluation (ECCE). Healthy Families Massachusetts is a statewide teen parenting program; MHFE (for which Professors Ann Easterbrooks and Jayanthi Mistry are co-investigators) has been in operation since 1998. We are now in its final stages, conducting secondary analyses of data we collected over the period of the study.

The ECCE program trains early childhood professionals in an approach to establishing partnerships with parents of young children that builds on the clinical work of pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton. This evaluation began in April, 2005, and will be gathering pre-test data in infant and toddler child care centers during the fall, 2005. Professor Ann Easterbrooks is also the co-Principal Investigator of this study.

Sara K. Johnson, Ph. D.

Connecting Adolescents’ Beliefs and Behaviors: Intentional Self Regulation and the Promotion of Character Development, funded by the Templeton Religion Trust

The “CABB” study is conducted in partnership with Jacqueline V. Lerner (Professor of Applied Developmental and Educational Psychology at Boston College) and Richard M. Lerner (Professor of Child Study and Human Development at Tufts). The purpose of the study is to examine the role that moral identity, character role models, and intentional self-regulation skills play in helping adolescents act in ways that are consistent with their values and come to contribute positively to themselves, their families, and their communities. This project is a four-wave, cohort-sequential, mixed methods study with
data from students, parents, and teachers or other school staff. Pilot data were collected in Spring 2015, the first wave of data collection took place in Winter 2015-2016, and the second wave in early Summer 2016. The fourth and final wave of quantitative data will be collected in Fall and Winter 2016. In Summer and Fall 2016, we will be interviewing a subgroup of the participants to learn about their perspectives regarding the roles of moral identity, self-regulation skills, and character role models in their lives. The key goal of the study is to provide new research findings about the development of moral behavior in adolescence. As such, this project will provide the evidence base for interventions that may substantially narrow the gap between espoused positive character and enacted virtuous behavior. Interested students should contact Dr. Johnson at s.johnson@tufts.edu.

Richard M. Lerner, Ph.D.

The Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) engages in research framed by relational developmental systems models to describe, explain, and optimize the course to healthy, positive development among diverse children, adolescents, young adults, families, and communities. Richard M. Lerner, Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science, is the Director of the Institute. Heidi Johnson is the Managing Director of the Institute. The Institute is the home of several research, training, and outreach projects that seek to use theory-predicated developmental research to promote character development and thriving among youth.

Project #1: Duty, Honor, Country: A Study of the Development of Leaders of Character at the United States Military Academy, funded by the Templeton Religion Trust

In this five-year study (2015-2020), funded by the John Templeton Foundation, we are examining the character and leadership development of cadets at the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point across their four-year training program. We hope to better understand which experiences at USMA are most salient for promoting character and leadership. In turn, we are also examining whether attributes of character and leadership predict performance outcomes among current USMA cadets, as well as in their roles as U.S. Army officers. We will use this information to help USMA maximize its efforts to promote character and leadership, as well as to inform other service academies, universities, and other institutions about best practices in developing leaders of character.

Project #2: The Arthur Interactive Media (AIM) Buddy Project, funded by the John Templeton Foundation

Following a one-year planning grant, the John Templeton Foundation continued to support, in a three-year grant, our productive collaboration on the Arthur Interactive Media (AIM) Buddy Project with the WGBH Educational Foundation in Boston. In the

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1 © 2015 WGBH Educational Foundation. All rights reserved. “Arthur” & the other Marc Brown ARTHUR characters and underlying materials (including artwork) TM and © Marc Brown. The Arthur Interactive Media Buddy Project was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.
2015-2016 school year, we implemented and evaluated a social, emotional, and character development program involving both digital interactive media and cross-age peer mentoring. The AIM program encouraged meaningful connections and reflective conversations between cross-age peers, or buddies (e.g., 1st and 4th graders, 2nd and 5th graders), as they engaged with five digital interactive features (i.e., comics and games) adapted from *Arthur* episodes and characters. To test whether children’s positive outcomes are a function of the program content, we have been using both process and impact evaluation tools as part of our mixed-method research design. The sample included 91 classrooms and over 1100 children within nine elementary schools in Massachusetts, and data collection will continue into the third year of the grant cycle. The primary goal of this applied research study is to develop children’s character virtues, and more broadly, to explore the role of joint media engagement on character education.

**Project #3: Connecting Adolescents’ Beliefs and Behaviors: Intentional Self Regulation and the Promotion of Character Development, funded by the Templeton Religion Trust**

The “CABB” study is conducted in partnership with Jacqueline V. Lerner (Professor of Applied Developmental and Educational Psychology at Boston College) and Sara K. Johnson (Assistant Professor of Child Study and Human Development at Tufts). The purpose of the study is to examine the role that moral identity, character role models, and intentional self-regulation skills play in helping adolescents act in ways that are consistent with their values and come to contribute positively to themselves, their families, and their communities. This project is a four-wave, cohort-sequential, mixed methods study with data from students, parents, and teachers or other school staff. Pilot data were collected in Spring 2015, the first wave of data collection took place in Winter 2015-2016, and the second wave occurred in early Summer 2016. The fourth and final wave of quantitative data will be collected in Fall and Winter 2016. In Summer and Fall 2016, we will be interviewing a subgroup of the participants to learn about their perspectives regarding the roles of moral identity, self-regulation skills, and character role models in their lives. The key goal of the study is to provide new research findings about the development of moral behavior in adolescence. As such, this project will provide the evidence base for interventions that may substantially narrow the gap between espoused positive character and enacted virtuous behavior. Interested students should contact Dr. Sara Johnson at s.johnson@tufts.edu.

**Project #4: Evaluating the Positive Coaching Alliance Model: Developing Competitors of Character, funded by the John Templeton Foundation**

We are continuing two projects in partnership with the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), a national non-profit focused on character development through youth sport. The first project, funded by JTF, evaluates the model of coaching on developing youth competitors of character. This study focuses largely on the character development of high school athletes. This is a three-year project entering the third and final year in Fall of 2017. We will continue to collect quantitative data from surveys of the same athletes.
throughout the year, as well as prepare preliminary findings for dissemination through academic- and practitioner-focused publications and conference presentations.

**Project #5: Improving Adult Practice in Character Development to Transform the Culture of Youth Sports, funded by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation**

The second PCA project, funded by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, focuses on coaches' behaviors in youth sport. Through collaboration with PCA, we are conducting a one-year, short-term, mixed-methods longitudinal study to evaluate the impact of PCA’s training programs on the performance of Little League baseball coaches. From December 2015 to December 2016, we will use self-report survey measures, written open-ended responses, observational assessments, audio recordings, and semi-structured interviews to collect data from participating coaches before and after they attend a PCA workshop. We will use this information to help PCA maximize its efforts to promote character development among athletes, and to inform other youth sport programs about developing athletes of character through positive and effective coaching.

**Project #6: Girl Scouts of the USA: Measure Development and Evaluation**

We completed our work with Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) in June 2016. This collaboration involved the development of new survey measures assessing Girl Scout programming, and a multi-site data collection with girls ranging in age from 6 to 18 years. Entering the Summer 2016, the Girl Scouts Research Institute and IARYD are discussing grant opportunities to fund a longitudinal study evaluating Girl Scout programming.

**Project #7: Developing Responsible and Fulfilled Christian Adults: Towards a Multi-National Longitudinal Study of the Compassion International Model of Promoting Positive Youth Development among Children Living in Poverty, funded by Compassion International**

Across the world there are more than one billion children living in persistent and pervasive poverty, with about 400 million living in extreme poverty. Such marginalization creates an often self-fulfilling trap of hopelessness about their chances to thrive or grow into healthy, fulfilled, and responsible adults. Adding to poverty’s cruel attack on generation after generation of human lives, this waste of human capital has pronounced and burgeoning, dire effects on geopolitics, the world’s economic system, and global peace. The Compassion International (CI) response to this situation is predicated on a holistic approach that integratively and uniquely capitalizes on: 1. A strengths-based approach to youth development reflected in the positive youth development (PYD) model and 2. the documented importance of sustained religious faith as a unique and fundamental asset in the lives of all people and, perhaps especially, youth from the poorest ecological settings. CI’s integrative model offers over 1.7 million of the world’s poorest children a developmentally and context-sensitive life journey marked by personal fulfillment (health, well-being, faith, and spiritual richness) and responsibility (to self, family, and civil society, and God). This project will evaluate the CI model in regard to its effectiveness in developing among the world’s poorest youth responsible and
fulfilled adults. The project involves a collaboration involving IARYD, CI, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Boston College. We will study the longitudinal development of youth involved in CI’s programs in three nations: one in Central or South America, one in Africa, and one in Asia. In each nation we will compare the development of CI program participants to youth who are not participating in CI’s programs to identify what works, with what children, in what context, over what time period.

Tama Leventhal, Ph.D.

**Project #1: Neighborhood Context and Immigrant Youth’s Development.**

Neighborhoods historically have played a central role in the lives of immigrant families who typically settle in communities comprised of other immigrant families with a shared language, values, practices, and social ties. However, efforts to explore neighborhood effects on immigrant children’s development remain largely theoretical. In addition, immigrants now live in diverse destinations throughout the US. The primary goal of this project is to investigate how neighborhood contexts contribute to child development in ways that both promote and inhibit well-being. To address this topic, the project uses data from multiple sources including the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, a multilevel, longitudinal study of children and youth sampled from 80 diverse neighborhoods; the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey, a multilevel, longitudinal study of children and youth sampled from 65 diverse neighborhoods; the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, a nationally representative sample of youth; and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort, a nationally representative sample of children followed from kindergarten through middle school.

Student Opportunities: Assist with data analysis and coding, literature reviews, and manuscript preparation.

**Project #2: Housing and Children’s Healthy Development.**

This goal of this new longitudinal data collection effort is to investigate how housing and the social contexts in which it is embedded together affect the development of children from birth through 10 years of age at the study’s inception. The study design combines a housing voucher experiment and a representative population sample in each of the three study sites. Data collection entails numerous innovative measures of housing and child and family well-being.

Student Opportunities: Assist with measure development, pilot testing, and various aspects of data collection.

**Project #3: Preschool, Family, and Community among Mexican Immigrants.**

The goal of this project is to identify mechanisms that select children from Mexican immigrant families into preschool and then condition how such enrollment supports their subsequent school readiness. The objective is to elucidate avenues of policy action for increasing Mexican immigrant children’s realization of early educational opportunities. This project is guided by evidence of long-term returns to early intervention and recognizes the complex mixture of challenges and opportunities that Mexican immigrant children
present to the U.S. educational system and economy. To meet this objective, this mixed-methods study will use data from three sources: the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), a nationally representative birth cohort; the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, a multilevel, longitudinal study of children from 80 diverse neighborhoods; and data from classroom assessments, parent focus groups, and teacher interviews in ten public preschool programs in Texas.

Student Opportunities: Assist with data analysis and coding, literature reviews, and manuscript preparation.

**Project #4: Residential and Preschool Instability: Links to Young Children’s School Readiness.** The connection between residential mobility and education has received growing policy attention among school-age children. Understanding this connection among young children also has important policy ramifications for addressing long-term social inequalities in health and well-being. The goal of this project is to illuminate the ways in which residential mobility impinges on children’s early care and education (ECE) experiences and their subsequent development. To address this issue, we will use two longitudinal datasets, one nationally representative (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort) and the other a multicity sample of children born to unmarried parents (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study), and supplementing them with annual state/district-specific data on the scope and quality of publicly-funded pre-K programs (National Institute for Early Education Research).

Student Opportunities: Assist with data gathering, linking, and analysis, literature reviews, and manuscript preparation.

Christine M. McWayne, Ph.D.

**Project #1: Partnerships for Early Childhood Curriculum Development: Readiness through Integrative Science and Engineering (RISE), with Co-PIs Jayanthi Mistry (Tufts), Daryl Greenfield (U Miami), Betty Zan (University of Northern Iowa), and Kimberly Brenneman (Heising-Simons Foundation)**

The primary goal of the RISE project is to improve school readiness for dual language learners (DLLs) by strengthening connections between home and school and by fostering positive approaches to learning through hands-on science, technology, and engineering (STE) content. We focus on STE because this knowledge is a marker of later success but is an area of curriculum in which early childhood education falls short. Our target population is low-income, DLL children who tend to be underrepresented in curriculum development studies despite the fact that they are most at-risk for later school adjustment difficulties. A major focus of RISE is on helping Head Start teachers to access families' funds of knowledge, because theory and research suggest that building on children's prior knowledge and fostering home-school connections improves student outcomes. Over the last four years, the project team has developed an integrative STE curriculum that has high potential to access and activate the learning potential in low-income, DLL preschoolers. The development and initial pilot implementation phase of this project was funded by the National Science Foundation and the Brady Education Foundation. We are
currently preparing for a large-scale randomized controlled trial in 90 Head Start classrooms.
Participants are educators, children, and families who are part of ABCD Head Start and Children’s Services (ABCD) Head Start programs in Boston, Massachusetts.

For more information on the RISE project: [http://rise.as.tufts.edu/](http://rise.as.tufts.edu/)

**Opportunities:** For the coming academic year, our efforts will be focused upon major data collection planning and partnership-building in several Head Start sites. Students will have opportunities to volunteer in Head Start classrooms on a weekly basis to interact directly with children, their families, and their teachers. This could be particularly interesting to students who want to get some hands-on experience in a preschool classroom and working with low-income, DLL children. Students will be trained for conducting naturalistic observations of the classroom, neighborhood walks, conducting direct child assessments of language and science knowledge, and interviewing parents and teachers.

**Project #2: Project P.E.A.R.L.S. (Parents Enhancing Academic Readiness through Lessons About Strengths), with Co-PI Jacqueline Mattis (Psychology, U Michigan) and Collaborator Linnie Green Wright (Grad School of Social Work, Boston College)**

This project is in the data analysis and dissemination phases and explores what Black (African American, Black Caribbean, and African immigrant) parents in New York City Head Start programs determined to be supportive parenting. Specifically, we wanted to learn about parents' beliefs, values, goals, and practices with respect to their preschool aged children. We set out to learn from parents through parent conversation groups, individual interviews, and videotaped observations of interactions with their children about their conceptualizations of parenting strengths. The ultimate goal was to develop new tools to assess parenting that are strengths-based and grounded in the beliefs and values instilled in parents' communities. As we learn more about positive parenting across communities, we learn more about how we can influence positive outcomes for children, like school readiness. This project was originally funded by the National Institutes of Health. We are currently seeking funding to continue building on what we have learned.

Opportunities: Undergraduate and graduate students may become involved in literature reviews, coding of observational video-taped interactions, helping to develop heuristics for a new observation coding system informed by both parents’ conceptualizations and their actual behaviors with their children, and quantitative and qualitative data analyses. This year, we will also be looking specifically at the fathers in our sample, and there will be opportunities to be involved with manuscript preparation, presentation at local and national conferences, and grant-writing.

**Project #3: Latino Family Involvement in Young, Low-Income DLL Children’s Education, with Co-PI Gigliana Melzi (Applied Psychology, New York University)**

This collaborative research project examines family engagement practices with Latino families of young children in New York City and Boston Head Start programs. The goal of this study was to identify low-income, Latino parents' conceptualizations of their engagement with children's education, learning, and development and then to link these
culture-contextualized dimensions of family engagement practices to children's school readiness in the areas of language development and social-emotional competency. We are currently in the dissemination phase of this work, as well as developing grant proposals for building on what we have initially learned. This project was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as well as the National Institutes of Health (NICHD).

Opportunities: Because the work is focused on Latino families, if students are Spanish-speaking and bilingual that’s a plus, but not a requisite. The project is in the data analytic and dissemination phase, with opportunities mostly for both qualitative data analysis, as well as opportunities to be involved with manuscript preparation, presentation at local and national conferences, and grant-writing.

Project #4: Integrated Data Systems with the Boston Public Schools, with Nancy Hill (Harvard GSE) and Dan O’Brien (Northeastern)

In collaboration with the Boston Area Research Initiative at Harvard University and the Boston Public Schools, we are conducting a set of analyses to evaluate the equity of Boston Public Schools’ choice based school assignment policy (i.e., Home-Base). The analyses are designed to understand where and how equity or inequities emerge through the preferences that parents have for schools and how they implement these preferences and priorities through their choices of schools. We are looking for students interested in these issues and, especially those who have experience working with, managing, and manipulating spatial data in ArcGIS, particularly geocoding point data, conducting spatial joins, and representing information visually through maps. Experience with other spatial analytic tools is also appreciated.

Opportunities. This work is currently underway, and supported by internal funding from Tufts and Harvard. Students interested in participating in meetings with City Officials and community agencies, learning about policy and data management decisions, and interested in data development and coordination should inquire about opportunities.

Lynn Meltzer, Ph.D. (Affiliated)

SMARTS Leadership and Mentoring Program (ResearchILD).

The SMARTS Leadership and Mentoring Program is a ground breaking peer-to-peer mentorship program designed to build a supportive community of student leaders who want to make a change in their school environment. Students are taught research-based executive function strategies that focus on planning, organizing, prioritizing, shifting approaches, and self-monitoring. Students also participate in metacognitive activities to build awareness of their own individualized learning styles. Through a project called the “Initiative for Positive Action and Change” (IPAC), students develop questions about an important problem they observe in their school, hypothesize about why it exists, develop methods for testing their hypothesis, draw conclusions and suggest solutions based on the results of their investigations. The SMARTS program fosters the development of student mentors and leaders who can succeed in school due to their increased motivation, effort, positive self-concept, effective strategy use, persistence and resilience.
After three waves of data collection we are now focusing on further refining our curriculum and implementation of SMARTS in different school systems. Beginning in the fall, we will be assessing program efficacy using quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. We will also be involved in the design and pilot testing of SMARTS Online, an interactive website comprising training materials, video clips of mentors and mentees, photo galleries, and curriculum materials for use by after-school programs and schools.

We are looking for qualified graduate students who are interested in gaining experience in any of the following: website design, website programming, quantitative and qualitative data collection, data entry and analysis, curriculum design, program evaluation, and manuscript preparation. A minimum of a six month commitment is required.

For more information, please see our websites (www.researchild.org and www.ildlex.org) and/or contact Dr. Lynn Meltzer at lmeltzer@ildlex.org or Mimi Ballard at mballard@researchild.org.

Jayanthi Mistry, Ph.D.

NAVIGATING MULTIPLE CULTURAL WORLDS AND IDENTITIES
This ongoing research project is designed to investigate the processes and circumstances under which children gain expertise in navigating between multiple worlds and identities. The underlying assumption is that navigating multiple identities is a critical component of the development of self and identity – especially for children of immigrants and those from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities who experience life as minorities in the U.S.

Current Opportunities:
The data set on this project consists of survey data and interview data. There are opportunities for mixed methods analysis of data. I invite students who are interested in assisting with the next steps in interpretive/qualitative analysis. Participation will include designing and implementing a plan of analysis for specific research questions as driven by the overarching research objectives of the study. There are rich possibilities for student theses or directed research projects.

MASSACHUSETTS HEALTHY FAMILIES EVALUATION 2ND COHORT (MHFE2)

MHFE-2 is a large-scale, multi-year evaluation study of the MA Healthy Families program being led by Profs. Jacobs, Easterbrooks and Mistry. The study consists of two main components:
- Impact Study: designed as a randomized control trial to evaluate program effects;
- Integrative Study: designed to enable a more concentrated and comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors that influence participants’ trajectories as they transition both to parenthood and adulthood.
The Integrative Study uses a mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative data) approach with a sample of 276 participants from the program group and 200 participants from the control group. It is designed as a multi-method study with data gathered through standardized measures, structured survey questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Data is gathered at three points in time beginning at the start of participants’ enrollment in the HFM program.

**Current Opportunities:**
I am coordinating the analysis of data from an open-ended research interview that is conducted as part of the Integrative Study. We have completed coding of over 400 interviews. Features of participants’ childhood history, their educational history, pregnancy stories, their relationships with family members, and their representations of parenting have been coded using a qualitative analysis program (Atlas-ti). We are now inviting students who are interested in assisting us with the next steps in interpretive/qualitative analysis. Participation will include designing and implementing a plan of analysis for specific research questions as driven by the research objectives of the overarching evaluation study, and may include the integration of qualitative data from the research interview, with data collected through surveys/questionnaires and standardized scales, as well as with GIS based data. There are rich possibilities for student theses or directed research projects.

Ellen Pinderhughes, Ph.D.

**Families and Children in Challenging Circumstances (FaCCC)**
The primary goal of the projects in this research program is to contribute an understanding of developmental processes that occur within families whose children are at risk for dysfunctional behavior so that policies, interventions and services can be improved or designed to facilitate optimal child outcomes. Families that include children at-risk face unique challenges as they confront the socialization task of preparing their children to function in developmentally appropriate ways in the larger society. Helping families successfully meet these challenges presents important and interesting clinical and social policy issues. Specific ongoing studies include: research on adoption - a) transracial adoptive families and their experiences, and b) international adoptive parents’ experiences with the adoption process; gay fathers – their pathways to fatherhood and related experiences; and research on at-risk children in biological families which involves hypothesis testing examination with large samples over multiple years.

**Adoption and Development Project (ADP):** The ADP examines how families who are raising children adopted internationally and transracially navigate cultural and racial differences. Data collection, which has reached 45+ families, includes interview, questionnaires and the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Our analyses to date have focused on cultural socialization activities, children’s understanding of adoption, ethnic identity and self-image and children’s public discourse experiences.

Our current work focuses on microaggressions that children and parents experience and preparation for bias messages/activities in which parent engage. Microaggressions are common, occurrences that can be slights, insults, attitudes, or
actions that communicate negative messages to the target person or group (Sue et al., 2007). Preparation for Bias includes parents’ messages about how to deal with microaggressions or similar experiences (Hughes et al., 2006). With Amanda Baden’s research team (Montclair State University), we are examining racial and adoption microaggressions that parents experience, and how they view and respond to these messages. We also are examining children’s interviews for racial and adoptive microaggressions that they report.

**Opportunities for students** (course credit or volunteer) include participation in data coding and analyses, preparation of conference presentations and assisting in preparing manuscripts. If interested, contact Xian Zhang (xian.zhang@tufts.edu), the lead PhD student on this project.

**Intercountry Adoption: Parents’ Experiences and Professionals’ Practices:**
Intercountry adoptions between many countries are regulated by The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (HCIA; Hague, 1993), an international treaty which sought to establish safeguards that protect the rights of children in need of permanency, as well as those of birth families and adoptive families. The Hague set forth rules to prevent abduction, sale or traffic of children, essentially to ensure that children found safe permanency options and intercountry adoptions would be legal and ethical. With the goal of understanding how the HCIA has affected intercountry adoptions, this project examines over 1200 parents’ experiences and over 200 professionals’ practices with intercountry adoptions around the world. Using web-based surveys of individuals participating in adoptions involving over 50 countries, we are examining patterns and variations in adoption processes from before placement through after placement. Our current analyses focus on parents’ experiences, including decisions to adopt, experiences that might be affected by HCIA rules and implementation, children’s special needs, concerns about adoption abuses, post-placement services, challenging and most helpful parts of the adoption process, connections to their children’s country, and differences among multiple ICAs, if parents adopted from more than one country.

**Opportunities for students** (course credit or volunteer) include participation in data coding and analyses, preparation of conference presentations and assisting in preparing manuscripts. If interested, contact Jessica Matthews (jessica.matthews@tufts.edu), the lead PhD student on this project.

**Lives of Gay Fathers and their Children.** With Ellen Perrin, M.D. of the Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at Tufts Medical Center. We are conducting an internet-based study of gay fathers in the US. With a sample of over 700 fathers, we are examining the following themes: pathways to fatherhood and parenting experiences, challenges and discrimination experiences, relationships with extended families and friends, and children’s adjustment. **Opportunities for students** (course credit or volunteer): include participation in data scoring and coding, analyses and preparation of conference presentations and perhaps manuscripts. If interested, contact Ellen Pinderhughes at Ellen.pinderhughes@tufts.edu.
**Fast Track**  Fast Track is a long-term randomized clinical trial designed to prevent the onset of serious conduct disorder and other problematic outcomes in adolescence. Initiated in 1991, the study is ongoing in 4 sites in the country with 445 intervention youth, a matched group of 446 high risk controls, and normative comparison group of 387 youth. Services were delivered to intervention youth from grades 1 through 10. Yearly data collection provides opportunities to examine the effect of the intervention and the development of children living in high-risk communities.

**Opportunities for students here** at Tufts: students could participate in qualitative and quantitative analyses that are being conducted from the data set. For more on Fast Track, go to [www.fasttrackproject.org](http://www.fasttrackproject.org). If interested, contact Ellen Pinderhughes at Ellen.pinderhughes@tufts.edu.

**W. George Scarlett, Ph.D.**

I am developing writing projects focused on general issues related to children and youth engaging the ‘natural world’ (e.g., the issue of declining opportunities for children to directly experience the natural world unsupervised by adults) and specific issues related to children and youth becoming “ocean stewards”. The focus here is also on the larger discussions going on in the ecology/environmental - conservation movement (including discussions about habitat loss, climate change, and relevant philosophical/theological perspectives). The projects will provide opportunity to work directly with educators and children at the New England Aquarium where there is serious work under way to involved children and youth in the ecology movement. I welcome interested students to join me on these projects. You can contact me at George.Scarlett@tufts.edu.

**Maryanne Wolf, Ed. D.**

**The Center for Reading and Language Research** is an interdisciplinary reading-research center that brings together researchers and projects involved in the cognitive neurosciences, linguistics, child development, and education. The Center offers a variety of theoretical and applied experiences for undergraduate, Masters and Ph.D. students: for example, in applied experiences, undergraduates and graduate students may become involved in tutoring at-risk impaired readers in community schools in the Tufts Literacy Corps with Dr Cindy Krug. During the summer students may work as Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants with Dr. Melissa Orkin in the Tufts Center for Reading and Language Summer School.

Trained graduate and undergraduate students may become involved in an extensive range of research activities, including assessment, curriculum development, app development, and preliminary data collection and entry tasks. Current collaborative projects are:

1) **GLOBAL LITERACY PROJECT**

In collaboration with Dr. Tinsley Galjean A and Cynthia Breazeal at the MIT Media Lab, Dr. Robin Morris at Georgia State University, and Venerable Tenzin Priyadarshi of the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at MIT, we are investigating
whether we can use our knowledge of the reading brain to curate content for a digital learning experience on a tablet that will enable children in remote regions of the world to learn to read on their own. Projects are currently in Uganda, South Africa, Ethiopia, India, and Bangladesh. Volunteers and research assistants at every level are a welcome part of this work. A special course on Literacy and Technology over the past two years partners students from Tufts who have background in reading theory and child development with technology students at MIT. The applied goal of this course involves the design and creation of potential theoretically based apps for inclusion on the tablet. Potential student assistants and volunteers are to contact Dr. Stephanie Gottwald at 627-3815.

2) RAVE-O: Reading Intervention with struggling readers.

In this long-term work based on ten years of NICHD-funded, randomized treatment control studies, we investigate the effect of intervention based on reverse engineering principles of the “reading brain”. Students can become involved in the design and implementation of activities targeting cognitive and linguistic processes in the reading brain within an innovative, highly playful and systematic reading intervention program that includes a computerized component. Studies of interventions effects are conducted in various schools and in the summer school program. Under the direction of Dr. Stephanie Gottwald, Assistant Director of CRLR, new RAVE-O projects are occurring in coordination with Bellavista School in South Africa.

3) The GRAD Study (Genetics, Reading and Dyslexia) a collaboration with Dr. Jeff Gruen at Yale, investigates different patterns of genetic markers and behavioral, cognitive, linguistic, and emotional differences in children with a range of reading issues who are either African American or Latino. The purpose of this investigation is to broaden our genetic understanding of dyslexia, which to date is based largely on Caucasian populations. We wish to understand whether there are unique differences in the African American and Latino populations so that we may ultimately have

4) Music and the Brain.

This study emerges from work on the Center that demonstrates the relationship between the processes involved in both reading and music. Current research in collaboration with Dr. Ani Patel in the Tufts Psychology Department will explore the relationship between phonology and rhythm and other aspects of music.