Five Junior Scholars Receive the
Patrice L. Engle Dissertation Grant in Early Child Development

Established in 2013, the Patrice L. Engle Dissertation Grant for Global Early Child Development provides opportunities for junior scholars who are either from or are working in an international context to conduct dissertation research in global early child development. Recipients of the grant are each awarded $5,000 USD to support dissertation research, as well as a two-year student membership to SRCD. This grant honors Patrice L. Engle, a pioneer and leader in global early child development whose work spanned multiple industries, countries, and research fields. This year, the Society has announced five junior scholars from around the globe as the recipients of the 2018 Engle Dissertation Grant: Zeynep Ertekin, Iuliia Korshina, Kirsten Lesage, Laia Fibla Reixachs, and Shubhi Sachdeva.

SRCD congratulates the 2018 Patrice L. Engle Dissertation Grant winners.

Zeynep Ertekin is a doctoral candidate in Developmental Psychology at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkey where she also earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Master of Science degree in Developmental Psychology. Zeynep's research interests lie in the cognitive development of at-risk children, especially institutionalized children and children from low SES family environment. She is supervised by Professor Sibel Kazak Berument. Throughout her graduate years, she worked on the longitudinal project titled "Turkish Care Type Study" about the development of institutionalized infants and children. Zeynep's doctoral thesis expands on the aims and findings of this longitudinal project by examining the role of early adversity on cortisol and cognitive development of infants with the moderating role of temperament. Currently, she is gathering data from infants reared in a low socio-economic environment. Their cognitive development will also be compared with that of the institutionalized infants. Zeynep hopes that this study will contribute to understanding the role of environment, child temperament, and stress levels on the cognitive development of infants.

Iuliia Korshina is pursuing her PhD in Clinical Psychology at the Department of Psychology, Saint-Petersburg State University in the Russian Federation. Her advisors are Drs. Mary Dozier and Rifkat Muhamedrahimov. As an undergraduate student, Julia joined a multidisciplinary project focused on evaluating early bio-behavioral development in children with a history of institutionalization. This experience serves as a background for her current research interests which lie on executive function development in early childhood. In particular, she is interested in examining the effects of different socio-emotional conditions (e.g. institutions, foster/substitute family, biological family settings) and types of intervention programs on executive function in young children. Her dissertation project titled "Executive function in young children with the experience of institutional social-

emotional deprivation in a program of early intervention" aims to expand on this research area by studying how an intervention with children in substitute families affects executive function. Julia believes that her research will help to change current intervention approaches for substitute families that exists in the Russian Federation.

Kirsten Lesage is pursuing her PhD in Developmental Psychology at the University of California, Riverside, working under the direction of Dr. Rebekah Richert. Her research focuses on the cultural evolution, transmission, and development of causal explanatory systems (e.g., across generations, parent-to-child) by analyzing how language shapes concept development, learning from testimony (verbal, written), and social learning within a variety of communities (school, medical community, religious community) and with a variety of social partners (parents, siblings, friends). Her dissertation focuses on how the cultural context shapes the emergence of explanatory systems and causal reasoning in early childhood in two populations: Spanish-speaking Colombian Catholics (funded with this grant) and bilingual (Spanish-English) Mexican-American Catholics. Specifically, she is examining the causal mechanisms (folk, scientific, religious, supernatural) 3.5- to 6-year-old children and their parents attribute to the causes and treatments of biological illnesses, their reasons for endorsing those causes, and parents' ethnotheories and approaches to explaining the causes of illness to their children. The primary goals are to assess if individuals judge religious supernatural causes as working in parallel with folk, scientific, or other supernatural causes, and if so, in what ways. With a focus on cultural influences on cognitive development, the dissertation will examine how child's age, cognitive skills, and religious exposure moderate their co-existing causal reasoning, and finally, how language itself (Spanish or English) affects children's concepts of causality. Kirsten plans to use her research findings to work with policy makers, regarding culturally-appropriate approaches to teaching about health and wellness within these communities. She holds a BA in Psychology and Spanish (Northwestern College – Iowa) and an MA in Psychology (University of California, Riverside).

Laia Fibla Reixachs is a doctoral candidate in Developmental Psychology at the University of East Anglia School of Psychology in Norwich, England. Her advisor is Professor Larissa Samuelson. Laia's interests focus on language development during the first years of life, individual variation, and the relation between environment and developmental outcomes. During her Masters, Laia worked on the adaptation of a portable self-administered vocabulary test implemented on a touch-screen device. The test was used to measure lexical development across SES households and language backgrounds (bilingual and multilingual infants). Her master thesis approached language development from a computational perspective, modelling bilingual language segmentation. Her dissertation project entitled "Assessing Early Language Processing across cultures: a comparative study between UK and India", seeks to understand differences in the early developmental language trajectory of infants growing up in diverse cultural settings. The proximal goal of the project is to develop and test an efficient, portable, and reliable early language processing assessment that can be used to measure word processing cross-culturally and provide a basis for the development of appropriate early language interventions. This

measure is being applied to a group of young infants growing up in a rural population in India and urban infants from the United Kingdom. The project will benefit from connections to two ongoing longitudinal projects assessing early neural and working memory development in both of these populations. These ongoing studies, led by Laia's co-supervisor, Professor John Spencer include measures of functional brain network development, nutrition, sleep, dyadic communication and language input as well as early working memory and executive function. These projects thus provide the opportunity to place the findings of Laia's project on language development in the context of multiple facets of early cognitive development and their relations. This will provide a solid foundation for the later development of appropriate interventions.

Shubhi Sachdeva is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of Texas at Austin. She specializes in Early Childhood Education and her doctoral advisor is Dr. Jennifer Keys Adair. Shubhi has been in the field of early education for 13 years, spanning 3 countries: India, Taiwan, and the US. Prior to coming to the University of Texas, she worked as a preschool teacher and teacher trainer in Taiwan. In India, she worked with several non-profits and as a research associate at the Center for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University in Delhi. There she worked on the largest longitudinal study on school readiness in the country in partnership with UNICEF and Government of India. The study aimed to understand correlations between preschool experiences and school readiness to how children performed in primary school years. Her doctoral dissertation titled "School Readiness in India: Historicizing the present discourse" is a video-cued-multivocal-multi-sited ethnographic study, and seeks to understand how different groups working closely with young children—parents, teachers, and administrators—conceptualize school readiness in two preschool classrooms in Delhi—a private preschool catering to higher income families and a non-profit program that caters to children from urban slums. The project seeks to understand how the colonial nature of class structures in India determines what is offered to children, and how teachers and families are negotiating cultural practices while being situated within global discourses of early childhood education. Shubhi hopes that this study would support and strengthen educational initiatives in India by providing perspectives from the school communities that could help make early education experiences more meaningful. Shubhi's research interests include global perspectives on childhood, socio-cultural processes in early education, and equity and social justice issues in early education. Since 2014, she is also working as a research assistant on a 3-country project, located in Australia, New Zealand and the US, that is trying to understand civic action that young children from marginalized communities engage in. Shubhi holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in Child Development from Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi, India.