

LEENA TWAL, B.A.

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EDUCATION

University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (August 2022 - Present)

Ph.D. Candidate, Developmental Psychology

Advisor: Melissa Sturge-Apple, Ph.D.

Expected Graduation: May 2027

Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI (September 2015 - April 2018)

B.A., Psychology *Summa Cum Laude*

Minor: French Language

Major GPA: 3.92 | Overall GPA: 3.89

PUBLICATIONS

Twal, L., Sturge-Apple, M.A., & Davies, P. (2026). Delineating the Impact of Neighborhood Risk on Parental Responses to Distress and Children's Socioemotional Outcomes. *Developmental Psychology*.

PUBLICATIONS IN PREP

Li, Z., Sturge-Apple, M.L., **Twal, L.**, De la Fuente, E.R., & Davies, P.T. (*Revise & Resubmit*). Children's Social and Emotional Development in the Shadow of a Pandemic: A Prospective, Quasi-Experimental Study. *Child Development*.

Twal, L., Swerbenski, H., Amoah, E., Dorsey, A., Sturge-Apple, M.A., & Davies, P. (*Revise & Resubmit*). A Cascade Model of Positive Family Functioning in Black Families: Neighborhoods, Constructive Conflict, and Parenting. *Journal of Family Psychology*.

Li, Z., Platts, C.R., **Twal, L.**, Sturge-Apple, M.L., & Davies, P.T. (*Under Review*). Understanding Paternal Parenting across Caregiving Contexts and Children's Sensory Processing Sensitivity in the Development of Pro-social Behavior in BIPOC Children. *Developmental Psychology*.

Twal, L., Keefe, B., Fang, Y., Sturge-Apple, M.A., & Davies, P. (*Under Review*). Parental Emotion Socialization within the Protection Domain: Associations with Parental Cognitions and Children's Separation Anxiety. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*.

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Twal, L., Keefe, B., Fang, Y., Sturge-Apple, M.A., & Davies, P. (Jun., 2026) Parental Responses to Children's Distress: Associations with Parental Cognitions and Children's Separation Anxiety. Lighting Talk at *Development 2026*. Montreal, Québec.

Twal, L., Sturge-Apple, M.A., Davies, P. (May, 2025). Delineating the Impact of Neighborhood Risk on Parental Responses to Distress and Children's Socioemotional Outcomes. In **Twal, L. (Chair)**, Jaques, D. T. (Second Chair). *Exploring Multi-level Influences on Parenting Within and Across Diverse Contexts*. Paper Symposium at SRCD Biennial Convention. Minneapolis, MN.

Twal, L., Purcell, D. G. (Apr., 2018). An Exploration of Facial Affect. Oral Presentation presented at National Conference on Undergraduate Research. Edmond, Oklahoma.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

**Denotes mentored student*

Twal, L., Swerbenski, H., Amoah, E., Dorsey, A., Sturge-Apple, M.A., Davies, P. (May, 2025). A Cascade Model of Positive Family Functioning in Black Families: Neighborhoods, Constructive Conflict, and Parenting. Poster presented at SRCD Biennial Convention. Minneapolis, MN.

Keefe, B.*, Twal, L., Fang, Y., Sturge-Apple, M.A., Davies, P. (Mar., 2025). Predicting Children's Emotional Development: Effect of Parental Cognitions and Emotion Socialization Practices. Poster presented at EPA Annual Convention. New York City, NY.

Fang, Y.*, Twal, L., Keefe, B., Sturge-Apple, M.A., Davies, P. (Mar., 2025). How Parental Self-Beliefs Impact Emotion Socialization and Children's Developmental Outcomes. Poster presented at EPA Annual Convention. New York City, NY.

Twal, L., Swerbenski, H., Sturge-Apple, M.A. (May, 2024). Collective Efficacy Serving as a Protective Buffer Against Effects of Neighborhood Risk on Disciplinary Practices. Poster presented at APS Annual Convention. San Francisco, CA.

Swerbenski, H., Twal, L., Sturge-Apple, M.A. (May, 2024). Expanding Treatment Targets: Meta-Analysis of Attachment-Based Interventions on Caregiver Psychopathology Outcomes. Poster presented at APS Annual Convention. San Francisco, CA.

Purcell, D. G., Twal, L., & Stewart, A.L. (Nov., 2019). Impact of Facial Affect on Race Judgment. Poster presented at the 60th annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society. Montreal, QC.

Purcell, D. G., Twal, L., & Stewart, A.L. (Nov., 2018). Affect Congruency With Full Color Angry and Happy Faces. Poster presented at the 59th annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society. New Orleans, LA.

Twal, L., Purcell, D. G. (May, 2018). An Exploration of Facial Affect. Poster presented at Meeting of Minds Conference. Dearborn, MI.

Twal, L., Raman, L. Do Children Recognize the Impact of Physical and Sedentary Activities on Weight? (May, 2018). Poster Session presented at Meeting of Minds Conference. Dearborn, MI.

Twal, L., Purcell, D. G. An Exploration of Facial Affect. (Mar., 2018). Poster Session presented at the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters Conference. Central Michigan University, MI.

Twal, L. (Nov. 2017). An Exploration of Facial Affect: How anger inferiority is influenced by race. Poster presented at Oakland University Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Poster Session. Rochester Hills, MI.

HONORS AND AWARDS

2025 *Psychology Department Engagement and Enrichment Service Award, U of Rochester*
2023 *Lisa Flanagan Grossman Memorial Award Recipient, University of Rochester*
2018-2015 *Oakland University Dean's List*

2018-2015 Oakland University Honors College
2018-2015 Oakland University Distinguished Scholar
2018-2017 *Honors College Merit Award* Recipient, Oakland University
2018-2016 *MI Competitive Scholarship* Recipient, Oakland University
2016-2015 *J Alford Jones Scholarship* Recipient, Oakland University

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Project TRAIL [Melissa Sturge-Apple, Ph.D.](#), [Patrick Davies, Ph.D.](#)

(Thriving, Responding, and Adapting in Interpersonal Life)

University of Rochester, Mt. Hope Family Center

Study Summary: Follow-up study aimed at understanding longitudinal effects of child maltreatment on intercouple relationships and parenting practices

Graduate Research Assistant (2023 - 2026)

- Creating and validating new interview measure assessing parents' reactions to children's negative emotionality expressions
- Conducting data collection with parents and children, including administering a variety of behavioral tasks and sensitive interviews
- Mentoring undergraduate interns on study

Parent Emotion Socialization Coding Project | Project FLIGHT [Melissa Sturge-Apple, Ph.D.](#)

(Families Learning, Interacting, and Growing Healthy Together)

University of Rochester, Rochester Center for Research on Children and Families

Study Summary: A longitudinal study aimed at understanding the impact of interparental conflict on intercouple relationships and children's developmental outcomes

Primary Coder (2026)

- Primary coder on a behavioral coding project measuring individual and dyadic-level behaviors in an interparental conflict discussion task

Primary Coder (2025)

- Primary coder on a behavioral coding project measuring parents' attachment-based caregiving behaviors during a dyadic interaction task

Coding Project Lead (2023 - 2024)

- Creating and validating a behavioral coding manual on forms and functionality of parental reactions to their children's negative emotionality
- Training undergraduate coders to reliability, and leading weekly coding meetings

ABC Growing Kids Study [Julie Lumeng, M.D.](#)

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Study Summary: Longitudinal study examining effects of mother-infant attachment and infant's eating behaviors on child's attachment, temperament, and eating behaviors 5-years later.

Research Technician (2020 - 2022)

- Creating study protocol manual, including adapting protocols to be done remotely over Zoom during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Assisting with IRB application submission and maintenance of REDCap pages,
- Participant recruitment and scheduling, as well as study retention plan
- Administering virtual Zoom visits (consenting participants, collecting anthropometric measurements, running behavioral protocols over Zoom, using data collection software including ADA24)
- Training new research associates, overseeing and reviewing data collection

Simply Dinner Study [Julie Lumeng, M.D.](#), [Holly Brophy-Herb, Ph.D.](#)

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Study Summary: Longitudinal study examining effects of parenting stress and financial insecurity on children's temperament and eating behaviors.

Research Technician Associate (2019 - 2020)

- Participant recruitment, scheduling, and retention
- Running detailed at-home visits with children ages 3-5 and their parent (consenting and assenting, administering questionnaires, collecting parent and child anthropometric measurements)
- Training interns and new research associates
- Transcribing and coding video recordings

Michigan Twin Neurogenetics Study [Luke Hyde, Ph.D.](#), [Elizabeth Burt, Ph.D.](#)

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Study Summary: Longitudinal study utilizing Michigan State University Twin Registry to research gene-environment interactions in a sample of families living in disadvantaged neighborhoods

Volunteer Postbac Research Assistant (2019)

- Assisting lab managers and post-doctoral researchers with data entry and revision
- Transcribing video recordings of mother-twin triads
- Checking structural and functional MRI image alignment

Race and Facial Affect Study [Dean Purcell, Ph.D.](#)

Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI

Study Summary: An extension of Dr. Purcell's previous work, this study examines the interaction between race and facial affect on reaction time and accuracy of participant responses.

Undergraduate Thesis Project (2017 - 2018)

- Completing the IRB application and revisions
- Writing and administering participant consent and debriefing forms
- Writing all protocol manuals and training research assistants for administration
- Administering experiment protocol with participants
- Reviewing and coding data, completing all statistical analyses of data

Child Development Laboratory [Lakshmi Raman, Ph.D.](#)

Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI

Research Summary: Researching children's understanding of exercise on physical health

Volunteer Research Assistant (2017 - 2018)

- Writing vignettes and administering experiment sessions with both college students and preschool children ages 3-4
- Contacting daycare directors to plan data collection time
- Transcribing data collection sessions and coding data

Facial Affect Laboratory [Dean Purcell, Ph.D.](#)

Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI

Research Summary: Researching effect of angry stimuli on participants' task performance, also known as Anger Inferiority

Undergraduate Research Assistant (2016 - 2017)

- Recruiting participants through SONA
- Administering the experiment protocol with participants (college students)
- Assisting with data coding and analysis, attending weekly lab meetings
- Conducting literature reviews

TALKS AND GUEST LECTURES

Data Blitz *Department of Psychology Interview Weekend*
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (Spring, 2025)

Invited Student Presenter: Neighborhood Risk, Responses to Distress, and Child Outcomes

SRCD Biennial Convention, Minneapolis, MN (Spring, 2025)

Paper Symposium Chair: Exploring Multi-level Influences on Parenting Within and Across Diverse Contexts. Paper Symposium.

Psychology of Parenting *Department of Psychology, Vanessa Cao, M.S.*
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (Fall, 2024)

Invited Guest Lecturer: At-Risk Parenting and Child Maltreatment

Introduction to Psychology *Department of Psychology, Anetta Snell, M.S.*
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (Spring, 2024)

Invited Guest Lecturer: Overview of Developmental Psychology

DISSEMINATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PANELS

Twal, L. (2025) Protective Neighborhood Factors: Promoting Positive Development in the Face of Neighborhood Risk. [Fact Sheet]. *TRANSFORM Research Center.*

<https://www.psych.rochester.edu/MHFC/transform/transform-resources/transform-factsheets/>

University of Rochester Psi Chi Graduate School Information Panel (2026)

- Spoke at a panel for undergraduate students in University of Rochester's Psi Chi chapter interested in applying to clinical or developmental psychology graduate programs.

Underrepresented Student Panel (2026, 2025)

- Organized and spoke on a panel of underrepresented students at the University of Rochester's interview weekend to answer prospective students' questions

DEI Workshop Series (2026, 2025)

- Created and organized a new department-wide speaker series to integrate DEI-informed practices into research, clinical work, and teaching in a way that is specific and applicable to psychology.

Applying to Graduate School Panel (2025, 2024)

- Spoke at a panel for undergraduate and post-bac research assistants interested in applying to clinical or developmental psychology doctorate programs.

Department Culture Survey Dissemination (2024)

- Helped organize department-wide dissemination of results from a 2022-2023 Department Culture survey administered to the department.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Child Development *Department of Psychology, Course Instructor*
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (Summer, 2026)

Psychology of Human Motivation *Department of Psychology, Chris Niemiec, Ph.D.*
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (Spring, 2023)

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Holds weekly office hours, leads weekly discussion-sections, grades papers for upper-level writing section of course, grades weekly reflection papers, grades exams, assists students with studying and writing papers

Social and Emotional Development *Department of Psychology, Laura Elenbaas, Ph.D. University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (Fall, 2022)*

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Holds weekly office hours, grades exams, grades papers for upper-level writing section of course, assists students with studying and writing papers

Psychological Statistics *Department of Psychology, Rebecca Malatesta, Ph.D. Oakland University, Rochester Hills, MI (Winter, 2017)*

Teaching Assistant: Holds weekly office hours, assists students with homework and SPSS use, organizes and leads review sessions, grades homework, creates study guides

SERVICE

Psychology Department DEI Committee Co-Chair *University of Rochester (2024-2026)*

- Student co-chair of the Psychology department's DEI committee. Roles include planning and leading meetings and presenting on initiatives within the department.

Colloquia Committee *University of Rochester (2023)*

- Nominated an outside researcher to give a department-wide colloquium presentation and organized the faculty member's schedule during the visit.

GLC - DEI Subcommittee Member *University of Rochester (2022-2024)*

- Student-led organization that meets monthly to discuss issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the psychology department. Co-chair of the Fundraising Subcommittee, where students plan events to raise money for different DEI-related initiatives

GLC - Welcome/Social Committee Co-Chair *University of Rochester (2022-2023)*

- Student-led organization that meets monthly to plan events and initiatives within the psychology department. Organized social events for the department and planned welcome events for incoming first-year students.

Psychology Department DEI Committee Member *University of Rochester (2022-2023)*

- Member of the Psychology department's DEI committee, where issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the department are discussed. Active voting member.

International Allies Secretary *Oakland University (2016-2018)*

- Secretary of the student-run organization that helps connect international students with domestic students. Organized monthly meetings, planned events for club members, designed event flyers, and coordinated with other student-run organizations

Student Program Board *Oakland University (2017-2018)*

- Member of the University-run organization that enhances campus life by planning campus-wide events for all Oakland University students

Student Liaison for Psi Chi *Oakland University (2015-2016)*

- Roles included helping to organize monthly meetings, communicate with club members, make announcements to different psychology classes, and communicate with different professors in the department

MENTORSHIP

Summer 2026 Master's Student Thesis Committee

U of Rochester

Thesis committee member for *Marriage and Family Therapy* Master's program

Spring 2025	Independent Research Project Mentor	<i>U of Rochester</i>
	Assisted with application for the Friends of the UR Libraries' (FURL) Research Initiative Award. Mentee was awarded a \$750 scholarship for second place.	
F'24 - S'25	PSY: 393 Undergraduate Honors Project Mentor	<i>U of Rochester</i>
Fall 2024	PSY 395: Independent Research: Observational Research I	<i>U of Rochester</i>
Spring 2024	PSY 395: Independent Research: Behavioral Coding Research I	<i>U of Rochester</i>
Spring 2024	PSY 395: Independent Research: Behavioral Coding Research II	<i>U of Rochester</i>
Fall 2023	PSY 395: Independent Research: Behavioral Coding Research I	<i>U of Rochester</i>
Fall 2023	PSY 395: Independent Research: Behavioral Coding Research I	<i>U of Rochester</i>

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Autism Home Support Services *Ann Arbor, MI (2018-2019)*

ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) Therapy Registered Behavioral Technician:

- Provides one-on-one therapy to children of all ages on the ASD spectrum, engages in approved therapy techniques to enhance social, educational, and communication skills, communicates with family members of children, as well as with the Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA), to complete individualized therapy plan best suited for children, performs data collection to study effectiveness of each treatment, and works in-home with clients adapting to each household's unique home environment

MORC, Inc. *Troy, MI (2018)*

ABA Therapy Behavioral Technician Aide:

- Undergoes extensive training to become certified in working one-on-one with children on the ASD spectrum, engages in approved therapy techniques to teach skills for children, communicates with family members, as well as with the BCBA, to complete therapy plan best suited for children, completes payments and documents client charges into company system, performs data collection to document effectiveness of each treatment, works with clients and at a center, engaging with other staff and clients in group activities, but has experience conducting therapy sessions in-home with clients

FUNDRAISING AND VOLUNTEER WORK

City of Rochester Mini Clean Sweep *U of Rochester & Mt. Hope Family Center (2025, 2026)*

- Organized and participated in three city-wide initiatives to clean up trash around various Rochester communities. Collaborated with Mt. Hope Family Center, the U of R, and city employees.

Fundraiser for Rochester Mutual Aid Network *University of Rochester DEI Committee (2024)*

- Collected over \$500 through department donations to give to Rochester Mutual Aid Network, a local community-based organization providing resources to those in need.

Foodlink Volunteer *Rochester, NY (2023-2024)*

- Volunteer work at local food banks weighing, organizing, and distributing food donations.

Fundraiser for Rochester Center for Youth *University of Rochester DEI Committee (2023)*

- Collected over \$500 through department donations to give to Rochester Center For Youth, a community-based organization providing support and resources to local youth.

Volunteer at FASD Family Nights *Mt. Hope Family Center (2022-2023)*

- Volunteer at Mt. Hope during “FASD Family Nights”, where roles included planning and leading activities with a range of children who have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, as their parents participate in a monthly community-based support group.

Independent Fundraiser for Detroit Rescue Mission *Self-led (2020)*

- Independently fundraised over \$600 through social media to purchase clothing for a men’s homeless shelter in Detroit.

Basic Social Skills Program Volunteer through OUCares *Oakland University (2018)*

- Helps children (ages 5-12) with ASD interact with peers, work on patience and focus, and have fun making arts and crafts

Assistant Yoga Instructor through OUCares *Oakland University (2017)*

- Aids and encourages children and adults who have various special needs (ages 8+) to engage in yoga activities, with an emphasis placed on teaching social skills while children learn the important of health and fitness

The Social Club through Birmingham Family YMCA *Birmingham, MI (2017)*

- Helps adults with various special needs interact in a social setting, chaperones field trips that help members engage with strangers and practice social skills outside of the YMCA, assists with running movie nights, supervises adults swimming in the pool

CERTIFICATIONS

2024 *NYS Mandated Reporter Certification*, NYS Office of Children and Family Services

2018 *Behavior Analyst Certification Board* Registered Behavioral Technician

2018 *Crisis Prevention Institute, INC.* Nonviolent Crisis Intervention

2015 *Mental Health First Aid USA* Mental Health First Aid Training

RELEVANT SKILLS

- Experience teaching elementary, high school, and college-age students in both formal classroom settings as well as social and informal settings
- Formal training in *SPSS*, *R*, and *MPlus* computer statistical program
- Experience administering tasks with *ASA24*, *Inquisit*, *PsychoPy*
- Experience using REDCap as a data entry system
- Experience writing academic theses and literature reviews
- Experience presenting posters and talks at local, state-wide, and national level conferences
- Familiarity with many psychological research methods

REFERENCES

Melissa Sturge-Apple, Ph.D., Dean of University of Rochester’s Warner School of Education and Human Development. Former Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education for University of Rochester’s Arts, Sciences, & Engineering Department, Professor of Child Development, Co-Director of *Rochester Center for Research on Children and Families (RCRCF)*; *University of Rochester, Phone: 585-275-0880, Email: melissa.sturge-apple@rochester.edu*

Julie Lumeng, M.D., Associate Dean for Research for University of Michigan Medical School, Assistant Vice President for Research-Clinical and Human Subjects Research at University of Michigan, Executive Director for Michigan Institute for Clinical and Health Research (MICHR), Thomas P. Borders Family Research Professor of Child Behavior and Development, Professor of Paediatrics, Former

Associate Chair for research in Department of Paediatrics, and Former Director of Center for Human Growth and Development;

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Phone: 734-936-4185, Email: jlumeng@umich.edu

Holly Brophy-Herb, Ph.D., Professor at Michigan State University, Associate Editor of the Infant Mental Health Journal, recipient of Extension's Key Partner award, co-founder of the Michigan Infant-Toddler Research Exchange, Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University

Michigan State University, East Lansing, Phone: 517-355-3397 Email: hbrophy@msu.edu

Dean Purcell, Ph.D., Professor at Oakland University, Studies Visual Perception and Psychology, Honors Thesis Advisor. *Oakland University, MI; Phone: 248-421-4056, Email: purcell@oakland.edu*