

ORLA C PUTNAM

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research is centered around characterizing social communication in autism using multi-modal approaches such as eye tracking, natural language sampling, and observer report. Through this work, I aim to improve our understanding of how individuals with different neurotypes communicate across social contexts.

EDUCATION

PhD: Speech and Hearing Sciences 2025	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Advisor: Dr. Clare Harrop Certificate in Computational Linguistics
BS: Human Development Sciences 2018	University of California San Diego Minor: General Biology

HONORS & AWARDS

Grant Funding

2023 – Present	Ruth L. Kirschstein NRSA Predoctoral Fellowship (F31) National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) “Naturalistic Social Communication in Autistic Females: Identification of Speech Prosody Markers” (F31-DC021107)
2023 – 2024	Autism Science Foundation (ASF) Predoctoral Fellowship “Identifying Speech Prosody Markers and Patterns in Females to Improve Diagnosis” (#23-003)
2022	Course Enhancement Grant UNC APPLES Service-Learning Program “EDUC 400: Autism in our Communities” (PI: Putnam, \$500)
2022	Stakeholder Engagement Grant North Carolina Translational and Clinical Sciences Institute (NC TraCS) “Gendered Experiences in Autism Research” (PIs: Putnam & Harrop, \$2,000)
2020	Leadership Development Scholars Program Grant UNC Graduate School “Understanding and Promoting Racial Equity in Allied Health Sciences” (PIs: Putnam & Nader, \$500)
2017	Summer Research Fellowship UCSD Summer Research Program “Chancellor’s Research Fellowship for Social Sciences: Sex Differences in an Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis” (Mentor: Dr. Karen Pierce, \$5,000)

Fellowships & Awards

- 2025 INSAR Top Poster Award: “A Few of My Favorite Things: Talking about a Strong Interest Affects Speech Prosody and Conversation Engagement in School-Aged Autistic and Non-Autistic Children”
- 2024 UNC Department of Health Sciences Student Research Excellence Award
- 2022 INSAR Student and Trainee Award
- 2021 NC Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NC-LEND) Fellowship
- 2021 Thomas S. Carsey Symposium Finalist: “Gendered Experiences in Autism Research: Stakeholder Perspectives”
- 2021 Carolina Institute of Developmental Disabilities (CIDD) Travel Award
- 2020 Pilot International Maria Newton Sepia Memorial Scholarship
- 2016 San Diego Foundation: Weissbuch Family Scholarship
- 2017 San Diego Foundation: Adrian Gonzalez Scholarship

PUBLICATIONS

1. **Putnam, O.C.**, Swisher, M.N., McFayden, T.C., Chan, D., & Harrop, C. (2025). The role of gender and strong interests in self-reported camouflaging of autistic adults. *Neurodiversity* <https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330251351732>
2. **Putnam, O.C.**, Eddy, G., LaPoint, S.C., Swisher, M.N., & Harrop, C. (2025). “I’m excited to have my voice heard”: Understanding autism research participation from the perspectives of autistic women, non-binary adults, and parents of autistic girls. *Neurodiversity* <https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330251324007>
3. **Putnam, O.C.**, Markfeld, J.E., Wright, S.T., Feldman, J.I., Goldblum, J.E., Karpinsky, M., Neal, A.J., Swanson, M.R., & Harrop, C. (2024). The use of Language ENvironment Analysis in autism research: a systematic review. *Autism*
4. **Putnam, O.C.**, McFayden, T.C., & Harrop, C. (2024). Sex differences and parent-teacher discrepancies in reports of autism traits: Evidence for camouflaging in a school setting. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-024-06498-w>
5. **Putnam, O. C.**, & Erickson, K. A. (2024). The role of prosody in reading comprehension for individuals on the autism spectrum. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_PERSP-23-00170
6. Harrop, C., Tomaszewski, B., **Putnam, O.C.**, Klein, C., Lamarche, E., & Klinger, L. (2024). Are the diagnostic rates of autistic females increasing? An examination of state-wide trends. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, jcpp.13939. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13939>
7. McFayden, T. C., Bristol, S., **Putnam, O.C.**, & Harrop, C. (2023). ChatGPT: Artificial intelligence as a potential tool for parents seeking information about autism. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2023.0202>
8. Goldblum, J. E., McFayden, T. C., Bristol, S., **Putnam, O. C.**, Wylie, A., & Harrop, C. (2023). Autism Prevalence and the Intersectionality of Assigned Sex at Birth, Race, and Ethnicity on Age of Diagnosis. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-023-06104-5>

9. **Putnam, O. C.**, Eddy, G., Goldblum, J., Swisher, M., & Harrop, C. (2023). How autistic adults' priorities for autism research differ by gender identity: A mixed-methods study. *Women's Health, 19*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17455057231160342>
10. McFayden, T. C., **Putnam, O.C.**, Grzadzinski, R., & Harrop, C. (2023). Sex Differences in the Developmental Trajectories of Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Current Developmental Disorders Reports, 10*(1), 80–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40474-023-00270-y>
11. Kan, D., Malone, K., **Putnam, O.**, & Hume, K. (2023). Current trends and theoretical approaches in autism research. In *Autism Spectrum Disorders: Advancing Positive Practices in Education, Fifth Edition* (pp. 482-509). Routledge, New York.
12. **Putnam, O. C.**, Sasson, N., Parish-Morris, J., & Harrop, C. (2023). Effects of social complexity and gender on social and non-social attention in male and female autistic children: A comparison of four eye-tracking paradigms. *Autism Research, 16*(2), 315–326. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2851>

Under Review

1. McFayden, T. C., **Putnam, O. C.**, Karpinsky, M., McAllister, M. L., Neal, A., Russell, A. S., Strang, J. F., & Harrop, C. (Under Review). Assigned sex, gender, or both? A systematic review of sex and gender terminology in child development research spanning 20 years.

PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentations (= oral presentation)**

1. ****Putnam, O.C.**, Cooleen, T., Cho, S., Lyons, M., Faulk, C., Lee, A., Schillinger, S., Karpinsky, M., Strang, J.F., Parish-Morris, J., & Harrop, C. (March 2026). Effects of Sex, Diagnosis, and Conversation Topic on Acoustic Markers of Prosody: Evidence from Naturalistic Speech in School-Aged Children". *Accepted as an oral presentation at the Meeting on Language in Autism (MoLA)*
2. **Putnam, O.C.**, Cooleen, T., Cho, S., Lyons, M., Faulk, C., Lee, A., Schillinger, S., Karpinsky, M., Strang, J.F., Parish-Morris, J., & Harrop, C. (May 2025) A Few of My Favorite Things: Talking About a Strong Interest Affects Speech Prosody and Conversation Engagement in School-Aged Autistic and Non-Autistic Children *International Society for Autism Research*
3. **Putnam, O.C.**, Karpinsky, M., Covello, M., Lee, A., Harris, S., Strang, J.F., Parish-Morris, J., & Harrop, C. (July 2024) "Getting to Know You": Feasibility of a naturalistic sampling protocol with school-aged autistic children. *Child Language Symposium (CLS)*
4. **Putnam, O.C.**, Eddy, G., LaPoint, S., Swisher, M.N., & Harrop, C. (April 2024) "I want to be seen and understood": Priorities for autism research from autistic women, non-binary adults, and parents of autistic girls and women. *Gatlinburg Conference*
5. **Putnam, O.C.**, Novak, M., Leavitt, M., McFayden, T.C., Cho, S., Ip, M.H.K., Lee, A., Karpinsky, M., Strang, J.F., Parish-Morris, J., & Harrop, C. (March 2024). Imitation of Prosody in a Sentence Recall Task: Evidence from Autistic and Non-autistic Children. *Meeting on Language in Autism (MoLA)*

6. McFayden, T.C., **Putnam, O.C.**, Miller, J.S., Lee, A., Grzadzinski, R., Hazlett, H.C., Strang, J., Parish-Morris, J., & Harrop, C. (March 2024). Social Communication Profiles of Autistic Females Ages 4- to 8- Years. *Meeting on Language in Autism (MoLA)*
7. M. H. K. Ip, **Putnam, O. C.**, Cho, S., Vurgun, U., Lyons, M., Knox, A., Hauptmann, A., Covello, M., Lee, A., Fulop, L., Russell, Al., Walker, K., Miller, J., Fiumara, J., Cieri, C., Fusaroli, R., Chatham, C., Liberman, M., Schultz, R. T., & Parish-Morris, J. (submitted). Prosodic similarities and variation in autistic and neurotypical children: A telephone-based study of verbal counting. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*
8. **Putnam, O.C.**, McFayden, T.C., & Harrop, C. (May 2023). The eye of the beholder: Sex differences in parent and teacher report of autistic traits on the Social Responsiveness Scale. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*
9. Tiede, G., **Putnam, O.C.**, & Walton, K. (May 2023). Examining validity of eye tracking for outcome measurement in social communication treatment for children with autism. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*
10. **Putnam, O.C.**, Markfeld, J., Goldblum, J., Wright, S., Swanson, M., & Harrop, C. (November 2022). The Use of Language ENvironment Analysis (LENA) in Autism Research: A Systematic Review. *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)*
11. **Putnam, O.C.**, Harrop, C., & Parish-Morris, J. (November 2022). Prosodic Characterization of School-Aged Autistic Children During Narration. *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)*
12. **Putnam, O.C.**, Swisher, M.N., Niblack, T.A., Perry, C.M., & Harrop, C. (May 2022). Understanding the research priorities and perspectives of autistic female and nonbinary people. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*
13. Swisher, M.N., Chan, D.V., **Putnam, O.C.**, Harrop, C. (May 2022). The Role of Gender, Interests, and Diagnosis Age in Camouflaging ASD. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*
14. **Harrop, C.**, **Putnam, O.C.**, Klein, C., Tomaszewski, B., Lamarche, E., & Klinger, L. (May 2022). Are the diagnostic rates of autistic females increasing? An examination of state-wide trends. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*
15. Klein, C.B., Harrop, C., **Putnam, O.C.**, Tomaszewski, B., Lamarche, E., & Klinger, L. (May 2022). Adaptive Behavior in School-Age Autistic Males and Females. *International Society of Autism Research (INSAR)*
16. Kan, D., **Putnam, O.C.**, Hume, K.A., Steinbrenner, J.R. (January 2022). Impact of school programming on autistic high school students' social behavior and social relationships *Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)*
17. **Putnam, O.C.** (November 2021). Gendered Experiences in Autism Research: Stakeholder Perspectives. *Graduate Student Symposium for Research in Social Sciences*
18. **Harrop, C.**, **Putnam, O.C.**, Sasson, N., & Parish-Morris, J. (October 2021). Sex Differences in Visual Attention in Autism Spectrum Disorder: Evidence of Differential Social and Nonsocial Attention in Females With Autism Spectrum Disorder Across Four Paradigms. *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*
19. Goldblum, J., **Putnam, O.C.**, & Harrop, C. (May 2021) The impact of demographic variables and comorbidities on the timing of ASD diagnosis and access to services: Data from a large national survey. *International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)*

20. **Putnam, O.C.**, Blanco, N., Sloutsky, V.M. (October 2019) Decision-making in early childhood: Young children shift from perseverance to systematic exploration. *Cognitive Development Society (CDS)*
21. **Putnam, O.C.**, Posid, T., Clark, S., & Sloutsky, V.M. (October 2019). The Effects of Pattern Training on Pre-Algebraic Training in Preschoolers. *Cognitive Development Society (CDS)*.
22. ****Putnam, O.C.**, & Pierce, K. (July 2017). Sex Differences in an Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis. *San Diego Summer Research Conference*

Invited Presentations & Panels

November 2024	UNC Department of Health Sciences: Grant Writing Panel Panelist; Speaking on experience writing grants as a graduate student
October 2024	Women's Health Seminar: Health of Autistic Women Guest Speaker: "How autistic adults' priorities for autism research differ by gender: A mixed methods study"
April 2024	UNC Department of Health Sciences Research Forum Presenter: "Motivations, Barriers, and Facilitators for Autism Research Participation: Perspectives from Autistic Women, Non-Binary Adults, and Parents of Autistic Girls"
February 2023	UNC Department of Psychology First-Year Seminar Guest Lecturer: "What is autism?"
September 2022	Small World Therapies Inservice Workshop (Orange County, NC) Guest Speaker: "Recognizing and Supporting Autism in Girls"
March 2020	UC San Diego Department of Human Development Undergraduate Workshop Guest speaker: "Applying to graduate school: Finding your research interests and where to do that work"

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Student Researcher, UNC-Chapel Hill <i>Harrop Lab (PI: Clare Harrop, PhD)</i>	2020 – Present
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Ongoing Projects:

Sex and Gender in Autism (SAGA) Study: Developed and adapted natural language sampling tasks and measurements of gender for use with younger autistic children. Administer standardized and semi-structured assessments of language, visual attention, and social behavior.

Characterization of Speech Prosody of Autistic Children: In this dissertation study, I am examining utterance-level characteristics of prosody, including pitch, intonation, and speech rate. In addition to examining effects of sex and diagnostic groups, I am exploring whether children's prosody changes when speaking about a strong interest of theirs. I am also exploring relationships between acoustic measures of prosody and characteristics of social communication, as measured through parent-report and in-lab assessments.

Completed Projects:

Gendered Experiences in Autism Research: Led the mixed-methods study design (Putnam et al., 2023; Putnam et al., under review), participant recruitment, interview development, data collection, and quantitative/qualitative analyses. Co-wrote a stakeholder engagement grant with Dr. Clare Harrop to hire a community partner for our team in the analysis stage of the study; thereafter supervised the qualitative research training of collaborators.

Analysis of LENA Data / LENA Systematic Review: Cleaned and analyzed data from day-long audio recordings collected through the Language ENvironmental Analysis (LENA) system. Led a systematic review on how LENA is used in autism research (Putnam et al., 2024, in press)

Liminal Project: Coordinated the recruitment and weekly meetings of a group of transgender autistic youth in North Carolina. Collaborated with this group of stakeholders to develop goals for the improvement of healthcare for trans autistic youth across the state. This project resulted in a youth-led community summit.

Project Coordinator, The Ohio State University **2018 – 2020**

The Cognitive Development Lab (PI: Vladimir Sloutsky, PhD)

Managed the recruitment, data collection, and data organization of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of child development. Supervised undergraduate research assistants and fostered working relationships with local schools and daycares. Led an independent project assess infant exploration of novel stimuli.

Clinical Research Assistant, The Ohio State University **2018 – 2020**

The Family and Early Intervention Lab (PI: Katherine Walton, PhD)

Administered Reciprocal Imitation Training to young autistic children and their families, and assisted with data collection of other developmental assessments. Designed Areas of Interest for an eye tracking paradigm examining joint attention. Coded parent-child interaction videos for joint engagement.

Undergraduate Research Assistant, University of California San Diego **2016 – 2018**

The UCSD Autism Center of Excellence (PIs: Karen Pierce, PhD & Eric Courchesne, PhD)

Administered eye tracking assessments to infants and toddlers. Worked to develop novel and ecologically valid eye tracking stimuli, as well as to create areas of interest for a multitude of eye tracking paradigms. In an independent project, I tested for sex differences in infant attention to geometric stimuli and examined relationships between social attention and clinical measures.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Consultant, UNC-Chapel Hill

Department of Psychology, Undergraduate-level instruction **Spring 2023**

PSYC 058H: First Year Seminar “The Psychology of Mental States and Language Use”

Developed and presented a guest lecture, assisted students with development of research questions and study design, assisted students with data analysis.

Lead Course Instructor, UNC-Chapel Hill

School of Education, Undergraduate-level instruction

Fall 2022

EDUC 400: “Autism in our Communities”

Developed course syllabus, rubrics, and lecture material. Facilitated class discussions, completed course grading, and coordinated service-learning experiences for students with community partners.

Teaching Assistant, UNC-Chapel Hill

Department of Health Sciences, Undergraduate-level instruction

Fall 2021

SPHS 530: “Introduction to Phonetics”

Graded tests, quizzes, and student on the principles of phonetics and on IPA transcription.

Department of Health Sciences, Graduate-level instruction

Spring 2021

SPHS 701: “Introduction to Research in Speech and Hearing”

Supervised masters students in conducting a systematic review. Gave class lectures on various research topics. Developed quiz material. Assisted students in creating and formatting conference poster presentations. Graded final posters and presentations.

Teaching Assistant, University of California San Diego

Department of Human Development, Undergraduate-level instruction

Spring 2018

HDS 181: “Experimental Projects in Human Development Research”

Supported students in conducting literature searches and navigating library databases. Assisted students in quantitative experiment design and data analysis. Created and graded course exams, graded course papers.

SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

2023 – Present	Ad Hoc Peer Reviewer Journals: Autism, Autism Research, Molecular Autism, Neurodiversity
2023 – Present	Student Representative UNC Department of Health Sciences Research Advisory Committee
2022 – Present	Application Reviewer UNC Speech Language Pathology Master’s Program Admissions
2021 - 2022	Trainee & Fellow North Carolina Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NC LEND) Program
2021 - 2022	Committee Leader UNC Allied Health Ambassadors
2021	Project Implementation Consultant HEELS 2 Transition
2020 - Present	Student Leader SPHS Graduate Student Professional Development Committee
2019 - 2020	Book Club Facilitator Next Chapter Book Club: Ohio State Nisonger Center