SRNDNA Newsletter

Where Are They Now: Katie Senn, Traversing Social Work

The Diversity Summer Research Awards are designed to encourage and aid undergraduates from underrepresented backgrounds to spend a summer participating in research. In 2019, one of those students was Katherine (Katie) Senn.

Undergraduates selected for the Diversity Summer Research Award go on to pursue varying life and career paths. For 2019 recipient Katherine (Katie) Senn, receiving the award set off a domino effect that will see her graduating from The University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill's Master of Social Work program in Spring 2024.

"The SRNDNA diversity in summer research award opened many doors to me and ultimately informed my trajectory," Katie said.
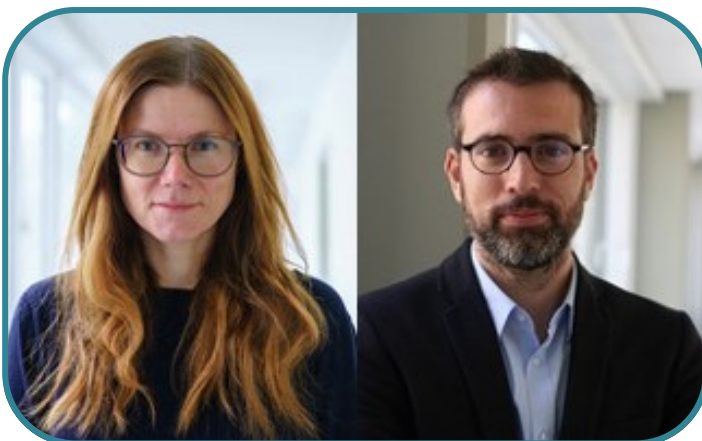
Katie's journey began at UNC Greensboro where she earned a BS in psychology, minoring in American Sign Language. The SRNDNA award gave her the opportunity to take on a project manager position, which set Katie up to become a Lab Manager and Research Coordinator at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. There, she worked with a multidisciplinary clinical team, including social workers who impressed Katie with the level of care

Photo courtesy of Katie Senn

Embracing Social Work Katie Senn received a Diversity Summer Research Award in 2019 while attending UNC Greenboro. She will complete The UNC at Chapel Hill Master of Social Work program in Spring 2024.

Open Data Award Winner Shares Experience

Data Wranglers Drs. Loreen Tisdall (left) and Rui Mata of University of Basel, Switzerland, received an SRNDNA Open Data Award for sharing data from their AgeRisk project.

Sharing data seems easy enough, but sometimes sharing is easier said than done, especially when the data involves MRI scans.

This is something Dr. Loreen Tisdall, Center for Cognitive and Decision Science at the University of Basel, Switzerland, and one of the recipients of the SRNDNA Open Data Awards, discovered as she was making data from her AgeRisk project available on the OpenNeuro platform using BIDS (Brain Imaging Data Structure) formatting.

"Sharing hundreds of BIDS-compliant NIFTI images was not trivial and took quite a bit of time, effort, and debugging," Dr. Tisdall said. She added

Katie Senn Journeys into Social Work

they provide to patients.

"The social worker profession was a highly appealing career trajectory because of its strengths-based, person-centered framework," Katie said. "Social work also goes beyond the individual level, considering systemic and historical forces as well as aiming to institute macro-level preventative change."

Katie credits her studies in psychology for fueling her desire to "better understand the human experience."

"Learning about complex social phenomena such as stigmatization, discrimination, and prejudice altered my perception on how one is perceived in the world and how that in turn affects the way one engages and interacts within society," she said.

These complex social phenomena are why Katie thinks it is important the sciences focus on including people with different lived experiences. She added that a diverse research team can impact community participation and that representation in top positions is fundamental to obtaining inclusive samples.

Additionally, Katie is working on completing the Substance Use and Addiction Specialist (SUAS) program. She is interested in trauma-related work, noting the overlap between posttraumatic stress disorder and substance use disorder.

"I look forward to partnering with my clients and supporting them on their journey toward recovery, whatever that looks like for them," she said, adding that she has especially enjoyed partnering with the veteran population.
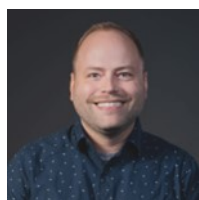

Diversity Summer Research Award
Applications open Jan. 15, 2024.

If you are or know an undergraduate from an underrepresented group who wants to do research during the summer, we're talking to you!

SRNDNA Announces Pilot Grant Winners

Eliany Perez
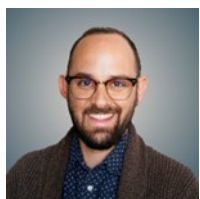

Dr. Adam Barnas

Dr. Natalie Ebner

Ruofan Ma

Dr. Kelly S. Giovanello

Dr. Peter Kvam

Dr. Dawn Bowers

Dr. Steven Weisberg

Dr. Margaret A. Sheridan

Dr. Kristen A. Lindquist

Exploring Risk Tolerance and Decision-Making Across Contexts: Implications for Healthy Cognitive Aging and Alzheimer's Disease

Impact of Neurophysiological Aging and Discrimination on Social Decision-Making and Relationship Building

DON'T LEAVE MONEY ON THE TABLE!
COLLABORATION AWARDS DEADLINE DEC. 15, 2023

Data Sharing Opens Doors to Discovery

that while adhering to the strict BIDS formatting was time consuming, she was able to find help via the BIDS website and online community resources, specifically for .json sidecar file templates.

Another challenge Dr. Tisdall encountered was the fact that her dataset had multiple measures for different measure categories — self-report, informant-report, behavioral, hormone, neuroimaging — and she wanted the data to be user-friendly.

"Ensuring error-free linkage of data from different measures and categories and transparently documenting all measures, was quite a challenge," she said.

Though Dr. Tisdall has shared group activation maps on NeuroVault and summary VOI beta coefficients on OSF, she did not have experience sharing individual neuroimaging files, so there was a "steep" learning curve in her process.

"I learned a lot not just about my own data but data processing pipelines in general," said Dr. Tisdall. "I also realized that I did not have a specific data model in mind when I first thought about how to share which data, in what format, and how to do the documentation."
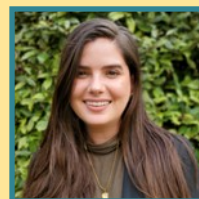
To fix this, Dr. Tisdall developed a "blueprint" for organizing, structuring, and documenting her data to allow for efficient storage, retrieval, and use. She said she will use this process again the next time she shares her data. She concedes, though, that even the best-laid plans may need adjusting, especially when it comes to having multiple categories of human data, so it's key to remain flexible with the data model.

Despite the challenges, Dr. Tisdall supports the push for data sharing and open science, acknowledging the foothold open science has taken. She mentioned how open science is becoming "a concrete output of a researcher's work," and that open science statements are becoming "an integral part of the hiring process." But the benefits of this openness really excite Dr. Tisdall.

"While I value open science in its own right, as a communal effort, this also paves the way for much more collaborative research," she said. "Sharing data with the community, especially when it has taken you a lot of time, effort, and money to collect and/or curate datasets, has the potential for a greater exchange between researchers, and, in my experience, exchange often leads to cool new ideas and joint scientific ventures."

Open Data Award Recipients Publish Paper

Dr. Marilyn Horta   Rebecca Polk   Dr. Natalie Ebner

Single dose intranasal oxytocin administration: Data from healthy younger and older adults

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352340923007540