

Cole Williams

Curriculum Vitae

Center for Computational Molecular Biology
Brown University

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Education

Ph.D. in Computational Biology

October 2025

Brown University

- Thesis: Population-Genetic Methods and Insights Across the Spectrum of Relatedness
 - Defended: April 2025
- Advisor: Dr. Sohini Ramachandran
- Committee: Dr. Emilia Huerta-Sanchez, Dr. Daniel Weinreich, Dr. Amy Williams
- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow

M.S. in Computational Biology

2024

Brown University

- Earned during Ph.D. studies
- GPA: 4.00/4.00

B.S. in Genetics & Genomics

2019

University of California, Davis

- Thesis: Inferring Genetic Relatedness in an Endogamous African Population
- GPA: 3.99/4.00

Research Experience

Graduate Research Fellow

2020–Present

Ramachandran Lab, Brown University

- Developed HAPTIC, a novel inter-chromosomal phasing algorithm using spectral clustering of identity-by-descent (IBD) segments, successfully scaling to analyze 500,000+ UK Biobank samples and validated on 23andMe’s dataset.
- Engineered and optimized high-performance computing code for large-scale genetic relatedness analysis, enabling efficient processing of genome-wide IBD segments across millions of sample pairs.
- Developed PONDEROSA, a machine learning algorithm for predicting genealogical relationships from IBD segments, with ongoing development of CNN-based approaches for improved accuracy.

- Led research on genetic privacy implications, resulting in forthcoming publication on policy recommendations and best practices.

Professional Research Assistant

2019–2020

Gignoux Lab, University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus

- Developed clustering methods to identify genetic relatives in the San Antonio Mexican American Families Study (SAMAFS).
- Assisted with biobank team to implement relatedness detection algorithms for the Colorado Center for Personalized Medicine biobank.

Undergraduate Researcher

2018–2019

Henn Lab, University of California, Davis

- Investigated genetic relatedness in the Himba population.
- Began development of PONDEROSA, for inferring genealogical relationships using IBD data.

Publications

* Denotes equal first author contribution

† Denotes equal senior author contribution

Journal Articles

1. **Williams, C.M.**, Scelza, B.A., Slack, S.D., Mathias, R.A., Watson, H., Barnes, K.C., Lange, E., Johnson, R.K., Gignoux, C.R., Ramachandran, S., & Henn, B.M. A rapid, accurate approach to inferring pedigrees in endogamous populations. bioRxiv doi:10.1101/2020.02.25.965376. July 2024. Accepted at *GENETICS*.
2. **Williams, C.M.**, O’Connell, J., Freyman, W.A., 23andMe Research Team, Gignoux, C.R., Ramachandran, S.[†], & Williams, A.L.[†] Phasing millions of samples achieves near perfect accuracy, enabling parent-of-origin classification of variants. bioRxiv doi:10.1101/2024.05.06.592816. May 2024. In revision at *HGG Advances*.
3. Moody, N.M., **Williams, C.M.**, Ramachandran, S., & Fuxjager, M.J. Social mates dynamically coordinate aggressive behavior to produce flexible territorial strategies. *PLOS Computational Biology*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1012740>
4. Wiley, L.K., Shortt, J.A., Roberts, E.R., Lowery, J., Kudron, E., Lin, M., Mayer, D., Wilson, M., Brunetti, T.M., Chavan, S., Phang, T.L., Pozdeyev, N., Lesny, J., Wicks, S.J., Moore, E.T., Morgenstern, J., Roth, A.N., Shapowitz, E.L., Stewart, A., **Williams, C.M.**, [...], Barnes, K.C., & Gignoux, C.R. Building a vertically integrated genomic learning health system: The biobank at the Colorado Center for Personalized Medicine. *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, 111(1):11–23, January 2024.
5. Swinford, N.A., Prall, S.P., Gopalan, S., **Williams, C.M.**, Sheehama, J., Scelza, B.A., & Henn, B.M. Increased homozygosity due to endogamy results in fitness consequences in a human population. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 120(43):e2309552120, October 2023.

6. Gopalan, S., Berl, R.E.W., Myrick, J.W., Garfield, Z.H., Reynolds, A.W., Bafens, B.K., Belbin, G., Mastoras, M., **Williams, C.**, Daya, M., Negash, A.N., Feldman, M.W., Hewlett, B.S., & Henn, B.M. Hunter-gatherer genomes reveal diverse demographic trajectories during the rise of farming in Eastern Africa. *Current Biology*, 32(8):1852–1860.e5, April 2022.

Manuscript Preprints

1. Ramanan V.*, Vinod R.*, **Williams C.***, Ramachandran S.[†], Venkatasubramanian S.[†] Genetic Data Governance in Crisis: Policy Recommendations for Safeguarding Privacy and Preventing Discrimination. arXiv doi:10.48550/arXiv.2502.09716. February 2025.

Conferences

1. Ramanan V.*, Vinod R.*, **Williams C.***, Ramachandran S.[†], Venkatasubramanian S.[†] Genetic Data Governance in Crisis: Policy Recommendations for AI Applications. Poster presentation at Sociotechnical AI Governance workshop. Yokohama, Japan. April 2025. [Paper]
2. **Williams, C.M.**, O’Connell, J., 23andMe Research Team, Gignoux, C.R., Ramachandran, S., & Williams, A.L. Phasing of millions of samples achieves near perfect accuracy, enabling parent-of-origin classification of variants. Poster presentation at the American Society for Human Genetics (ASHG) annual meeting. Washington, D.C. November 2023.
3. **Williams, C.M.**, 23andMe Research Team, Gignoux, C.R., Ramachandran, S., & Williams, A.L. Parent of origin classification of identity by descent segments. Poster presentation at the Probabilistic Modeling in Genomics meeting. Cold Spring Harbor, NY. March 2023.
4. **Williams, C.M.**, Scelza, B.A., Shortt, J.A., Lange, E., Rafaels, N., Crooks, K., Barnes, K.C., Gignoux, C.R., & Henn, B.M. A rapid, accurate approach to inferring pedigrees in endogamous populations. Poster presentation at the American Society for Human Genetics (ASHG) annual meeting. Houston, TX. October 2019.
5. **Williams, C.M.**, Scelza, B.A., & Henn, B.M. A rapid, accurate approach to inferring pedigrees in endogamous populations. Talk presented at the Bay Area Population Genomics meeting. Palo Alto, CA. June 2019.

Technical Skills

Programming

- Advanced: Python, Bash
- Intermediate: R
- Basic: C++

Tools & Technologies

- Version Control: Git/GitHub
- Development Tools: Apptainer/Singularity, VS Code, Jupyter Notebooks
- Workflow management: Nextflow, Snakemake

Data Analysis

- Dimensionality reduction: PCA, LDA
- Machine Learning: scikit-learn, TensorFlow
- Visualization: seaborn, matplotlib

Awards & Fellowships

- UC Davis Undergraduate of the Year (2019)
- NIH T32 Predoctoral Training Grant (2021)
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (2022)

Leadership & Service

Academic Service

- Graduate Teaching Assistant (BIOL495: Statistical Analysis of Biological Data)
- Guest Lecturer in BIOL495 (Statistical Analysis of Biological Data): Spring 2023 & Spring 2025

Professional Service

- Co-founder: Science on the Hill outreach program