November 29, 2023

Dear William:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for your NIH Diversity Specialized Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Advancement in Neuroscience Award application titled “Intersubject Synchrony in Neural and Behavioral Representations of Social Uncertainty Among Adults and Adolescents.”

Throughout my career, I have broadly studied adolescent social development and the unique appraisals adolescents generate to navigate risky situations. These situations often feature uncertainty in many forms. As we had discussed when you were enrolled in my seminar, adolescents represent a unique population whose social evaluations and responses do not often merely mirror their older counterparts, but rather differ due to developing biological, psychological, and contextual factors. I am excited to advise you on a project that would extend research on how adolescents and adults differ by exploring correlations in their neural and behavioral responses to social uncertainty. This fills a crucial gap in the literature, as few extant studies have explored developmental differences in response to social sources of ambiguity. Examining developmental intersubject correlations in neural and behavioral activity could also be relevant to informing successful parent-child relationships, as positive correlations exist between neural synchrony among individuals and their success on cooperative, communicative, and coordinated tasks. I believe the research strategy you have outlined presents a clear picture of why this methodology is well-suited to answer questions regarding social uncertainty processing in adults and adolescents. Additionally, your training plan provides a strong scaffolding to build the research skills necessary to successfully pursue this line of research. My many collaborations with your co-advisor on this project, Jason Chein, will help ensure your support team is robust and well-integrated. Because of my expertise with adolescent populations, I believe that my consultation will be beneficial to the aims you have proposed in your research strategy, especially in making the transition from your pre-doctoral stage research to your post-doctoral stage research.

As your consultant, I will help transition this line of research from adult to adolescent populations. I will meet with you monthly to discuss the progress on data collection and the literature on social reward, risk, and uncertainty in adolescent populations. These discussions will also focus on the practical challenges and ethical considerations unique to studying adolescent populations using social paradigms. We may increase the frequency of this meeting in your second year as you prepare to transition to your preferred post-doctoral position. I will also offer my advice to you in selecting a post-doctoral lab that conducts impactful adolescent social psychological research aligning with your ultimate career goals. Lastly, I can guide you through the social developmental psychology literature to help you interpret your findings in relation to adolescence. As we are part of the same department, I will also continue to see you at joint department meetings and seminars where we can further discuss topics and issues about your proposal.

In summary, I am eager to assist with this exciting line of research and your training plan.

Sincerely,