Teresa (Tess) Flanagan
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EDUCATION

CORNELL UNIVERSITY Ithaca, NY
Ph.D. | Department of Psychology *Aug 2018 – August 2023*
- Concentration in Developmental Psychology, Minor in Cognitive Science
- Dissertation Thesis: Growing up in the digital age: investigating children's use, judgment, and engagement with interactive technologies.
- Committee: Drs. Tamar Kushnir (Co-Chair), Marianella Casasola (Co-Chair), Shaun Nichols, David Pizarro

FRANKLIN & MARSHALL COLLEGE Lancaster, PA
B.A. | Scientific and Philosophical Studies of the Mind Major; Applied Mathematics Minor *May 2018*
- *cum laude*
- Honors Thesis: "What Will the Robot Do?: A Psychological, Philosophical, and Technological Study on Children's Attribution of Free Will"
- Honors Thesis Committee: Drs. Lauren Howard (Co-Chair), Joshua Rottman (Co-Chair), Robyn Waller, Kristi Leimgruber, Nina Kollars

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Social Cognitive Development; Human-Robot Interaction; Trust and Learning; Agency Beliefs; Moral Judgments

RESEARCH POSITIONS AND EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO Chicago, IL
Data Science Institute; Computer Science Department
- Postdoctoral Scholar, Human-Robot Interaction Lab (PI: Dr. Sarah Sebo) *Aug 2024 – Present*

DUKE UNIVERSITY Durham, NC
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience
- Postdoctoral Associate, Early Childhood Cognition Lab (PI: Dr. Tamar Kushnir) *Aug 2023 – Aug 2024*
- Research Affiliate, Early Childhood Cognition Lab (PI: Dr. Tamar Kushnir) *Aug 2021 – Aug 2023*

CORNELL UNIVERSITY Ithaca, NY
Department of Psychology
- Graduate Researcher, Research on the Principles of Sufficient Reasoning (PI: Dr. Shaun Nichols) *June 2022 – Aug 2023*
- Graduate Researcher, Play and Learning Lab (PI: Dr. Marianella Casasola) *June 2022 – Aug 2023*
- Graduate Researcher, Early Childhood Cognition Lab (PI: Dr. Tamar Kushnir) *Aug 2018 – May 2022*

FRANKLIN & MARSHALL COLLEGE Lancaster, PA
Scientific and Philosophical Studies of the Mind Program and Department of Psychology
- Lab Manager, Development and Experience Center (PIs: Drs. Lauren Howard, Joshua Rottman, Krista Casler) *Jan 2017 – May 2018*
- Research Assistant and Hackman Scholar, Early Social Cognition Lab (PI: Dr. Lauren Howard) *Jan 2016 – May 2018*

YALE UNIVERSITY New Haven, CT
Department of Psychology *June 2016 – Aug 2016*
- Intern Research Assistant, Yale Mind and Development Lab (PIs: Drs. Paul Bloom and Christina Starmans)

PUBLICATIONS ([+] indicates undergraduate research assistant)

Flanagan, T., Zhang, J.[+], Bian, L., & Sebo, S. (2026). Can you help me? The influence of robot requests for help on child-robot connection. *In Proceedings of the 2026 ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI '26)*. https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3757279.3785631

Flanagan, T., Vesga, A., Kushnir, T., & Nichols, S. (2025). But why?: Children's belief in the necessity of explanations. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2025.106317

Georgiou, N., **Flanagan, T.**, Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2025). Perceived Morality of Robot and Human Transgressors Varies By Perceived Ability to Feel. *In Proceedings of the 2025 ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI '25).*

Flanagan, T., Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2024). School-age children are more skeptical of inaccurate robots than adults. *Cognition.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2024.105814

Flanagan, T., Zhao, X., Xu, F., & Kushnir, T. (2024). Is it personal or is it social? The interaction of knowledge domain and statistical evidence in U.S. and Chinese preschoolers' social generalizations. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001605

Flanagan, T., Wong, G.[+], & Kushnir, T. (2023). The minds of machines: Children's beliefs about the experiences, thoughts, and morals of familiar interactive technologies. *Developmental Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001524

Flanagan, T., & Kushnir, T. (2022). Children's Developing Beliefs About Agency and Free Will in an Increasingly Technological World. *HUMANA.MENTE Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *15*(42), 179-204. Retrieved from https://www.humanamente.eu/index.php/HM/article/view/415

Flanagan, T., Rottman, J., Howard, L. (2021). Constrained choice: Children's and adults' attribution of choice to a humanoid robot. *Cognitive Science, 45*(10), e13043. https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.13043

Liu, J., Partington, S., Suh, Y., Finiasz, Z., **Flanagan, T.**, Kocher, D., Kortenaar, M., Kushnir, T. (2021). The Community-Engaged Lab: A Case-Study Introduction for Developmental Science. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.715914

Flanagan, T., Rottman, J., Howard, L. (2019). Do children ascribe the ability to choose to humanoid robots?. *Proceedings of the 41th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Flanagan, T. & Kushnir, T. (2019). Individual differences in counterfactual fluency predict judgments of free will. *Proceedings of the 41th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Flanagan, T., & Kushnir, T. (in press). Children's Judgments and Interactions with Empathetic AI. In D. Cameron & A. Perry (Eds.), *AI Empathy*.

Flanagan, T., DeCesare, A.[+], & Kushnir, T. (under review). Technologies in the home. A comprehensive report on children's daily technology use.

Cao, X., **Flanagan, T**., & Wang, F. (under review). Would you trust a robot that makes errors? The Impact of robot errors on children's trust.

Flanagan, T., Pitts, C.[+], Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (in prep). Children's persistence and collaboration with mistaken robots.

Flanagan, T., Calabro, R., Leong, Y.C., & Sebo, S. (in prep). Mind perception of a cheating robot.

Zhang, J.[+], **Flanagan, T.**, & Sebo, S. (in prep). Who am I collaborating with? Users perceptions of robots that are controlled by LLMs.

Lin, T.**, Flanagan, T.**, Malani, U.[+], Liang. Y.L.[+], Multu, B., Michaelis, J., & Sebo, S. (in prep). Comparing the effects of robot empathy and self-disclosure on people's rapport with a work companion robot.

PRESENTATIONS

CHAIRED CONFERENCE SYMPOSIA

Flanagan, T. (2025). Children and their (imperfect) bots: New evidence for children's judgments of technologies and its limitations. Paper symposium presented at the *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting,* Minneapolis, MN.

Flanagan, T. (2021). The statistics of group cognition: New evidence for children's statistical learning of social groups. Paper symposium presented at the *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting,* Virtual.

PEER-REVIEWED ORAL PRESENTATIONS (*presenting author, + student author)

Flanagan, T.*, Georgiou, N., Pitts, C.[+], Zhang, J.[+], Scassellati, B., Bian, L., Kushnir, T., & Sebo, S. (2026). Children's Obligation to Imperfect Robots. Paper presented at the *Cognitive Development Society Conference,* Montreal, Canada.

Flanagan, T., Zhang, J.[+], Bian, L., & Sebo, S. (2026). Can you help me? The influence of robot requests for help on child-robot connection. Paper presented at the *2026 ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI '26),* Edinburgh, UK.

Flanagan, T.*, Pitts, C.*[+], Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2025). Children's persistence and collaboration with mistaken robots. Paper presented at the *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting,* Minneapolis, MN.

Georgiou, N.*, **Flanagan, T.**, Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2025). Perceived Morality of Robot and Human Transgressors Varies By Perceived Ability to Feel. Paper presented at the *2025 ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI '25),* Melbourne, Australia.

Flanagan, T.*, Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2022). The role of epistemic and moral qualities on children's trust of an inaccurate robot. Paper presented at the *Society for Philosophy and Psychology Meetin*g, Milan, Italy.

Flanagan, T.*, Zhao, X., Kushnir, T. (2021). The Statistics of Group Cognition: New Evidence for Children's Statistical Learning of Social Groups. Paper presented at the *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting,* Virtual.

Flanagan, T.*, Rottman, J., Howard, L. (2019). Do children ascribe the ability to choose to humanoid robots?. Paper presented at the *Conference of the Cognitive Society*, Montreal, Quebec.

PEER-REVIEWED POSTER PRESENTATIONS (*presenting author, + student author)

Flanagan, T.*, Pitts, C.[+], Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2025). Children's persistence and collaboration with mistaken robots. Poster presented at the *Society for Philosophy and Psychology*, Ithaca, New York.

Flanagan, T.*, Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2024). Feeling robots are moral robots: Investigating the influence of emotional capacities on moral judgments. Poster presented at the *Society for Philosophy and Psychology*, Purdue, Indiana.

Flanagan, T.*, Vesga, A., Kushnir, T., & Nichols, S. (2024). Must there be an explanation? Children and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Poster to be presented at the *Cognitive Development Society Conference*.

Flanagan, T.*, Vesga, A., Kushnir, T., & Nichols, S. (2023). Must there be an explanation? Children and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Poster presented at the *Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, Sydney, Australia.

Flanagan, T.*, Vesga, A., Kushnir, T., & Nichols, S. (2023). Must there be an explanation? Children and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Poster presented at the *Society for Philosophy and Psychology Meeting*, Pittsburg, PA.

Flanagan, T.*, Georgiou, N., Scassellati, B., & Kushnir, T. (2022). Children's trust of an inaccurate robot depends on the robot's motives. Poster presented at the *Cognitive Development Society Conference*, Madison, Wisconsin.

Flanagan, T.*, Wong, G.[+], & Kushnir, T. (2021). The Roomba is like a computer, the Nao is like a human, but the Alexa knows good from bad: Children's beliefs about the properties of interactive technological agents. Poster presented at the *Society for Philosophy and Psychology Meeting*, Virtual.

Flanagan, T.*, Wong, G.[+], & Kushnir, T. (2021). Children's beliefs about the agentic properties of three different interactive technologies. Poster presented at the *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting*, Virtual.

Flanagan, T.*, & Kushnir, T. (2019). Preschool-aged children generalize statistically learned functions and labels but not preferences to other agents. Poster presented at the *Cognitive Development Society Conference*, Louisville, Kentucky.

Flanagan, T.* & Kushnir, T. (2019). Individual differences in counterfactual fluency predict judgments of free will. Poster presented at the *Conference of the Cognitive Society*, Montreal, Quebec.

Flanagan, T.*, Rottman, J., Howard, L. (2019). Children's Attribution of Free Will to Human and Robot Agents. Poster presented at the *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting*, Baltimore, Maryland.

Howard, L.*, **Flanagan, T.***, Waters, F., & Liberman, Z. (2017). Children's Memory for the Moral and Conventional Actions of Ingroup and Outgroup Members. Poster presented at the *Cognitive Development Society Conference*, Portland, Oregon.

INDIVIDUAL TALKS & PRESENTATIONS (first author only)

Children's treatment of robots as moral agents. (2024). Presented at the Developmental Psychology Brownbag, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Feeling robots are moral robots: Investigating the influence of emotional capacities on adults' moral judgments. (2024). Presented at the Moral Philosophy Research Group, Duke University, Durham, NC.

Children's treatment of robots as moral agents. (2023). Presented at the Moral Philosophy Research Group, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Children's trust of imperfect robots. (2022). Presented at the Developmental Psychology Brownbag, Duke University, Durham, NC.

Children's moral treatment towards robots. (2021). Presented at the Deepest Beliefs Lab, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

U.S. and Chinese children's generalization of statistically learned actions. (2020). Presented at Toronto Early Cognition Lab, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Children's attribution of agency to interactive technologies. (2020). Presented at Yale Social Robotics Lab, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

How U.S. and Chinese children generalize statistically learned functions and labels but not preferences to other agents. (2020). Presented at Department of Human Development Brown Bag Series, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

What Will the Robot Do?: A Psychological, Philosophical, and Technological Study on Children's Attribution of Free Will. (2018). Presented for Edward S. Reed Prize Talk, Franklin & Marshall, Lancaster, PA.

The Intersection of Robotics and Folk Theory of Free Will. (2018). Presented at a meeting of the Junto Honor's Society, Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA.

Children's Memory for the Moral and Conventional Actions of Ingroup and Outgroup Members. (2017). Presented at the Hackman Summer Research Fair, Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA.

IN THE NEWS

Paige Miranda. (August 14, 2023). 'Roomba is like your pet and Alexa is like your friend': How kids view home smart devices. *WUNC.* https://www.wunc.org/science-technology/2023-08-14/how-kids-view-smart-home-devices-roomba-pet-alexa-friend

Petra Stock. (May 25, 2023). Why people are making room for Roomba… in their hearts. *COSMOS.* https://cosmosmagazine.com/technology/explainer-why-people-are-making-room-for-roomba-in-their-hearts/

Alison Gopnik. (May 13, 2023). A child's view of intelligent machines. *Wall Street Journal.* https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-childs-view-of-intelligent-machines-65838dae

Dan Vahaba. (April 9, 2023). Kids judge Alexa smarter than Roomba, but say both deserve kindness. *Duke Today.* https://today.duke.edu/2023/04/kids-judge-alexa-smarter-roomba-say-both-deserve-kindness

SERVICE WORKSHOPS

Co-organizer of the AI in Society Workshop. (October 2021). Interdisciplinary workshop for graduate researchers focusing on the role of artificial intelligence in society comprised of invited speakers, panels, research talks, and networking events. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. https://aisocietycornell.weebly.com/

Lead organizer of the Graduate Women in Science Empowerment Month. (March 2021). Event series comprised of invited speakers, panels, and workshops designed to empower yourself, others, and your community. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. https://gwiscornell.wordpress.com/empowerment-month-2021/

Lead organizer of the Graduate Women in Science Empowerment Month. (March 2020). Event series comprised of invited speakers, panels, and workshops designed to empower yourself, others, and your community. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. https://gwiscornell.wordpress.com/march-2020-empowerment-month/

Co-organizer of the Graduate Diversity and Inclusion Renaissance Ball. (November 2019). Social event to celebrate the diversity of the Cornell graduate community and promote inclusion of all of its members. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

HONORS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

ACADEMIC

- Data Science Postdoctoral Scholar Fellowship – Awarded $81,000 *Present*
- Foulk, Martha E. Fellowship – Awarded $26,128 to CHE graduate student for academic promise *Spring 2021*
- Human Development Summer 2020 Fellowship – $3,000 summer research award *May 2020 – Aug 2020*
- Edward S. Reed Prize – Awarded to student with excellence in the SPM program *May 2018*
- Awarded Nissley Scholar Grant – $700 to fund independent research *Nov 2017 – May 2018*
- Lucille and William Hackman Endowment – $5,000 summer research award *May 2017 – Aug 2017*

SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

- Co-chair of Duke's Developmental Psychology Brownbag Series *Aug 2022 – May 2023*
- Member of Cornell's Graduate and Professional Diversity Council *Oct 2018 – Aug 2023*
- President of Cornell's Graduate Women in Science *May 2020 – July 2021*
- Secretary of Cornell's Graduate Women in Science *Oct 2018 – May 2020*
- Executive Member of Franklin & Marshall's Alice Drum's Women Center *June 2017 – May 2018*
- Selected member of Franklin & Marshall's Harwood Leadership Seminar *Sept 2015 – May 2016*

RELEVANT SKILLS

- *Data Presentation, Collection, and Analysis Software*: R, SPSS, Python, Qualtrics, Prolific
- *Methods*: Museum data collection (children 2-10 years), eye tracking (infants 6-18 months), in-lab data collection (infants-adolescence), online data collection (children and adult), in-home data collection (children)

TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant Mentor

- *Mentor*: Supervised 24 undergraduate students and 2 high school students as research assistants during my graduate and post-graduate career; 2 completed an independent honors thesis and 7 received research awards and fellowships

Project Mentor | Data Science Institute | University of Chicago *Winter and Spring 2026*

- *Mentor*: Supervised weekly meetings on progress for an undergraduate group independent research project and provide grades on the progress and final project

Teaching Assistant | Department of Computer Science | University of Chicago *Summer 2025*

- *TA:* Introductory to Robotics for a high school program

Teaching Assistantship | Department of Human Development | Cornell University

- *Head TA:* HD 1150 Introductory to Infancy and Childhood *Fall 2019*
- *TA:* HD 1150 Introductory to Infancy and Childhood *Fall 2018*