



Child Development Laboratories

Newsletter - Winter 2018

We are a group of child development research laboratories at the University of Ottawa. This newsletter will keep you informed about our current studies, results, and other research activities. We thank all participants and daycares who have taken part in our studies so far!

Childhood Thinking Laboratory

Ongoing studies

The cognitive mechanisms underlying selective learning in early childhood

This study's purpose is to investigate the links between young children's learning strategies and their cognitive skills. Children between 3 and 5 years of age have helped us learn more about these associations both in-lab and in daycares across the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

Toddlers' attention to the credibility of others

In this research, we are interested in learning how young children, around their 3rd birthday, use non-verbal and verbal cues of confidence to decide whether or not to learn from a person and imitate their actions.

Attention to confidence and overconfidence in preschoolers

The goal of this study is to investigate the circumstances under which children aged between 4 and 5 years old may fall prey to claims of overconfident informants. Children watch video clips depicting an individual labelling various toys in either a confident or unconfident manner and answer a series of questions afterwards.

Completed Studies

Many parents have completed a questionnaire on children's behaviour, the *Children's Social Understanding Scale*, either during a visit to the lab or in an online study. An article confirming the equivalency of the English and French versions of this questionnaire was recently accepted by the academic journal *Psychologie Française*. This article was written by the CTL's director Patricia Brosseau-Liard in collaboration with professor Diane Poulin-Dubois of Concordia University (Montreal). Thanks to all parents for their participation in this research!

Language Development Laboratory

Ongoing Studies

Using words to form categories

Based on previous research showing that hearing a word while seeing an object on-screen can help 3-6-month-olds categorize objects, we are interested in seeing if babies this age can categorize objects and if being presented with words in a foreign language as opposed to their own has the same effect. We hope that this study will demonstrate whether any language input helps babies to categorize objects, or whether babies specifically use their native language to categorize objects.

The effect of mixed-up labels on word-learning

In this study, looking at 13- to 15- month-olds we are investigating whether mixing up names of objects presented on a screen (e.g., seeing a shoe, but hearing “kitty”) helps or hinders infants’ abilities to learn new words in detail.

Understanding Bilingual and Monolingual Language Acquisition via Brain Waves

The aim of this study is to observe how 9-month-old infants’ brain process words that either match or don’t match associated objects. To do so, we are using electroencephalography (EEG). This (painless and non-invasive) method involves the use of a cap equipped with 32 electrodes that record brain activity.

Social Moral Development Laboratory

Ongoing Studies

Ottawa Toddler Study: The development of cooperation in the first years of life

The Ottawa Social Moral Development Lab has just begun a new study, exploring the development of cooperation over the first year of life. We are looking for 3-month-olds (and their parents), currently residing in Canada, to participate in this study. You and your baby will take part in everyday interactions and games, and fill-out questionnaires asking about motor development, and activities in the home. Best of all, you can take part in our study from the comfort of your home, joining us by Skype or FaceTime. [N.B. You will require a camera-equipped computer or phone to take part in the study]

Childhood Cognition and Learning Laboratory

Ongoing Studies

When Can Children Plan to Avoid a Future Mishap?

This study is aimed at typically-developing 4- to 8-year-olds (anglophone or bilingual). We're investigating children's capacity to think about and plan for the future in order to avoid losing a reward.

Completed Study

Preschoolers’ Understanding of Changing Preferences

Studies on future thinking in preschoolers have revealed that this population (especially younger ones) has difficulty appreciating that their current (e.g., Kool-Aid) and future (e.g., coffee) preferences will differ. But do these

“low-performing” children nevertheless have some appreciation that current and future preferences will differ? To explore this possibility, we asked a group of preschoolers (3-5 year olds) to choose between child- (e.g., Kool-Aid) and adult- (e.g., coffee) preferable items according to what they liked best “now” (self-now trials) and what they would like best in the future (self-future trials). Extending previous research, children were also asked to indicate how much they liked the child- and adult-preferable items now (self-now trials) and how much they would like them in the future (self-future trials) using a scale ranging from 1 “the worst!” to 9 “the best!”. Children were then categorized as “low”, “medium”, or “high” performers based on their ability to choose child-preferable items for their current self and adult-preferable items for their future self. Key results reveal that “low” performers failed to appreciate that they would like child-preferable items less in the future than they do now and that they would like adult items more in the future than they do now. On the other hand, “high” performers demonstrated an understanding that their current and future preferences will differ. These findings both support and extend previous research on children’s understanding of changes in their own mental states.



Dr. Cristina Atance, director of the Childhood Cognition and Learning Laboratory with a participant at the *Living Lab*

HIGHLIGHTS

The Childhood Cognition and Learning Laboratory and the Language Development Laboratory are now at the Canada Science and Technology Museum! In partnership with the museum and in collaboration with the Centre for Child Language Research, we opened the *Living Lab* this past fall. The *Living Lab*, adjacent to the Children’s Gallery, aims to bring cutting-edge research directly to the community, in a fun, accessible and interactive manner. We invite you and your children to visit us while you’re at the museum to take part in our game-like studies on language and cognitive development.

UPCOMING EVENTS

If you are looking for a fun activity to do with your whole family, come join us at Kidsfest 2018, on March 3rd and 4th at the EY center or at the Parent and Child Expo 2018 on April 21st and 22nd at the Nepean Sportsplex! Both events will feature local parenting exhibitors and many different activities for your kids, including face painting, gymnastics demonstrations, arts and crafts activities and many more!

We would love to tell you about our different ongoing studies at the Developmental Laboratories. We are very excited to start our new projects and would be happy to have your children take part in our studies.

HELP US GET THE WORD OUT!

We’re always looking for new participants! If you or anyone you know would like to participate, please don’t hesitate to contact us: (613) 562-5800 ext. 4446

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To participate, please visit:

<http://socialsciences.uottawa.ca/childhood-thinking/participate>