

CHILD COGNITION LAB

※Parent Newsletter※ **BOSTON UNIVERSITY** ※Spring 2010※

Dear Parents,

We would like to take this opportunity to update you on what we have been working on at the Child Cognition Lab. We have been very busy with several studies looking at how children learn, and continue to design new studies to help further our understanding of child development.

Thank you to all the families and daycares who have participated in our studies. Our research would not be possible without your cooperation and we appreciate your help! We hope that you and your children found the experience to be interesting and fun.

Please do not hesitate to forward our information to family, friends, and daycares that might be interested in taking part in our research. We continue to need participants and are currently looking for children between the ages of 2 and 10 years. If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions, please contact us at (617) 358-1738 or childlab@bu.edu.

Sincerely,
The Child Cognition Lab



Child Development Labs

Who is working in the
lab this fall?

Lab Director
Professor Deb Kelemen

Lab Manager
Laure Saint Georges

Graduate Students
Josh Rottman
Becca Seston

Research Assistants
Megan Baumgarten
Mary Burbridge
Missy Goldberg
Anna Kyritsis
Stephanie Lee
Rachel Lissandrello
Rawan Missouri
Maria Renken
Meredith Taylor



Check out our NEW
website!

www.bu.edu/childcognit

Current Studies

Storybook

PARTICIPANTS: 5-10 year olds

DURATION OF STUDY: 2 visits – 30 minutes on first visit, 45 minutes on second visit 3 months later.

DESCRIPTION: In this study we are interested in whether children can learn new information from storybooks, and what kind of information they retain. We'll read a storybook with your child and then ask him/her to help us retell it.

Tools + Surreptitious

PARTICIPANTS: 2 year olds (26-34 mo)

DURATION OF STUDY: 2 visits – 20 minutes on first visit, 10 minutes on second visit 1-3 days later.

DESCRIPTION: These studies look at how children learn functions of new objects from other people. We show children two different tools and demonstrate how to use one of them. We then watch the decisions that children make while using those tools to perform the same goal again, and other tasks.

Design Stance Assessment

PARTICIPANTS: 3 year olds (38-46 mo)

DURATION OF STUDY: This study is looking at how children learn about unfamiliar objects. We're interested in what social and design cues children pay attention to when learning what new objects are for. Children will see adults use tools that they have never seen before to perform a few simple goals, like ringing a bell. We then ask the children to choose which tool they would use for themselves to accomplish the same goal. The study takes about 20 minutes.

DESCRIPTION:

Imitation 2

PARTICIPANTS: 3.5 year olds (38-46 mo) and 4.5 year olds (50-58 mo)

DURATION OF STUDY: 20 minutes

DESCRIPTION: In this study we are looking at how children learn about unfamiliar objects. We are interested in what social and design cues children are paying attention to when learning what new objects are for. Children will see adults use new tools to perform a simple goal and then choose which tool they would use for themselves.

Speeded TE

PARTICIPANTS: Adults

DURATION OF STUDY: 1 hour

DESCRIPTION: This study is exploring the effects of education on adults' reasoning and attitudes. It consists of three computer-based tasks where participants make judgments regarding various statements about natural phenomena. Participants also complete a survey exploring knowledge and beliefs about nature.

Recent Results

Despite everyday occurrences of unfairness, people maintain an expectation that resources should be distributed fairly. An interesting study by one of the lab's former graduate students Liz Donovan, investigated this phenomenon, specifically whether every unequal distribution is initially assumed to be intentional. Participants were shown videos of accidental, negative outcomes where sometimes the outcome was also unequal and sometimes it was not. The study found that both adults and children could correctly judge accidental, negative outcomes to be accidental. Interestingly, the study also found that adults and children judge accidental, negative outcomes that are also unequal as intended.

Recent Publications*

- ※ Kelemen, D. & Rosset, E.. (2009). The Human Function Compunction: Teleological explanation in adults. *Cognition*, *111*, 138-143.

Research has found that children possess a broad bias in favor of teleological—or purpose-based—explanations of natural phenomena. This two-experiment study explored whether adults implicitly possess a similar bias.

- ※ Casler, K. & Kelemen, D. (2008). Developmental continuity in the teleo-functional explanation: Reasoning about nature among Romanian Romani adults. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, *9*(3), 340-362.

This cross-cultural study explores whether apparent restrictions in using teleo-functional explanations to account for all objects in terms of purpose occurs as a function of age and development or scientific literacy.

- ※ DiYanni, C. & Kelemen, D. (2008). Using a bad tool with good intention: Young childrens' imitation of adults' questionable choices. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*.

This article presents three studies exploring 2- to 4-year-old's responses upon witnessing a model whose questionable tool use choices suggested her untrustworthiness.

- ※ Rosset, E. (2008). It's no accident: Our bias for intentional explanations. *Cognition*, *108*, 771-780.

Three studies tested the idea that our analyses of human behavior are guided by an “intentionality bias,” an implicit bias where all actions are judged to be intentional by default.

*Publications can be found at www.bu.edu/childcognition/publications

Lab Members



Lab Party, Fall 2009

We are still working hard and are always looking for children and parents who are interested in helping us! If you would like to get involved, or know others who would be interested in participating in our studies please contact us! We are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We can also schedule evening hours or home visits to accommodate difficult schedules.

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Keep us updated!
Email or call us with contact information changes.