

# EARLY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH GROUP



## KID FOCUS 2015

### WHAT IS THE EDRG?

The Early Development Research Group (EDRG) is a group of six research centres in UBC's Department of Psychology. We study the development of language, learning, and social understanding in infants and children up to 12 years old. In this first-ever issue of "Kid Focus", we are excited to share with you the results from some of our research with children two years old and up!

### THANK YOU, PARTICIPANTS!

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the hundreds of parents and children that have supported our research this past year by participating; we would not have been able to do it without you!

**WOULD YOU  
LIKE TO  
PARTICIPATE?**

SIGN UP ONLINE AT  
<http://edrg.psych.ubc.ca>

OR CONTACT US AT  
(604) 822-9540  
[earlydev@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:earlydev@psych.ubc.ca)



### FROM THE K.I.D. STUDIES CENTRE: "DISCERNING MINDS"

The Knowledge, Imagination, and Development (K.I.D.) Studies Centre focuses its research on topics related to children's social reasoning, and is directed by Dr. Susan Birch.

When it comes to accepting information from others, older children tend to become skeptical of an unjustifiably confident informant. Rather than passively absorbing knowledge, children are discerning in whom they learn from, for example preferring to learn from individuals who are accurate or confident.

Although confidence should be related to one's underlying knowledge, it is possible that an individual is unjustifiably confident, or overconfident. We investigated when children become sensitive to whether confidence is justified — do they prefer to learn from a confident individual, regardless of whether confidence is justified?

We found that children aged 3-12 years prefer to learn from the person they think is smarter and, on the whole, children thought the confident person was smarter when her confidence was justified. As children age, they are increasingly skeptical of an unjustifiably confident individual as a credible source of knowledge, suggesting they develop a more nuanced understanding that one's confidence needs to be justified.

## FROM THE INFANT STUDIES CENTRE: “NATIVE LANGUAGE”

The Infant Studies Centre focuses on language development and is directed by Dr. Janet Werker.

We know that from the first days of life, infants notice differences between their native language(s) and other unfamiliar languages. Even right after being born, newborn babies prefer to listen to the language(s) they heard while they were in utero! And by the time infants start learning words at 1-2 years, they seem to learn new words made up of sounds used in their native language much easier than they learn words made up of sounds from unfamiliar languages (for example, sounds from African click languages).

In a new set of studies, we are interested in whether infants’ preferences for their native language influence who they prefer to learn from. To test this, we show 2-year-old children videos of one person labeling new objects with words that use English language sounds (“look at the biba!”) and one person labeling new objects with words that use non-native language sounds (such as clicks sounds, “look at the !o!a”). Then we look to see if the children are more likely to learn new words from the person who previously labeled with English-sounding words versus from the person who previously labeled with non-native language words. These studies are currently ongoing and **we are always looking for more 24-26 month old participants!**

### The UBC Peer Relationships in Childhood Lab is recruiting families for a new study!

They are looking for **6-11 year old boys and girls with suspected or diagnosed ADHD and poor social skills or trouble getting along with peers.** Parents will receive 10 sessions of parent group intervention and payment for study measures.

**For more information please contact:  
UBC Peer Relationships in Childhood Lab  
Dr. Amori Mikami  
604-822-8756 or [peerlab@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:peerlab@psych.ubc.ca)**



## FROM THE CENTRE FOR INFANT COGNITION: “HAPPY GIVING”

The Centre for Infant Cognition (CIC), directed by Dr. Kiley Hamlin, focuses on the development of social reasoning.

Human are an extremely social species and often interact with many people each day. The majority of these interactions are pleasant, and people frequently do nice things for one another, including helping and sharing. Engaging in these “prosocial behaviors” often involves sacrificing something — such as time, energy, or money — yet people tend to feel good after doing so. These positive feelings may explain why we do nice things, and why these behaviours appear early in development. A recent study at the CIC found that 23-month-olds were happier when giving treats to others than when receiving treats for themselves. Further, these toddlers were happier when giving away their own treats than when giving away a treat from the researcher. Evidence that prosocial behavior leads to happiness in toddlers suggests that the experience of positive emotions may contribute to the widespread cooperation characteristic of humans.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Children (and adults) extend minds and human internal states to animals, inanimate nature, and technology — what is often referred to as *anthropomorphism*. The K.I.D. Studies Centre has developed a measure of anthropomorphism for use with children, to investigate whether and how children anthropomorphize; how it differs between individuals and across development and culture; and how it relates to other aspects of social cognition.