December 2024

Duke CHILD Studies

NEWSLETTER

OUR CHILD STUDIES LABS:

Identity and Diversity Lab
PI: Dr. Sarah Gaither

Wilbourn Infant Lab at Duke (WILD)
PI: Dr. Makeba Wilbourn

Tomasello Lab
PI: Dr. Michael Tomasello

Early Childhood and Cognition Lab (ECC)
PI: Dr. Tamar Kushnir

Mind and Culture Lab
PI: Dr. Dorsa Amir

THANK YOU!

For 2024, we were excited to continue building on the momentum of the past year, welcoming families back with even greater consistency and enthusiasm. It's been an incredibly successful year for psychology research, and we are deeply grateful for your participation in our studies. Your involvement has been key to advancing our work. In this newsletter, we'll share some of the fascinating findings and specific topics we explored this year. If you have any questions or thoughts, feel free to reach out to us: **rpad@duke.edu**! We thank you all again!

Community Outreach

Our mission in Duke CHILD Studies is to engage with the community of Durham to diversify developmental science and foster an inclusive environment. We aim to partner with local community organizations, leaders, and families to make science accessible and meaningful to the communities we work with. By including diverse perspectives within our science, we can better understand child development for children from all backgrounds.

Thank you to our 2024 Community Partners!

- *Asian Focus NC*
- *Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation*
- *Duke Maestro Care for Research*
- *Durham Montessori*
- *Durham Parks and Recreation*
- *Durham Public Schools*
- *Morehead Planetarium Science Center*
- *Museum of Life and Science*
- *Southpoint Mall*
- *The Little School at Duke*

Community Outreach

In 2024, we recruited ***over 340 children*** and their families from our community events! Thank you for your support!

Museum of Life and Science Community Day

Southpoint Mall

Magical Hill Arts Festival

Haunted Hill Trunk or Treat

Duke Identity and Diversity Lab

PI: Dr. Sarah Gaither

How does the use of nonverbal communication in the form of gesture facilitate word learning?
Earlier this year, in collaboration with the WILD lab, we completed the DPS Thrive study. To investigate this, we had students (ages 6-8) at a local Durham County Public School engage with a number of children's stories. Throughout each book, children were demonstrated with ASL gestures associated with certain target words relevant to the DPS curriculum. We found that both students with and without gesture learned around 4 new words following the nine-week intervention. However, students in gesture classrooms learned even more words!

How do Latino children understand their identity—as a race, an ethnicity, or something else entirely?
Does this understanding shift depending on how it's framed in everyday situations, like on demographic forms? In this study, we explore how Latino children, ages 9-12, respond to demographic forms: one that lists Latino as only an ethnicity, and the other as a racial category. We also looked at their experiences with skin tone, discrimination, parent-child cultural conversations, belonging, and well-being. **Our goal is to understand how these factors shape a child's sense of who they are and where they fit in.** The initial sample for this study has been completed, but we remain open to additional participants.

We investigated similar questions to the above study but with Latinx Duke students. In focus groups, they explored how demographic forms affect their identity and sense of belonging. They then reflected on whether they see their Latinx identity as a race or an ethnicity and share how these experiences shape their feelings of inclusion in academic and professional spaces. **Through this research, we hope to capture the nuances of Latinx identity and the importance of demographic forms that fully recognize and respect the diversity within Latinx communities**.

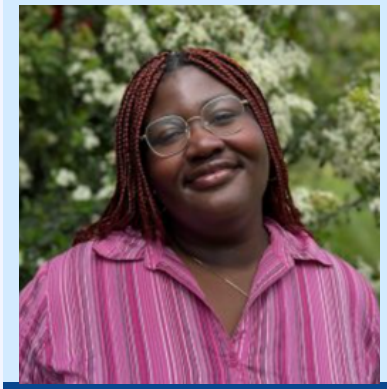
Please read about our completed studies!

Thank you to our contributors and participants!

We also welcomed new members to our lab!

Our new graduate student, Tose, joined us this fall, who is interested in exploring differences in socialization for children whose parents immigrated and what differences may arise between this group from their peers who did not immigrate in their parent's country of origin and their new home.

We also welcomed a new lab manager, Hannah who joins us after graduating from UNC Chapel Hill.



Please read about our ongoing studies!

How does language impact children's cognition of social groups?
Stereotypes are constructed and transmitted through our use of language. Linguistic quantifiers make statements more precise and may influence generalizations of group traits to individual members. In this study, 4-7 year old children were introduced to a fictional group of people using generic language (e.g. Sumas eat foliberries) or one of various quantifying language conditions (e.g. a few Sumas eat foliberries, half of Sumas.., most Sumas...). When hearing quantifying language, children were less likely to generalize traits to individual characters and were less certain of their assumptions about the characters. But, the higher a child's social essentialism score, the more likely they were to generalize group traits. **Through research like this, we aim to better understand how we can reduce stereotyping through intentional actions, like modifying our speech**.

How does nonverbal communication—like gestures—affect conversations between people from different racial and gender backgrounds?
By studying these interactions, we hope to gain a better understanding of how body language can create a sense of comfort, build connections, and lead to positive experiences in new social settings. Participants in this study take part in discussions with others, allowing us to observe their natural responses and interactions. Our goal is to see if using gestures or mirroring physical actions can make conversations run smoother and help bridge social gaps between differing identities. Through this work, we aim to uncover ways to encourage inclusivity and deeper understanding between people of different backgrounds. We are looking forward to sharing more findings as we move closer towards the conclusion of this study!

Wilbourn Infant Lab at Duke (WILD)

PI: Dr. Makeba Parramore Wilbourn

2024 Recap

Could gesture (non-verbal cues) be a cultural tool to narrow the learning gap between Black and White children?
Our lab has been working with the Duke Identity & Diversity Lab, led by Dr. Sarah Gaither, on a new research project. This past year, we were able to further investigate this question through a storytelling study with children ages 6-8, in partnership with Durham Public Schools. In this study, we created and read four children's stories to DPS students. In each story, we paired target vocabulary words with an ASL gesture. We found that both students who learned the words with and without the accompanying gesture learned around 4 new words after the study. However, students in the gesture group learned more words on average.

Infant-Directed Speech Study (MILDWILD)
Our lab has been working with Dr. Reiko Mazuka from the RIKEN Brain Science Institute on a new research project investigating infant-directed speech (i.e. how we talk to infants as adults). This study is being run in eight different locations and in seven different languages! **We are interested in looking at cross-cultural differences in language teaching and learning for parents and their 18-month-old infants.** This year, we were able to complete data collection for this portion of the study.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in our studies!

We appreciate your time and commitment to our research!

Ongoing Studies

Robot-Directed Speech and Scene Description (MILDWILD cont.)
To continue to further investigate our questions around infant language development, we introduced two new phases to the study: Robot-Directed Speech and Scene Description.

We are currently looking to recruit infants age 17.5 to 18.5 months and their parents. If you or someone you know would be interested in participating, please let us know, as we would love to have you!

Welcome to the WILD!

This year, we welcomed two new PhD students to our team!

Tose (left)
Tose is a first-year PhD student interested in exploring how immigrant parents racially socialize their children and the effects it has on their children's development.

Ricarda (right)

Ricarda is a PhD Candidate in Experimental Psychology at University College London (UCL) fascinated by early face perception. Specifically, she investigates the effects of exposure to linguistic and racial diversity on infants' and children's emerging face recognition and emotion processing skills.

Tomasello Lab

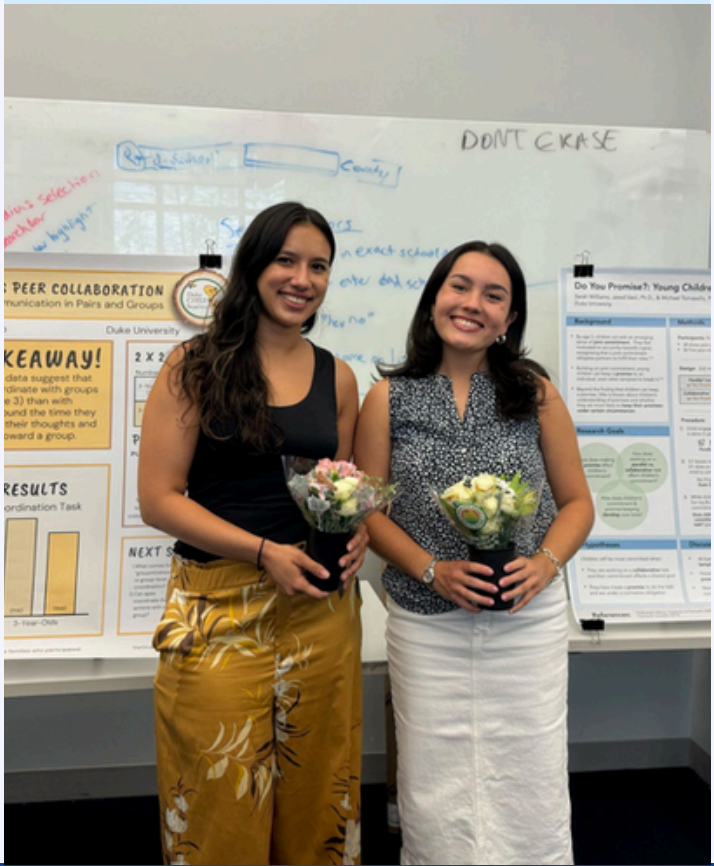
PI: Dr. Michael Tomasello

This year was full of success and new discoveries, made possible by our incredible research staff and all of the amazing families who participated in our studies! **We couldn't do the work that we do without families like yours!** We are so appreciative of all of the families who took the time to drive out to our lab at Duke University, who stopped by our table at the Museum of Life and Science or the Marbles Kids Museum, and who signed up to have their children participate at their preschool!

We are thrilled to have established partnerships with the following preschools in the Research Triangle: Duke Memorial Preschool, the Duke Little School, Abundant Love Christian Daycare, Triangle Grace Preschool, and the Harvest Learning Center! We are so thankful for the wonderful preschools directors that we have collaborated with and for the families who have signed up to participate!

We are so happy to announce that our former graduate student, Jared Vasil, successfully defended his dissertation and received his doctorate degree this spring! Since graduating, he has been working as a postdoc at NYU! We are so proud of him and all of his accomplishments, and we were so sad to see him go!

Alissa Rivero and Sarah Williams (pictured below) both made great progress on their Senior Thesis projects this past year and presented their findings at a poster session! We are so proud of the incredible work that the undergraduates are producing in our lab!



Completed Studies

We are so excited to have started and finished so many projects in 2024. We finished a project on children's understanding of the inclusive meaning behind the word "we", and we found that children are more likely to commit to a task when they were welcomed to do so with the word "we" as opposed to the word "you."

Our undergraduate student, Sarah Williams, also completed the first part of her senior thesis project on children's understanding of promises, and discovered that both 3- and 5-year-old children were more committed to a boring task when they promised to keep doing it. She is currently working on expanding upon this finding by investigating how promise-keeping compares to other types of committments.

Ongoing and New Studies

We are currently working on projects on **how children's beliefs are influenced by testimonial hearsay**, with preliminary findings suggesting that children are very seldom swayed by hearsay. We have also been working on a project looking at the emergence of children's group collaboration where 2- and 3-year-olds are participating together on a task in groups of 2's and 3's! This project is still ongoing, but we've seen some amazing feats of collaboration and coordination from these kiddos. We have lots more studies that are ongoing and getting started, and we are so appreciative for families like yours that participate in our studies! Thank you so much!

Early Childhood Cognition (ECC) Lab

PI: Dr. Tamar Kushnir

Our Team!

2024 Recap

2024 was a busy year for the ECC Lab! We gained some new faces and said goodbye to others. Our postdoc, Dr. Tess Flanagan, began a post-doc position at the University of Chicago, and our post-doc Dr. Pearl Li started a faculty position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We are so excited to watch them thrive in their next academic adventure! We also welcomed Dr. Shaozhe Cheng to the ECC Lab as a visiting post-doc and are excited for all the fun projects he will bring to the lab!

This year, the ECC Lab worked on a wide variety of interesting projects with **4-8-year-olds** and we couldn't have done this without the support of families like you! Here are some of those studies:

Information Sharing
Children know whose information is okay or not okay to share! 5- to 7-year-old children think it is more okay to talk about one's own stories than talking about others' stories. We are currently exploring whether children consider how many people the information is being shared with (a peer or the whole class) when deciding who is allowed to share information. Stay tuned for our findings!

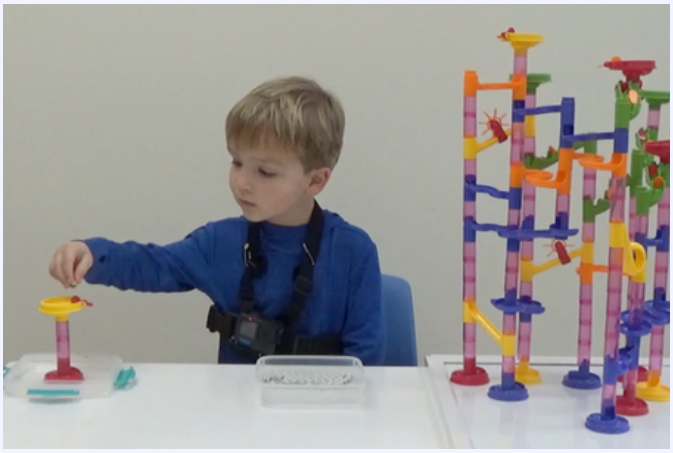
Imagination & Emotion
In order to navigate their negative emotions, it is important for children to be able to come up with ideas for how to make themselves feel better! In a short in-person imagination game we ask 4-7 year olds to generate ideas for how to make themselves feel better if they were upset and we found that children can be really creative with the ideas they come up with!

Running our studies at the Museum of Life and Science in Durham!

ecclabduke

ecclabduke.com

EARLY CHILDHOOD COGNITION LAB



Follow the Rules
Young kids pay attention to how we talk about rules! 4- to 5-year-olds understand the difference between rules that apply to everyone all the time and directions from adults that only apply to them for a short amount of time. Kids in our study were willing to follow a rule even when it was difficult to do, but only taught a new person to do the difficult task if it was framed as a rule for everyone!

Changing Your Mind
Children use their friends to learn about cause and effect! After making a guess about how to activate a light-up machine, children were less likely to change their mind when they met a team of peers who had made the same guess. This shows that 4- to 5-year-old children utilize their social relationships to learn!

Can You Find the Restaurant?
By the time kids are 5 years old, they are taking other people's perspectives when making decisions for themselves. We had kids play a fun computer game where they had to choose a goal for themselves, then introduced another game player (using AI algorithms). Kids took the AI's goals into account when pursuing their own goal!

Game With a Robot
How do children work together with robots that make mistakes? In our study, we have children play a game with a robot where they need to work together to win. So far, we are finding that children play longer and are more likely to forgive a robot that apologizes for messing up than one that does not, just like they do with human partners!

Questions or want to participate in our studies? Email us at ecclab@duke.edu

Mind and Culture Lab

PI: Dr. Dorsa Amir

This fall, the Mind and Culture (MAC) Lab celebrated their first semester at Duke University! After taking the time to set up our protocols, the lab is ready to begin running studies with your children in the new year!

As a brief introduction, the MAC Lab investigates how culture shapes the developing mind. We work with families all around the globe, bringing together tools from developmental psychology and anthropology to better understand cognitive diversity across cultures. The MAC Lab achieves this by playing research games with kids and students locally throughout the year, and taking research trips abroad in the summer.

Our small but mighty team (*left-to-right*)

- **Julia Bainbridge, B.S. (*lab manager*)**
- **Dr. Dorsa Amir (*principal investigator*)**
- **Dr. Julia Smith (*postdoctoral reseearcher*)**

The Mind and Culture Lab

The Mind and Culture Lab is founded by our principal investigator Dr. Dorsa Amir. Dorsa studies children's development of preferences, the emergence of cooperation, and cognitive regularities across cultures. The MAC Lab will continue research in these topics as well as others, like children's competitive strategies and moral reasoning!

In the new year, the Mind and Culture Lab can be found doing research at preschools in the Durham community, the Museum of Life and Science, and at Duke itself with 3-11 year-old children! If you are interested in learning about how your children's environment shapes how they think about the world, be sure to stay tuned!

Questions? We have answers!

maclab@duke.edu

mindandculturelab.com

@dukemaclab

Duke Mind and Culture Lab

Join us @ DUKE CHILD STUDIES!

If anyone you know might be interested in participating in our studies, they can sign up using the QR Codes below!

English

Spanish

Follow us on ***Instagram***:
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