

# UBC Parenting Lab



# Lab

NEWSLETTER

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UPDATE

## From the Director of the Parenting Lab, Dr. Charlotte Johnston:

This is our spring/summer newsletter for 2016, and we continue to be so thankful for all the families who participate in our research projects. We hope you have enjoyed being part of the studies, and we are glad for this opportunity to share some of our findings with you. On the pages that follow, you'll see some of the results from past studies reported. Of course, we also hope that you will be willing to be involved in future studies, and that you'll tell your friends and family about us.

Here's a quick update about the lab personnel. This year, we are home to five graduate students, two research assistants, and two undergraduate researchers. Yuanyuan Jiang has defended her dissertation and is just completing her internship in San Francisco before being awarded her PhD. Natalie Miller and Dave Williamson are both finishing up their dissertations and headed off to internship next year. Congratulations to both of them! Sara Colalillo and Joanne Park are the two other PhD students and both are planning their dissertation research. Kate, Bethany, Lizzy, and Brea are the wonderful undergraduate students in the lab and they help to keep things motoring along.

As always, we must express our thanks for our research funding and student scholarships from agencies such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and UBC.

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# RESEARCH REPORTS

## **How do mothers' symptoms of ADHD relate to their feelings about parenting - conducted by David Williamson**

This study used an online survey and looked at how mothers' own ADHD symptoms are related to how much stress they feel as a parent. 120 mothers completed the measures online and also found another person who would rate the mothers' ADHD symptoms. We found that, not only do mothers who have more difficulty with things such as organization, impulsivity, and forgetfulness feel more stressed, but that those same characteristics also make them feel like they are less effective parents. In fact, we found that feeling like you're not a very good parent is a big part of what leads mothers to feel stressed in the first place: it's not just that their ADHD symptoms make them feel stressed, but those symptoms make them feel like they're not very good parents, and that's what's stressful (or at least part of it). With this information, we became curious if other things made mothers feel like less effective parents and we found the same thing: mothers who use more positive parenting strategies feel less stress, but part of what's happening is that their positive parenting actually make them feel like they're better parents, and that's what's helping them feel less stressed!

## **How do characteristics of inattention and impulsivity in mothers relate to their explanations for child behavior - conducted by Joanne Park**

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) symptoms in adulthood are often related difficulties in parenting, such as staying organized or consistent. However, some have suggested that parents with these characteristics might also show more spontaneity and positive parenting. In this study, we looked at how inattention and impulsivity in mothers related to how they explain both positive and problem behaviors of their children. 79 mothers completed our measures via online survey links. We found that, in general, all mothers explained their children's behavior in a positive way. That is, they were less likely to blame the child for problems (e.g., he knocked over that glass of water by accident because he was tired) and more likely to give the child credit for positive behaviors (e.g., he picked up the book I dropped because he is kind-hearted). However, this pattern was stronger for mothers with less inattention/impulsivity than mothers with more of these characteristics. Mothers who were more inattentive or impulsive, were not quite as positive in their views of the causes of their child's behavior. These findings offer important clues that helping mothers identify and deal with their own ADHD-like characteristics may be important in allowing them to parent in the most positive way possible.

## What do boys attend to in social situations and is this related to their aggressive behavior – conducted by Natalie Miller

The Social Skills Study looked at how boys pay attention to different social cues and whether this attention is related to how they get along with their peers. Over 100 boys participated and their parents completed questionnaires. The boys did several computer tasks that measured different ways of paying attention to social cues. For instance, boys completed a task that measured the speed of their response when they were distracted by videos of other boys expressing anger, happiness, or being calm. We found that boys differed in how much they paid attention to different social cues. Some boys paid more attention to hostile social cues (i.e., angry faces) relative to other social cues (i.e., happy or neutral faces), and other boys attended equally to the different kinds of social cues. Sometimes, paying more attention to hostile social cues was related to more aggressive behavior in boys. However, this relation only held for two of the four computer tasks, suggesting that not all ways of attending are related to aggression. Overall, these results provide preliminary evidence that the ways children pay attention to different social cues is related to how they get along with others. The next step is to examine these relations in girls – stay tuned for those results.

# STUDY OPPORTUNITIES



Do you have a child with ADHD or ADD who has poor social skills, trouble making friends, or relates poorly to peers?



We are a UBC study recruiting families now!

We are looking for boys and girls:

- aged 6-11
- with suspected or diagnosed ADHD
- who have peer relationship problems

Families get:

- 10 sessions of parent group intervention for children's peer problems
- payment for study measures



To learn more, contact :

The Peer Relationships in Childhood Lab of Dr. [Amori Mikami](#)

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# STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

## ONLINE PARENTING STUDY

Is your child 6-12 years old? If yes, we need your help for a fun online study about child behaviour and parenting cognitions.

### Participation involves:

- Both moms and dads fill out questionnaires about their child, themselves, and their parenting
- Both moms and dads complete three computer tasks
- The study will take between 60-90 minutes
- You can complete that study at home or wherever you have access to a computer with an Internet connection

### Benefits:

Each parent will receive \$10 upon completion of the study and an additional \$5 once the other parent has completed as well.

If you are interested in participating in the online study, please call us at 604-822-9037 or email us at [cjlab@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:cjlab@psych.ubc.ca)

