What we are exploring:

- When do children begin to develop caring behaviors?
- Are toddlers more generous around 18 months or 30 months?
- How do children’s emotions figure in their in helping and sharing behavior?

What children do:

Book Reading: Children look at pictures of toys that also feature happy or sad faces in the background. Will they be more caring afterwards, or less?

Toy Sharing: Children play a variety of games with a research assistant. The assistant’s fun soon ends when the toddler gets all of the toys. Will toddlers share with the assistant?

Helping: What will a toddler do when a researcher or parent needs help completing a task?

Current Study:

“The Cradle of Compassion”: Emotions and the early development of caring behavior” (18-30 mos)

We would like to extend our appreciation to everyone who has participated in our studies, including those about early sharing behavior in toddlers and about body perception in preschoolers! Some of the findings from the sharing study are now available on our website. Stay tuned for results related to the body perception study.

If you are interested in participating in another study, we are starting a new study about early helping behavior and emotion understanding. We’re looking for children ages 18-20 months and 28-30 months. You can read more about this study below!

A Big Thanks to All of Our Participants!

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"What’s Mine is Mine & What’s Yours is Mine, Too":
Development of Voluntary Toy Sharing in Toddlers

What we explored:
• How early sharing behaviors change between 18 and 24 months of age.
• What children do when they do not share.
• How a sense of ownership ties into sharing.

What children did:
• Toddlers played a variety of different games with a research assistant. Sometimes the assistant had no toys. She looked a little sad, then tried to get some, and finally asked for some if a child had not yet shared.
• They also played some “whose is this” games and read books about emotions with their parents.

What we found:
• Two-year-olds shared more often, more quickly, and more generously. One-year-olds shared less frequently and when they did share they needed more opportunities and more prompting.
• Children at both ages who better understood ownership shared more readily.
• Children at both ages whose parents more often asked them to think and talk about the emotions shown in the books shared more quickly and more often.

“Show Me the Pretty One:”
Development of Body Perception In Preschool Children

What we explored:
Our previous research has shown that around 30 months, children begin to have a good sense of how their bodies are “mapped out.”

• How do children’s perceptions of their own bodies change between 36 and 48 months of age?

• When do children begin to make judgments about their bodies and other peoples’ bodies?

• What do these judgments look like?

(Still in process — answers in the next newsletter!)

Recent Studies

Recent Studies

What children did:
• Discriminating Differences: When can children distinguish between body figures based on size, shape, etc.?

• Figure Perception: When can children accurately choose a figure based on body features like size or age?

• Body Configuration: Children play with cars and dolls—some of which are broken. Do children sort these items based on similarities?

• Adjective Assignment: Children choose from a set of figures varying in size and other features—which figures will they assign specific adjectives to (e.g., “nice,” “friendly”)?

Add "Toddler Lab" on Facebook to read our weekly posts with interesting facts and articles about children!
International Children’s Festival

At Pittsburgh’s International Children’s Festival there is something for children of all ages and their families to enjoy! This annual event is sponsored by the Pittsburgh International Children’s Theater, and includes musical and theater performances presented at the University of Pittsburgh Theaters. Activities for children and smaller performances from local groups take place just across the street from us at Schenley Plaza. This past summer, the ESDL had the opportunity to sponsor a booth that included arts and crafts activities for toddlers and school age children to enjoy, as well as a toy raffle for parents to participate in. Our students who participated in this activity had a great time meeting the children and families from the community.

We hope to see you at the 2012 ICF!

Pittsburgh Zoo Baby Day

Baby Day at the Pittsburgh Zoo is an annual event that local families across the Pittsburgh area look forward to in the summer months, and we do too! On a warm Saturday afternoon in July, we set up a station in the aquarium where children could make lion, elephant, or monkey animal hats to wear as they toured the zoo and learned about the exciting animals they were seeing. We enjoyed meeting all of the families who stopped by at the zoo to say hello and register for our toy raffle. After learning about the ESDL at the zoo, many of these families came into the lab to play with us. We look forward to participating in Baby Day at the Pittsburgh Zoo again next year!

Kids Day in Schenley Plaza

Kids Day is a public program sponsored by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. Over the summer months, children and their families are invited for an afternoon of face painting, free performances, balloon animals, and free rides on the carousel. One sunny afternoon in September, the ESDL set up a table at this event and invited families over to learn about the lab. We also had an activity available for the children to create animal hats. The children who came to visit us had a great time and so did we!

Come play with us at Kids Day!
About the Early Social Development Lab—Meet the Researchers!

The Early Social Development Lab is made up of our lab director, Dr. Celia Brownell, two graduate students, Whitney Waugh and Jesse Drummond, a post-doctoral student, Stuart Hammond (not pictured), a lab director, Alyssa Marchitelli, and a team of hard working undergraduate students! Undergraduates can earn course credit while learning about child development and how to conduct research. Currently, we also have two students working on senior Honors theses. These are the friendly folks children get to play with when they visit our playroom at the University of Pittsburgh!