

# The Child Development Group

The University of Reading

*An Insight into the ongoing research // Autumn 2020*

We hope you and your families are safe and well during these uncertain times and we want to say a big thank you for finding the time to help us with our research! We also wanted to share ongoing research with you.

But first... someone is trying to get your attention... can you spot the 7 hands waving at you?!



How do children share attention with an adult, and how do they use language to get things done? How do children get across what they want, or say what they think is true? In a new study at the University of Reading we are trying to answer these questions and we are now inviting families of children *aged 24 to 36 months* to take part. The study is led by PhD candidate Tamara Schmidt under the supervision of Prof. Ludovica Serratrice in the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences.

Taking part in the study involves playing a series of games with your child such as furnishing a doll house, playing nonsense actions, and helping a teddy get dressed. You will be provided with a set of toys and with instructions that will guide you every step of the way. You will record yourself and your child at home while playing the games and then you can do so in the space of two weeks. You will also be asked to provide some general information on your child's use of language and on their development. If you have any questions about the project or would like to take part, please feel free to e-mail Tamara at [t.schmidt@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:t.schmidt@pgr.reading.ac.uk).



## Pandemic Play

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected children in a multitude of ways, and one of the ways that children cope in challenging situations is through play. The University of Reading and The MERL are putting together digital archive of descriptions, drawings or photographs of children's play during the pandemic. They are particularly interested in play where children have related their play to the theme of the pandemic. If you would like to add to the archive, and be a part of writing the history books of the future, please follow this link for more information: [pandemicplay.live/merl](https://pandemicplay.live/merl)

Dr Lily Fitzgibbon and PhD student Zoe Ryan, under the supervision of Professor Helen Dodd, have launched a study about children's behaviour in response to uncertainty. We all seek out information in our daily lives, sometimes because we are curious and interested and sometimes because we don't like the feeling of being uncertain or of not knowing something. We are interested in how children seek information when the information they are given is uncertain. What we learn should help us to think about how to support children who feel anxious around uncertainty and how to stimulate curiosity in education.

If you are interested in helping with this research, which takes place online and takes around 15-20 minutes, and your child is between 8-12 year olds, please go to this link for more information:

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/UncertainWorld](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UncertainWorld)



Professor Helen Dodd from our Child Development group has been working to campaign and support children and their families during the Covid- 19 pandemic, see below:

- Here is some advice for parents about how to support their child (<http://emergingminds.org.uk/advice-for-parents-carers-supporting-children-young-people-with-worries-about-covid-19/>)
- Her article in The Conversation, to try to relieve some of the pressure on parents to home school their children, can be found here : <http://theconversation.com/coronavirus-just-letting-children-play-will-help-them-and-their-parents-cope-1344800>
- In May, she led the @playfirstuk campaign (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/news/all?id=51954>) to encourage schools and the government to prioritise play when lockdown was eased. This campaign was covered in the Guardian and a range of other news outlets.
- The Co-space project (<http://cospaceoxford.org/>) tracks children's mental health during the pandemic. This has provided important information that is being used by Public Health England, NHS England and a range of other organisations to support decision-making.
- The ReachWell group (<https://reachwell.org/>) produces evidence-based briefings around children's wellbeing to support policy makers to make informed decisions.
- Finally, to try and offer parents advice and support, Helen and her team have featured on a number of radio shows, recorded podcasts and delivered a range of webinars on children's mental health and play during the pandemic, some of which can be found here: <https://emergingminds.org.uk/podcast/>

We wish you a very happy holiday season and wish you a healthy 2021!

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### Holiday card competition >>>

Our annual holiday card competition is back, and we would love to see as many of you participate!

We are looking for holiday card pictures drawn by your amazing children; it can be a scribble, sketch, a drawing, a digital creation or a fun photo – just keep it festive and send it to us by the 17th of December 2020! Using [l.mcdermott@reading.ac.uk](mailto:l.mcdermott@reading.ac.uk)

