Welcome from the President

We are delighted to announce the beginning of our new Applied Developmental Psychology Student Group, ADPSG. In the past few years our department has grown tremendously, with an increase in the number of students and faculty members. This increase has stimulated much enthusiasm within the program, with students thrilled and excited to further enhance the Applied Developmental Psychology program here at George Mason University.

Our mission is to serve the needs of the Applied Developmental Psychology graduate students at George Mason University. We hope to advance the understanding of developmental psychology at GMU, promote the ADP program both locally and nationally, and enhance further collaboration between the various developmental psychology labs on campus. As this is a student based group, we encourage both new and continuing students to bring their enthusiasm and interest in helping us achieve these goals.

We at ADPSG would like to take this opportunity to welcome the prospective graduate students and encourage them to meet and mingle with other students and faculty members. We hope you enjoy your visit at GMU. For more information on ADPSG please visit: http://adp.gmu.edu/adpsg
About The Developmental Labs

Dr. Susanne Denham
Development Lab

Dr. Denham is a professor at George Mason University, and previously has been an instructor at the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Guest Scientist at the National Institute of Mental Health Developmental Psychology Laboratory. Her teaching and research interests include basic processes of social-emotional development, social cognition, and social competence, particularly in young children, as well as developmental psychopathology.

Over the past year her lab has experienced some truly exciting changes, including the conclusion of the forgiveness study data collection, which is an innovative look into the development of forgiveness, empathy, and emotional styles in children and their connections to parental and peer relationships. In addition, her students are nearing the end of data collection for a longitudinal investigation of children’s emotional competence, its socialization, and its pathways to later social success in middle childhood. Her students are looking forward to take the next step of analyzing and reporting the findings from this data.

Additionally, her lab has been recently honored to receive a substantial grant through NICHD (The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development), ACF (Administration for Children and Families) and Head Start, to investigate the facets of social and emotional development that are related to children’s school readiness, especially how to assess them. They are currently gearing up to begin the beginning phases of this study, which is sure to keep them busy for more than a just a little while.

Dr. Robert Pasnak
Cognitive Intervention Lab

Dr. Pasnak has served on the faculty of the Catholic University of America, joined the George Mason University faculty in 1972. His teaching and research interests are the development of children’s thinking, particularly young and handicapped children or those at risk for cognitive delays. He has published four books and some of his work has appeared in The Journal of Experimental Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, Infant Behavior and Development and others.

For the last 20 years he has focused on helping children who lag in cognitive development to catch up to their peers. This has involved blind or mentally challenged youngsters, or those with ESL or minority status, but more often it is children who are behind their peers cognitively for no identifiable reason. He uses “learning set” methods to teach children the key cognitive constructs appropriate for their age, relying heavily on work by Piaget. He is currently examining which cognitive abilities are crucial for older and/or younger children, and trying to get a better understanding of the socio-emotional concomitants of increased cognitive competence. He also has a grant from Head Start, and is collecting data in the Northern Virginia area.

Dr. Elyse Lehman
Cognitive Development Lab

Dr. Lehman is a professor and the Director of the Applied Developmental Psychology Program at George Mason University. Her teaching and research interests include children’s cognitive development, especially the development of memory and attention in elementary school age children, and applications to special populations such as intellectually gifted children and children with disorders of attention (eg. ADHD).

Currently her lab is investigating parental beliefs about the development of attention and elementary achievement goal orientation in elementary school-age children. This project specifically examines maternal beliefs about the development of attention, in hopes to answer questions about how parents influence the development of attention in their children. The achievement goal orientation work looks at several correlates of the achievement goal orientation such as, temperament, intelligence, and classroom performance. Both projects will be presented at the Conference on Human Development in April, 2006.
About The Developmental Labs

Dr. Johannes Rojahn

Dr. Johannes Rojahn, is a professor and the Director of the Center for Cognitive Development at George Mason University. He is also a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and the President elect of Division 33 (Mental Retardation) of the American Psychological Association. Dr. Rojahn earned his doctorate in Psychology degree at the University of Vienna (Austria) in psychology.

Dr. Rojahn was identified as the fifth most prolific author of databased, English language, research articles in journals of developmental disabilities. He has served as an Associate Editor for journals such as, Research in Developmental Disabilities and the American Journal on Mental Retardation. His teaching and research focuses on persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. His areas of particular interest are challenging behaviors and other forms of psychopathology (epidemiology, assessment, applied behavior analysis) and socio-emotional aspects of mental retardation and their relationship to interpersonal functioning.

Dr. Adam Winsler

Language, Self-Regulation and School Readiness Lab

Dr. Winsler is an Associate Professor at George Mason University, where he also conducts research in his Language, Self-Regulation, and Motivation Lab. Dr. Winsler (Ph.D. Stanford University) is also a fellow APA Division 7 and editor of the journal, Early Childhood Research Quarterly. Dr. Winsler’s interests include; children’s transition to school, the development of self-regulation, children’s private speech, Vygotskian sociocultural theory; bilingualism, parent-child interaction, and the prevention of behavior disorders. His lab is composed of undergraduate, Master’s, and Doctoral students working together on a variety of research projects. Although individually quite diverse, each of the projects conducted within the lab is typically linked by a common desire to understand links between children’s social interactions with parents and teachers, and children’s language development, motivation, and/or self-regulation, with applications to school readiness and problems of executive control.

Current funded projects include a study of the Effect of Subsidized Child Care and Other Early Educational Interventions on the School Readiness of Diverse, Low-Income, Urban Preschoolers. This large-scale, university-community partnership, program evaluation, and applied research project involves maintenance and development of the master database for all child-level, classroom-level, child care center-level, and family-level data involved in the Assessment-Intervention Program, sponsored by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe. Each year, about 10,000 three and four year old low-income children attending state-subsidized child care/preschool programs are individually assessed on their cognitive, language, social, and motor skills at the beginning and end of the school year. These children are then longitudinally followed as they enter public schools.

Other projects in the lab examine a) relations between young children’s private speech (self-talk), speech awareness, executive functioning, and performance on cognitive tasks in both typical children and children with ADHD or autism, and b) self-regulated learning and motivation as predictors of academic performance and retention among college students.

New Faculty, 2006

Dr. Koraly Perez-Edgar

We welcome Dr. Perez-Edgar, a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Development at the University of Maryland, who will be joining the Applied Developmental Psychology program in August 2006. Dr. Perez-Edgar received her doctorate from Harvard University. Her current research interests include, the effects of early temperament on social behavior in adolescence, and the role of threat and attention in adolescent anxiety.
“I am currently doing a practicum at the Alzheimer’s Association (National Capital Area Chapter) in Fairfax. As part of my practicum, I am studying interventions that may help prevent memory loss in old age. There is some debate as to whether or not cognitive decline in late life is preventable. Studies have suggested that there may be protective factors acquired early in life, such as mental exercise and nutrition. My main interest is how effective interventions are and what specific abilities they target. My duties include updating resources, answering helpline calls, and becoming trained to run “Maintain Your Brain” workshops. While at the Alzheimer’s Association I have gained valuable experiences with and knowledge about cognitive problems that both normal and diseased adults encounter as they age. This experience will undoubtedly be very useful as I continue to follow my research interests of cognitive aging. After completion of my master’s degree this May, I will continue on to earn a PhD at the University of Florida.”

Erin Hastings
M.A. Student

“I am a student in Dr. Lehman’s Cognitive Development lab. For my last semester at GMU, I am currently doing a practicum at the National Head Start Association in Alexandria, Virginia. Although I have always been interested in the issues surrounding early child care, my interest in the field grew even more after taking Dr. Winsler’s Early Childhood Education, Childcare, and School Readiness course. By working at Head Start, I have been able to further expand my knowledge in areas. At Head Start I am responsible for conducting research, helping with memorandums, and locating polls and articles dealing with Head Start. I also have the opportunity to hear many politicians speak. I recently attended a talk given by Senator Pat Roberts, and will be attending another one next month by Governor Jeb Bush. Being at Head Start has broadened my knowledge in a variety of subjects, helped me network with others in the field, and allowed me to sharpen my research skills.”

Jennia Herold
M.A. Student

“I am in my third year of the doctoral program at GMU, and am currently working on my master’s thesis. I am examining children’s perceptions of positive and negative parental behaviors as moderators of parent-child attachment and emotional parent-child communication. I plan to defend my thesis this semester, after which I will be submitting the research as a paper at the 2007 biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development and also for journal publication. Writing a thesis has proven to be a challenging, yet extremely rewarding experience for me, both professionally and personally.”

Melissa Mincic
PhD. Student

“I am currently working on a project investigating achievement goal orientation in elementary school age children. Achievement goal orientation investigates the motivational pattern of response to a failure. Two achievement goal orientations have been researched extensively; learning and performance goal orientation. Typically, learning oriented children choose challenging tasks, demonstrate higher effort and optimism for success in the future, and seek opportunities to increase their ability. On the other hand, performance oriented children avoid challenges, especially those that produce errors, tend to be more negative about their abilities and future success, and seek opportunities to document their abilities. Currently in Dr. Lehman’s lab, we have developed a new measure, known as the Maze Task to further examine achievement goal orientation in older children. Additionally, we are investigating temperamental, and behavioral correlates of achievement orientation.”

Vanessa Olson
PhD. Student
“Why We ❤️ the Lab & GMU!

“I love that as diverse as the students in the ADP program are; ranging in age and coming from across the world, we are all united by our passion for psychology.”

- Charlotte Anderson

“I love that our lab spaces represent temperatures from each of the four seasons. Where else but the developmental labs could you catch a mean case of spring fever (Dr. Lehman’s lab), fan yourself in the intense summer heat (Dr. Winsler’s Miami room), fall in and comfortably warm your chilled hands (Dr. Pasnak’s lab), and shiver in an ice-cold winter breeze (Dr. Denham’s lab) all along the same hallway? Here’s to layering!

- Melissa Mincic

“I love our “kitchen” in the developmental lab space.”

- Jenny Crane

“I love the newly installed motion sensor lights in the lab, which turn off when there are no large movements in the room, leaving you flailing your arms up and down to create movement as if motioning to bring down a 747 jetliner.”

- Dhvani Patel

“I love the direct contact we have with kids, it makes me feel like we’re making a difference.”

- Krista D’Albenzio

“I love the weekly brown bags and I like the fact that they are open to everyone, not just graduate students.”

- Faye Huie

“I love teaching at GMU. Outside of my research, this is my outlet to express my creative side.”

- Nate Tatro
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
For Prospective Students

• How can I obtain additional funding?
Funds go quickly, so start looking EARLY. Potential sources of funding are research assistant positions, and/or teaching assistant positions. For information on research assistant positions talk to your advisor, and for information on teaching positions contact Dr. Hurley in the Psychology Undergraduate office at mhurley2@gmu.edu.

• Thesis or practicum?
Whichever best suits your current and future goals as a student. The thesis offers a great experience to design and conduct your own research if you’d like to present at conferences, publish, or learn more about a topic of interest. The practicum, on the other hand, offers very applied, hands-on experience that can be put to later use in the workplace. Focus on the kind of experience you want in terms of your current educational goals and future career plans to answer this question.

• Are there any free workshops available for students?
Yes. The Writing Center, Learning Services, Mathematic Tutoring Center, Student Technology Assistance & Resource Center offer various workshops throughout the year in order to make your graduate school experience easier. For further information please visit http://www.gmu.edu/mlstudents/ and http://media.gmu.edu

• Where can I workout for FREE on campus?
The Aquatic and Fitness Center and the Field House are both FREE for full-time students. Just show them your Mason I.D., and you’re in!
For more information please visit http://www.gmu.edu/service/aquatics/index.html

• Where can I obtain information about domicile classification?
To qualify for in-state tuition, you must have “in-state” status, which you establish after living in the state of Virginia for at least one year and have all the proper documentations. For more information visit http://registrar.gmu.edu/domicile/

• Are international students eligible for establishing domicile in VA?
The fact that an individual is a citizen of another country does not automatically disqualify that person from establishing domicile in Virginia. However, it depends on your immigration status. If you are not a U.S. Citizen you will need to present your immigration documentation to the institution. For further information please visit http://www.schev.edu/Students/VAdomicileInfo.asp?from=adminfaculty

• Do I have to register my car in Virginia?
Yes, especially if you are trying to obtain in-state status. However, if you are a full time student you are not required to do so. For more information please visit http://www.dmvnow.com/
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For Prospective Students

Life Around the Lab...

Working in the lab...

Enjoying the warm weather

Relaxing...

... back at work

Alone in “Miami”...

...and dancing!
**Dr. Susanne Denham**


**Dr. Elyse Lehman**


**Dr. Robert Pasnak**


**Dr. Adam Winsler**

Lab Publications, 2005-2006


Dr. Johannes Rojahn


Dissertations Awarded in 2005

Michael Feder. Mental Health and Academic Skills of Sierra Leonean Children from Refugee Families.


Julie I. Liebman. The developmental patterns and cognitive predictors of prosocial display rule behavior and understanding: Theory of mind and inhibitory control.

Amy Madigan. Implications of Interparental Conflict for Children’s Self-Control and the Mediating Role of Parenting Practices.

Words from the Editor

This opening edition of The Developer is the first in what I hope to be a long list of newsletters that will give us as developmentalists an opportunity to highlight and discuss our independent and laboratory research ventures, to promote our department locally and nationwide, and to provide an open forum to discuss activities on the departmental and university level. This publication is a great opportunity for George Mason Applied Developmental Psychology students to get involved, voice their opinions, and help further the legacy that this program.

I would also like to welcome the prospective students (to whom this first edition is cordially dedicated). Please take this newsletter as an opportunity to get to know the Applied Developmental Psychology Program a little better, to answer questions that you may have, and to give yourself an idea of what a great community of scholars awaits you here at Mason!

In closing, I would like to take a moment to thank the students and faculty members for all their contributions to this newsletter, and for their enthusiasm for the new ADP Student Group. Thank you.

Upcoming Conferences

Eastern Psychological Association
Baltimore, MD. March 16 - 19, 2006
http://www.easternpsychological.org/

Virginia Association for the Early Childhood Education
Roanoke, VA. March 23 - 25, 2006
http://www.vaece.org/

Society for Research in Adolescence
San Francisce, CA. March 23 - 26, 2006
http://www.s-r-a.org/

Society for Research in Human Development
Fort Worth, TX. March 30 - April 1, 2006
http://www.hdfs.hs.iastate.edu/swsrhd/

Society for Research in Adult Development
Atlanta, GA. April 6 - 7, 2006
http://www.adultdevelopment.org/

American Educational Research Association
San Francisce, CA. April 8 - 12, 2006
http://www.aera.net/

Conference on Human Development
Louisville, KY. April 28 - 30, 2006
http://www.kpa.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticle=184

American Psychological Association
New Orleans, LA. August 10 - 13, 2006
http://www.apa.org/

American Psychological Society
http://www.psychologicalscience.org/

Jean Piaget Society
Vancouver, Canada. June 2 - 4, 2006
http://www.piaget.org/

Head Start's 8th National Research Conference
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hsrc/

International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development
Australia. July 2 - 6, 2006

International Conference on Infant Studies
Brisbane, Australia. July 8 - 11, 2006
http://www.isisweb.org/

Society for Research in Child Development
Boston MA. March 29 - Apr. 1, 2007
http://www.srcd.org/