

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

# KIDS IN CONTEXT



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## AIMS AND OVERVIEW

Hello Kids in Context kids, teens, families, and schools!

Thank you for joining our research this year! We are excited to publish this newsletter as a celebration of the discoveries we've made together and to build connections with you. Kids in Context is a research lab in the School of Psychology at Queen's University Belfast focusing on children's social and cognitive development. We study child development to understand how young people around the world think about others across diverse social and cultural contexts. Better understanding the people that we encounter from different groups and in different social situations can help to build positive social relations and promote future generations of peace. This year we have worked with young people ages 4 to 18, families, and schools through interactive online sessions and in partnership with schools and community centres across Northern Ireland, and for some studies, with families around the world! In November 2022, we also held our first public Kids in Context event: Art of Identity at the Ulster Museum, and we are excited to do this again soon! (See kids' drawings on p. 4.)

Follow our Kids in Context Facebook page to stay updated on what we are up, learn about new studies to participate in, and be the first to sign up for upcoming raffles and events.



## Meet The Team:

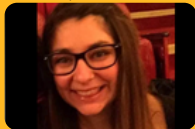
Dr. Jocelyn Dautel, Principal Investigator



Risa Rylander, Postgraduate Research Student



Dr. Hannah Kramer, Postdoctoral Research Assistant



Dr. Bethany Corbett, Postdoctoral Research Assistant



Find the rest of the research team on the last page!

## Contact & Follow Us

 QUBKidsInContext

 kidsincontext@qub.ac.uk

## PLAYFULNESS



Play is widely acknowledged as an important aspect of children's lives, but little research focuses on an individual's internal disposition to play, their playfulness. This project aims to investigate the role of playfulness both 1) as a trait that may be developed and 2) as a link to other socio-cognitive skills, like empathy and creativity. The first study in this project explores various adults' reports of children's playfulness, and specifically the reporting of parents, childcare givers, and researchers. Parents report higher playfulness scores on their children than observing researchers or childcare givers familiar with the children. Future research would benefit from including a self-report measures of children's playfulness to better explore this variation in scores.

## DEVELOPING BELIEF

In another of our projects, we are trying to learn more about the development and diversity of natural and supernatural beliefs all around the world! We are incredibly excited about the progress that we have made in this project. We are over half way done with data collection in Northern Ireland. In addition, other sites around the world have also started to work with children and families. We are especially looking forward to discovering how children learn about their identities, how they think about social groups, their thinking on which concepts and entities are real versus pretend, and how caregivers and children talk about the big question, like 'where the world came from.' We'd love your help with this project! If you're interested in participating, you can learn more and express your interest here: <https://tinyurl.com/DBN-Recruitment-NI> or scan the QR code on the last page!

### Science Word Search

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Y I D T L O R L C T C B E R K C Y J  
 G K N Q E E X H U A B A R Z F E T U  
 R E M S H C E N R H R I I F J P I P  
 E Z L T E M H B Y T O E E D B R V I  
 N W A A I C O N H Q X H Q R Z V A T  
 E E C S H N T E O P H Y S I C S R E  
 W B T D V W F K S L S Y S E L K G R  
 W R A I R E T C A B O L G T C L M P  
 Y U E U M U H F F B G G A O N A E G  
 T H G I L J Z P A B F H Y M L A P C  
 Y F Y T I C I R T C E L E T I O L S  
 B F E W K M V W T I U U R A Z N I P  
 V X E E K U R K P V C W K C D B A B

ANIMALS  
 CARBON  
 CHEMISTRY  
 ENERGY  
 JUPITER  
 PLANTS  
 WEATHER

BACTERIA  
 CAT  
 EARTH  
 GRAVITY  
 LIGHT  
 SPACE  
 WHALE

BIOLOGY  
 CELL  
 ELECTRICITY  
 INSECT  
 PHYSICS  
 TECHNOLOGY

# CHILDREN AND ADULT'S THINKING ABOUT AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



Globally, autism diagnoses are common, and most young people with autism attend mainstream education. Unfortunately, autistic people are at increased risk of being excluded by their peers. This can have lifelong implications for wellbeing.

This research wanted to understand some of the reasons why people without autism may exclude an autistic peer. This included a psychological process called 'dehumanization', which is when we think that people from other social groups do not think and feel the way 'we' do. Thinking this way can subconsciously justify treating people less fairly.

Research questions include:

1. Do neurotypical children know what autism is?
2. How do children and adults think about the minds of Autistic people?
3. How happy do children and adults expect themselves and others to be when including an autistic person?

Method:

82 children (aged 9-11) and 169 adults in Northern Ireland completed the study. Results were analyzed statistically using regression.

## FINDINGS

RQ1: Do neurotypical children know what autism is?

85.4% of 9-11-yr-olds had heard of autism before.

**Autism was understood as:**

**Children discussed autism in terms of:**

|                   |  |                               |   |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Difference</b> | "Special and different to others"        | <b>Personal Relationships</b> | "My cousin has it"                          |
| <b>Deficit</b>    | "Makes you do things slower than others" | <b>Social Status</b>          | "People look down on them"                  |
| <b>Disability</b> | "Disability some people have"            | <b>Emotions</b>               | "Excited easily"<br>"They get angry easily" |
|                   |  | <b>Challenges</b>             | "Struggle to concentrate"                   |

RQ2: How do children and adults think about the minds of Autistic people?

Children and adults thought that an autistic person was less able to experience emotions and personality characteristics than a non-autistic person.

This type of thinking can be harmful because it denies a person's individuality, and may imply that everyone in that group is 'the same'.



RQ3: How happy do children and adults expect themselves and others to be when including an autistic person?

When children and adults thought that an autistic person **could** experience emotions and personality characteristics, they expected that both themselves and others would be happier to include an autistic peer.



## IMPLICATIONS

Previous studies find that educating peers about autism improves classroom inclusivity. Educators and other professionals can find discussing social groups, and their differences, uncomfortable. However, these findings demonstrate that children already have an impressive knowledge of autism, that will support these conversations.

We expect that encouraging children to think about the minds of autistic people (i.e. their emotions, desires, personality) will improve attitudes towards inclusion of autistic peers. In particular, that autistic people can have similar mental experiences as non-autistic people, even if they perhaps display them differently.

## GET INVOLVED!

Work with young people and want to get involved with inclusion research like this?

We would love to talk with you about your 'burning questions', and the opportunity to co-design a research project.

Email [b.corbett@qub.ac.uk](mailto:b.corbett@qub.ac.uk) to discuss!



## CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS FROM ART OF IDENTITY EVENT

The aim of Art of Identity: Generation Peace event was to display children's drawings from across divided societies in Europe about 'peace' and key quotes from child interviews in an interactive Art Exhibit in the Learning Zone of the Ulster Museum. Using the Draw-and-Tell method, children drew pictures exploring the topic 'peace', and responded to open-ended questions about their understanding of a local or ethnic identity. For example, they were asked "Whenever you think of peace or groups of people getting along, what do you think of?" These are the drawings children created on 'peace' and 'where I live'. This event took place as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science 2022.

On the day, children and families got to add their drawings to our wall, and just look at the fantastic drawings we received! We had 25 children take our survey to get their feedback on the event. We found that 100% of them liked learning about kids in other places, and 96% liked learning about peace.



## **SIGN UP FOR MORE! YOUR CHID OR TEEN MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE ONLINE AND EARN A VOUCHER!**

Understand Polarization: Aged 12-18 and from Northern Ireland? Help us understand how different kinds of information are learned, and communicated to others. We are especially interested in 'polarized' information - that's the kind that people can feel quite strongly about, and sometimes very differently from others.

Follow this QR code to learn more!

Earn a £10 voucher!



Developing Beliefs: Have a child between 4 and 10 years? Want to be part of large project being conducted around the world on how kids develop natural and supernatural beliefs? Follow this QR code to learn more about our Developing Belief Study!

Earn a £25 voucher!



Understanding Nationality: We are looking for kids between the ages of 5 and 8 to help with us a study on how children think about nationality! If you're interested in helping with this study, follow this QR to learn more about our Nationality Study!

Earn a £10 voucher!



SPRING 2023

**THANK YOU SO MUCH TO ALL THE SCHOOLS, PARENTS,  
AND CHILDREN WHO HAVE MADE THIS POSSIBLE.**

**AND TO OUR FABULOUS RESEARCH TEAM FOR ALL THEIR HELP:**

**Research Assistants:**

Brendan Adreani

Tara Anderson

Charlotte Bradley

Megan Canning

Grace Cannon

Katie Carberry

Sierra Clanton

Reece Cochrane

Leah Cooney

Emma Colgan

Keelan Curran

John Curry

Clearisse Del Rosario

Grace Duffy

Luke Fulton

Cecilia Haecker

Aoife Keating

Megan McBurney

Melissa McQuade

Caitlin McShane

Sasha Pavlik

Tara Pouryahya

Kathryn Treacy



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School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast

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