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News

Birkbeck Student to cycle 5,000km in aid of Toddler Lab



Image courtesy of [John Spooner](#)
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Robert Hargreaves, an undergraduate student in BSC Psychology in Neuroscience, will be embarking on a 5,000km bike ride to raise funds for our new [Toddler Lab](#) which is currently under construction.

In June 2019 Robert will cycle through Northern Europe, taking in Belgium, The Netherlands and Denmark and then crossing into Norway via ferry to cycle up to the Arctic Circle, moving into Finish Lapland and then home via Sweden.

Find out more about Robert's incredible trip [here](#), or search Instagram and Twitter using the hashtag #RobsbikeRide.

Department welcomes new staff members

Three new staff members have started working in the department during this last period.

Gemma Hutton is a new RA working on a project which explores breast reconstruction choices among Black, Asian and minority ethnic women.

[Alon Zivony](#) begins as a Newton International Fellow working with Martin Eimer on *Voluntary shifts of attention: behavioural and electrophysiological consequences*.

Sarah Evans is the new Impact Officer for the department. She will be working on supporting the impact strand of the department's REF submission for REF 2021.

Changes at STAARS

The Studying Autism and Studying Autism and ADHD Risks Team ([STAARS](#)) want to thank **Amy Goodwin** for all her incredible work in running the [InterSTAARS](#) trial. Amy has now taken up a post at KCL with the Preschool Imaging Project and will continue collaborating with the STAARS team in her future work. The team welcomes **Pedro Costa** (a PhD student) who will work on adaptive neuroimaging with **Emily Jones** and **Rob Leech**.

New Research Group Launched

Gillian Forrester has launched a new research group for **Comparative Cognition** (Developmental and Evolutionary Psychological Research). Updates about the work of this group will be featured in forthcoming newsletters.

Top Media Mentions

Our staff have been attracting high profile media attention

Iroise Dumontheil was quoted in the [Independent](#) and [News Week](#), commenting on recent research which explores the impact of the blue light emitted by mobile phones on sleep quality. The research is being led by Dr Dirk Jan Stenvers from Amsterdam University Medical Centre. It showed that abstaining from evening use of mobile devices improved sleep duration and quality in teenagers. Dumontheil said, 'The results suggest that wearing blue-light-blocking glasses may reduce the impact of frequent screen use on adolescents' sleep.'

Tim Smith's research was recently featured on the [BBC News website](#) and in the [Guardian](#) in relation to new WHO guidelines about the use of screens by toddlers and young children. The guidelines suggest that children aged three to four should not have more than one hour of screen time per day, as well as providing advice about ideal levels of physical activity and face-to-face interaction. Smith commented that the guidelines are problematic in terms of their evidence-base and do not clarify current conflicting recommendations about screen use in young children.



Image courtesy of [Wutthicha Charaenburi](#)
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Picks from the Birkbeck Matters

The science of the teenage brain

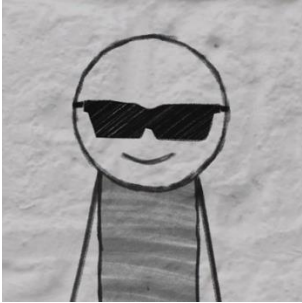


Image courtesy of Georgina Donati and Anne Brookman-Bryne.

Georgina Donati and **Annie Brookman-Bryne** from the Centre for Educational Neuroscience have created a video which aims to share the science of the teenage brain with teachers and parents. The film was designed to engage teachers to reflect on whether better knowledge of the teenage brain could improve their teaching practice and interactions with teenagers. Find out more by watching the film on [YouTube](#) and follow Donati and Brookman-Bryne's research on Twitter [@teenbrainfilm](#).

Activists and architects of change

Ana Maria Portugal, a final year PhD student at the [Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development](#) (CBCD) has reflected on her experience in public engagement via the [Birkbeck Events Blog](#). Portugal developed a public workshop in which she engaged parents and other members of the public with research on children's use of screens. She worked with the Birkbeck Public Engagement team to deliver her workshop as part of the Bloomsbury Festival. Her blog post provides a really useful guide to anyone hoping to engage the public with their research.



Image courtesy of BBK Events Blog

CBCD: Childhood Adversity and Brain Development

Four members of [CBCD](#) are part of the collaborative project, [Brain Imagining for Global Health \(BRIGHT\)](#), which has recently uncovered new evidence about the effects of childhood adversity on brain development. The team have published papers which show that early exposure to adversity may affect

how quickly the brains of 5-8 month old infants adapt and respond to stimuli. To read a detailed report of this research, visit our [media](#) pages.

Other Media Mentions

Belinda Brooks-Gordon made a number of appearances on BBC regional radio during March and April. On 25 March she was interviewed by [BBC Hereford and Worcester](#) (on the *Andrew Easton Show*) about the impact of drugs in prisons. She was then interviewed by BBC Radio Cambridgeshire on 17 April and on 19 April by [BBC Radio Wales](#) about prison safety.

Naz Derakhshan was featured in the [MadeAtUni](#) campaign which aims to show how universities are saving lives and keeping people healthy. The [article](#) showcased the work of the Building Resilience in Breast Cancer Centre at Birkbeck. Derakhshan's research was also featured in the [Psychiatric Times](#) in an article about how brain training may reduce the propensity towards depression and anxiety in teenagers.

Emily Jones was interviewed for the BBC World Service [ParentLand podcast](#) in an episode exploring toddler tantrums.

Forthcoming Training and Events

Gillian Forrester has a new public engagement project *Me, Human* with Soapbox Science Brighton which explores how humans are connected to the natural world. Follow their events and engagement activities via their Twitter account [@Me__Human](#) (note the double underscore). Over the summer *Me, Human* will feature as part of the [Live Science](#) festival at the Science Museum in London. For additional information, visit their new website: www.mehuman.io.



Image courtesy of [Brian Ford](#)
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Public Engagement and Talks

Departmental Staff Recognised in Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards 2019

Two members of the department were recognised for their excellent public engagement work in the Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards, 2019.



Jessica Massonnié of CBCD, image courtesy of Birkbeck College and Jessica.

Congratulations to **Jessica Massonnié** of the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (CBCD) who won the award for PhD/Early Career researchers for her research on *Noise Annoyance in Schools: is it a Fatality?* Massonnié worked closely with artists and school teachers to design child-friendly interventions to improve children's classroom well-being, as well as to gather data on noise within classroom settings.

Ajitesh Ghose of the Centre for Cognition, Computation and Modelling was highly commended in the 'PhD/Early Career' category, for his work on *Unearthing Gender Stereotypes in Visual Artificial Intelligence Models*.

Naz Derakhshan was highly commended in the category 'Communicating Research' for her work on *Empowering Resilience in Women Affected by Breast Cancer*.

Watch a short film about the Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards [here](#).



Other public presentations and invited talks

Naz Derakhshan was interviewed for a [podcast](#) with Breast Cancer Care about breast cancer survivors and PTSD. It has had over 6800 listeners to date. She also worked with BRiC members to show how BRiC has improved their mental wellbeing for a Mental Health Awareness Week project. Derakhshan gave a talk at the International Congress of Psychological Sciences in March in Paris entitled: *Smart adaptations: Targeting cognitive control to reduce emotional vulnerability*.

Rebecca Holman, Amy Goodwin and Emily Jones showcased their home-based eye-tracking set-up at the UNESCO Lates Science Museum Event in May. The team demonstrated their attention training games, which are being currently trialled in infants with older siblings with ADHD to see it is possible to strengthen focused attention.

At the end of March **Iroise Dumontheil** gave an invited talk entitled *The adolescent brain* at the Scientific Council of National Education International Congress Cognitive Science in the Classroom at the UNESCO, Paris, France.

In early March, **Belinda Brooks-Gordon** took part in the National Police Sex Work and Prostitution Group Advisory Group Meeting at Cambridgeshire Police HQ in Huntingdon where they discussed police guidance which relates to sex work and prostitution.

At the end of May **Brooks-Gordon** was an invited discussant at *A Day of Dialogue: Criminalization of Online Sex Work, Impacts and Strategies*. HIPS, 906 H Street Northeast, Washington DC, USA. The day involved a meeting with sex workers at Health for People in Sexwork (HIPS), which was organised in collaboration with National Ugly Mugs (NUM) and Beyond the Gaze (BtG) to discuss the impact of criminalising sex workers in the USA.

Claire Press delivered a departmental seminar at the University of Reading entitled: *How do actions influence perception?*

Sarah Lloyd-Fox delivered lectures about the BRIGHT Project at the Universities of Cambridge and Liverpool. She also delivered a TAD talk on *Shedding light on infant brain development in Africa and moving towards assessing global health* at the Society for Research in Child development in Baltimore, USA.

Matthew Longo gave departmental seminars at Utrecht University and Durham University.

Rianne Haartsen gave a presentation at the International Meeting for Autism Research, Montreal.

Luke Mason and Emily Jones presented at the AIMS2 Annual Meeting in Fuertaventura.

Atsushi Senju and team presented at a symposium and a grant workshop on cross-cultural autism research in Tokyo, which took place in May and was funded by the Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF) and other external funders.

Awards and Recognition

Congratulations to all our staff and students who have received awards

As mentioned above, **Jessica Massonnié**, **Naz Derakhshan** and **Ajitesh Ghose** were all recognised in the [Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards](#) of 2019.

Sarah Lloyd-Fox has been awarded a prestigious UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship, to begin in August at the University of Cambridge. The title of her Fellowship is: *Brain biomarkers and effective interventions to tackle global poverty from birth* which will build on the work she has been undertaking at CBCD.

In May, **Natalie Phillips** received an award from the British Psychological Society's Special Group in Coaching Psychology (BSP SGCP) for her research into personal coaching and the student experience.

Gillian Forrester has received two awards from the Institutional Strategic Research Fund (ISSF): one for Career Development and another for Public Engagement.

Laura Katus, a UCL postdoctoral researcher who has been working with **Sarah Lloyd-Fox** on the BRIGHT project has been awarded an ESRC postdoctoral fellowship starting in October at the University of Cambridge. She will be working on an EEG project on infant development in South Africa. In April she successfully defended her PhD thesis which is entitled: *Assessing infant neurocognitive development in resource-poor settings: the example of memory development in the UK and The Gambia*.

Grants

Congratulations to all our staff receiving research grants

NAME	FUNDER	TITLE	AMOUNT (£)
Fred Dick	Society for Education, Music & Psychology Research (SEMPRE)	Testing models of auditory learning in musicians and sound engineers: the transfer of different forms of auditory expertise on fine acoustic and perceptual processing, selective attention and auditory scene analysis.	2,075
Martin Eimer	Royal Society – Newton Fellowship	Voluntary shifts of attention: behavioural and electrophysiological consequences.	98,940
Gillian Forrester	Leverhulme Trust	Hand to Mouth: The Role of Tool-Use in the Evolution and Development of Language.	53,900
Gillian Forrester	Waterloo Foundation	Me, Human	7,973
Kyle Jasmin	SEMPRE	Auditory Grid Assistance	2,891
Emily Jones	Simon's Foundation	Generating EEG biomarkers of treatment outcome.	118,672
Mark Johnson	Medical Research Council (Sub-contract from King's College London)	Developmental Trajectories in Autism Spectrum Disorder from 6 months to 7 years.	95,932
Denis Mareschal /Rick Cooper	European Commission (revision – additional £200k awarded)	MOTION: Mobile Technology for Infant social-Cognitive Neuroscience: Interdisciplinary Training	544,493
Michael Thomas Co-PI with Hana D'Souza	Baily Thomas Charitable Research Fund	Early predictors of primary school outcomes in children with Down syndrome.	62,656
Adam Tierney	Leverhulme Trust	Individual differences in dimensional weighting in speech perception.	118,326

Conference Activity

Members of staff from across the department have been representing Psychological Sciences at conferences across the world

In March **Jessica Massonnié** attended the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) biennial meeting in Baltimore, USA where she presented her paper: *Studying in noisy classrooms: improving attention and reducing noise annoyance through interactive workshops*.

Emma Meaburn attended the Simons Foundation Annual Spring Meeting in New York in April.

Anna Gui and **Rianne Haartsen** presented posters at the Organisation for Human Brain Mapping, Rome.

Anna Gui, **Teresa Del Bianco**, **Anna Kolesnik** and **Rianne Haartsen** presented at the International Meeting for Autism Research, Montreal.

Virginia Eatough gave a keynote at the Phenomenology of Health and Relationships (PHAR) conference at Aston University. The title of her talk was: *Towards a phenomenological psychology perspective of affect: 'Birkbeck Explains' series: Why do people cry?*

Belinda Brooks-Gordon took part in the Law Society Conference at the end of May in Washington, DC. She presented a paper as well as a professional development session to delegates on policy and outreach through the media.

Two members of the [Action Laboratory Group](#) presented at the Experimental Psychological Society meeting in Manchester. **Daniel Yon** gave a talk about how sensory expectations shape perception during action. **James Chard's** talk asked how domain general atypicalities in processing perceptual configurations may underlie face processing difficulties in healthy ageing.

Clare Press, **Daniel Yon** and **Emily Thomas**, again from the Action Laboratory Group, presented at a meeting entitled 'Predictive processing in the brain', hosted by the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre, UCL. Clare Press, Daniel Yon and Emily Thomas individually presented different elements of the group's work on how actions bias visual and tactile perceptual decisions, as well as neural processing. Emily Thomas additionally presented a poster at the UCL hosted 'Skin to Self' meeting on a similar topic.

Anne Miles presented a paper on *Patient preferences for whole body MRI or conventional staging pathways in lung and colorectal cancer: a discrete choice experiment* at the British Psychosocial Oncology Society Conference in Chester.

Iroise Dumontheil gave two presentations at the International Convention of Psychological Sciences (ICPS) in Paris, France in March, one entitled *Risk taking during adolescence*, the other *Relational reasoning and science and maths problem-solving during adolescence*. Iroise organised and chaired a symposium invited by the British Psychological Society at the British Neuroscience Association conference in Dublin on 17 April 2019. Her talk was titled *Inhibitory control and science and maths reasoning*.

Ted Melhuish was invited to give keynote presentations to conferences in Australia. The first was the Conference of Australian Business Leaders (on 1 March in Melbourne) where he presented on *Early*

Experience, Long-term Development, & the Wealth of Nations. Australian Business Leaders. He subsequently presented to the Conference of the Australian Council of Educational Leaders (in Sydney) in a lecture entitled: *Early Years Experience and Long-term Development with Implications for Social Inclusion.*

In May, **Emma Meaburn** and other members of the [Birkbeck Research into Developmental Genomics \(BRIDGE\) Lab](#) presented several posters at the annual International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) conference in Montreal, Canada.

Doctoral Activity

Theses Awarded

Congratulations to all those successfully defending their theses

Candidate: Annie Brookman-Byrne

Title: *The cognitive and neural bases of science and maths reasoning in adolescence*

Supervisors: Dr Iroise Dumontheil, Prof. Andrew Tolmie and Prof. Denis Mareschal

Examiners: Prof. Michelle de Haan (UCL) and Dr Sinead Rhodes (University of Edinburgh)

Candidate: Georgina Donati

Title: *Investigating the relationship between emotion and cognition during adolescence: genes and behaviour*

Supervisors: Dr Iroise Dumontheil and Dr Emma Meaburn

Examiners: Prof. Yulia Kovas (Goldsmiths) and Dr Catherine Sebastian (Royal Holloway)

Candidate: Ajitesh Ghose,

Title: *Grounding Semantic Cognition Using Computational Modelling and Network Analysis*

Supervisors: Prof. Rick Cooper and Prof. Denis Mareschal

Examiners: Prof. Max Louwerse (Tilburg University) and Dr David Vinson (UCL).

Candidate: Jennifer Glennon

Title: *Visuo-Perceptual Correlates of Autistic Trait Expression in Children with Fragile X Syndrome and Down Syndrome*

Supervisors: Prof. Michael Thomas and Prof. Annette Karmiloff-Smith

Examiners: Prof. Emily Farran (University of Surrey) and Prof. Chris Oliver (University of Birmingham)

Candidate: Jen Haensel

Title: *Cultural Differences in the Development of Face Perception*

Supervisors: Dr Atsushi Senju and Dr Tim Smith

Examiners: Dr Daniel Richardson (UCL) and Dr Tom Foulsham (University of Essex).

Candidate: Liusa He

Title: *Attentional Control in Categorisation: Towards a Computational Synthesis*

Supervisors: Prof. Rick Cooper and Prof. Denis Mareschal

Examiners: Prof. Andy Wills (University of Plymouth) and Prof. Eddy Davelaar (Birkbeck College).

Candidate: Anna (Ching-Chi) Peng

Title: *A process-driven approach to the understanding of developmental differences in cognitive flexibility in young children and adults*

Examiners: Gaia Scherif (Oxford University) and Sam Gilbert (UCL).

Supervisors: Dr Natasha Kirkham and Prof. Denis Mareschal.

Theses Examined

Staff from around the department are frequently invited to examine doctoral theses at institutions across the country

Angelica Ronald acted as the external examiner for Meirav Amichay-Setter's PhD, Hebrew University, Israel. Thesis title: *Social Competence in Highly Intelligent Children: A Gender - Sensitive Longitudinal Genetic Investigation*.

Jacqueline Barnes was the external examiner for Ornolfur Thorlacius in at the University of Iceland, Iceland. His PhD thesis title was: *Parents' estimates of their children's emotional competence and adjustment - Development, reliability, validation and screening effectiveness of a new instrument*.

Matthew Longo was the external examiner for Ramiro Joly-Mascheroni at City University, London, who defended their PhD thesis: *Social Contagion Beyond Humans: an investigation on contagious yawning, exploring visual, auditory and tactile perception of a non-biological agent (an android) in primates and humans with intact vision and blind*.

Belinda Brooks-Gordon was the external examiner for Max Morris' PhD thesis at the University of Durham, Durham. Their thesis was entitled: *Incidental Sex Work: Casual and Commercial Encounters in Queer Digital Spaces*.

Publications

Journal Articles

- Alsmith, A. J. T., & Longo, M. R. (2019). [Using VR technologies to investigate the flexibility of human self-conception](#). In E. Fischer & M. Curtis (Eds.), *Methodological advances in experimental philosophy*, pp. 153-174. London: Bloomsbury.
- Anwyl-Irvine, A., Massonnié, J., Flitton, A., Kirkham, N., & Evershed, J. (2019). [Gorillas in our Midst: an online behavioural experiment builder](#). *Behavior Research Methods*, <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-019-01237-x>
- Azañón, E., & Longo, M. R. (2019). [Tactile perception: Beyond the somatotopy of the somatosensory cortex](#). *Current Biology*, *29*, R333-R324.
- Barkhuizen, W., Taylor, M. J., Freeman, D. & Ronald, A. (2019). [A twin study on the association between psychotic experiences and tobacco use during adolescence](#). *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *58*, pp.267-276.
- Beloe, P., & Derakshan, N. (2019). [Adaptive working memory training can reduce anxiety and depression vulnerability in adolescents](#). *Developmental Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12831>
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- Chard, J., Edey, R., Yon, D., Murphy, J., Bird, G., & Press, C. (2019). [Atypical emotion recognition from bodies is associated with perceptual difficulties in healthy aging](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, *45*, 803-811.

- Cracco, E., & Cooper, R. P. (2019). [Automatic Imitation of Multiple Agents: A Computational Model](#). *Cognitive Psychology*, 113(101224), 1-20. DOI: 10.1016/j.cogpsych.2019.101224
- Donati, G., Dumontheil, I., and Meaburn, E.M., (2019) [Genome-wide association study of latent cognitive measures in adolescence: genetic overlap with intelligence and education](#). *Mind, Brain and Education*. (Accepted for publication in April 2019)
- Edey, R., Cook, J., Brewer, R., Bird, G., & Press, C. (2019). [Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder are sensitive to the kinematic features defining natural human motion](#). *Autism Research*, 12, 284-294.
- Edey, R., Brewer, R., Bird, G., & Press, C. (2019). [Typical auditory-motor and enhanced visual-motor temporal synchronization in adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49, 788-793.
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- Gilligan, K. A., Hodgkiss, A., Thomas, M. S. C., & Farran, E. K. (2019). [The developmental relations between spatial cognition and mathematics in primary school children](#). *Developmental Science*, 22(4), July 2019, e12786. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12786>.
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- Hammer, D., Melhuish, E.C., & Howard, S.J. (In press). Child self-regulation, adolescent risky behaviours and substance use: A 10-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.
- Hecht, H., Welsch, R., Viehoff, J., & Longo, M. R. (2019). [The shape of personal space](#). *Acta Psychologica*, 193, 113-122.
- Howard, S.J., Cook, C.J., Everts, L., Melhuish, E., Scerif, G., Norris, S.A., Twine, R., Kahn, K., & Draper, C.E. (in press). Challenging SES: A cross-cultural comparison of early executive function. *Developmental Science*.
- Howard, S. J., Neilsen-Hewett, C., de Rosnay, M., Vasseleu, E., & Melhuish, E. (2019). Evaluating the viability of a structured observational approach to assessing early self-regulation. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.
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Qi, X. **Barnes, J.**, and **Melhuish, E** (under revision). Preschool education, home learning environment and children's cognitive development at school entry: a multilevel study from rural China. manuscript submitted to *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

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