

# CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH REPORT

## Welcome!

This report aims to inform parents, teachers, the general public and cooperating institutions about the ongoing research in psychology at Grand Valley State University. In this second edition, two different research teams present their current projects as well as our guest in social psychology Dr. Mihaela Friedlmeier.

The developmental lab is located in the Behavioral Research Facility on 632 Fulton Street W, in Grand Rapids. Our research is primarily funded by internal grants from Grand Valley.

Our primary interest is to gain and spread the knowledge we acquire about the way children think and feel, what they know about the world and themselves, and how this develops over time.

In order for us to fulfill this mission, we cooperate with schools and daycares of the Grand Rapids region and we also host parents and their children in our Behavioral Research Facility.

## The Cognition and Instruction Lab

Adviser:

**Brad Morris**

Specialization:

Cognitive Developmental Psychology



In our current research, we are investigating how different types of praise influence visual attention by using an eye tracker.

### LOGICAL REASONING

Ages 4-8

One area of interest is how language is related to reasoning. Young children begin with limited understanding of logical words like AND & OR (Morris, 2003) that is highly related to what they hear in everyday conversations (Morris, 2008). An example of how language is important in reasoning is recognizing inconsistencies. Children appear to first recognize inconsistencies by using the meanings of words. For example, Bill says that the bird outside the window is a Robin. Mary says that the bird is a Blue Jay. Our research demonstrates that although 4-5 year olds often fail to recognize such inconsistencies, children's abilities improve rapidly between 6 and 8 (Morris & Hasson, 2010).

### PRAISE AND MOTIVATION

Age 5

I am also interested in children's motivation. In a recent study, five-year-old children were given a mixture of two praise types, generic (e.g., You are a good girl) or non-generic (e.g., You worked hard) related to a picture they pretended to draw. Our results indicate that they were happy with their pictures with even a small amount (<25%) of non-generic praise. However, persistence did not increase until children received mostly non-generic praise (>75% of the time). These results suggest that praise focused on effort (e.g., hard work) is important for fostering persistence in young children.



### Selected Publications

- Morris, B. J. (2003). Opposites attract: The influence of predicate dimensionality on preschool children's processing of negations. *Journal of Child Language, 30*, 419-440.
- Morris, B. J. (2008). Logically speaking: Evidence for Item-based acquisition of the connectives AND & OR. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 9*, 67-88.
- Morris, B. J., & Hasson, U. (2010). Multiple sources of competence underlying the comprehension of inconsistencies: A developmental investigation. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning Memory, and Cognition, 36*, 277-287.

## Infant Cognition Lab

At the GVSU Infant Cognition Laboratory we are interested in what sorts of things infants are learning from their everyday experiences with people and objects. We learn about infant thinking using two different types of studies.

### LOOKING TIME STUDIES

#### Ages 3 months-1 year

One sort of study asks parents to sit in front of a puppet theater with their baby on their lap. We then move objects around on the stage and measure infants' attention to the objects by watching the infants' eyes. Using this sort of methodology we have learned about the types of situations where infants are likely to form a category, and how long infants can remember experiences they had with various objects. We have also learned that when adults speak about objects, infants are more likely to attend to those objects and to form categories including similar objects.

### INTERACTION STUDIES

#### Ages 3 months-13 months

A second sort of study that we conduct at the GVSU ICL aims to understand what infants' everyday experiences are actually like. In these studies we invite parents and infants to interact and play with each other like they would at home, and we record those interactions so that we can learn about infants' typical interactions with people and objects. From these sorts of studies we have learned that parents provide many cues to infants about what it is that is being spoken about. We are investigating how these cues effect infant learning and categorization.

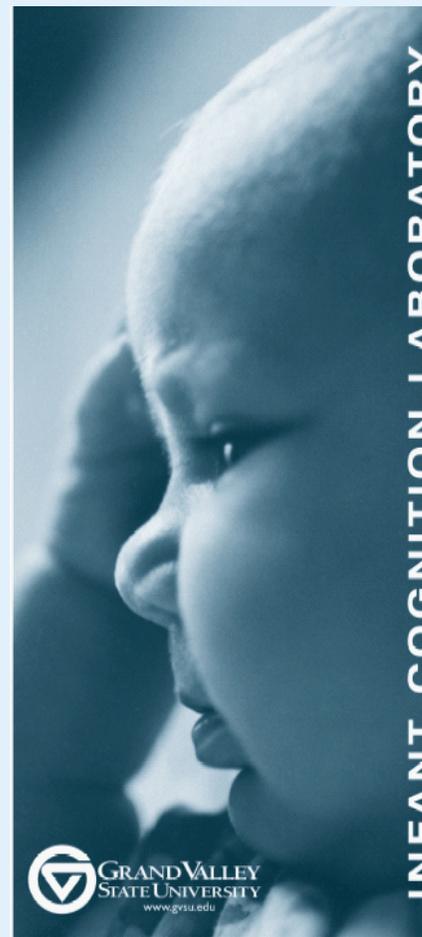


Adviser:

**Gwenden Dueker**

**Specialization:**

Object Perception/Cognitive Development



### Selected Publications

- Dueker, G., Cunningham, A. & Bracey, E. (2011). *Adults back off when an object is present: Messages conveyed by the distances adults maintain between themselves and pre-lexical infants.* Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Dueker, G.L. & Nedham, A. (2011). *Naturalistic object labeling facilitates category formation by prelinguistic infants: Evidence of an object naming context.* Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Dueker, G.L. & Needham, A. (2005). *Infants' object category formation in the real world: Context effects on category use in object segregation.* *Visual Cognition*, 12, 1177-1198.
- Needham, A., Dueker, G.L., & Lockhead, G. (2005). *Category information facilitates young infants' object segregation.* *Cognition*, 94, 215-240.

# OUR FEATURED PROFESSOR

Our guest for this edition of our research report is Assistant Professor Mihaela Friedlmeier who studies the relationship between different familial generations in different cultures.



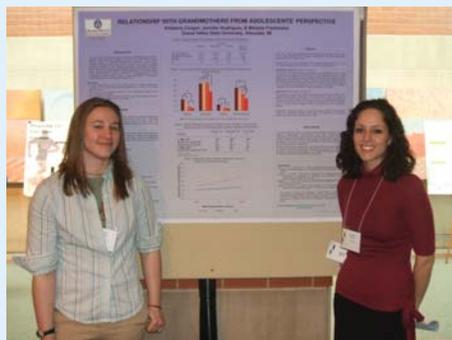
Adviser:

**Mihaela Friedlmeier**

**Specialization:**

Developmental/Cross-Cultural Psychology

## THE VALUE OF CHILDREN AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS\*



Kim Cooper (left) and Jennifer Rodriguez presenting at SSD

This is an ongoing project in which I have been involved since 2005. This project investigates fertility decisions as well as intergenerational relationships throughout the life span between three biologically related generations (grandmothers, mothers, adolescent children) in more than twenty countries including Germany, France, Turkey, Israel, Indonesia, China, the U.S. and more. More than twenty GVSU students participated in data collection and some of them presented the first results at professional conferences.

## RELIGIOSITY AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF ADOLESCENTS

The study investigated the role of adolescents' religiosity for their life satisfaction in four countries (France, Germany, Poland and US). We found that in all cultures, religiosity had a positive impact on how adolescents prioritized their family, which in turn relates to a higher life satisfaction. Interestingly, this link was stronger in cultures with a higher overall religiosity (Poland and the U.S.) as compared to cultures that value religion less (Germany and France).

## SUPPORT BETWEEN ADULT DAUGHTERS AND THEIR MOTHERS, RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Middle-aged women and their mothers from Grand Rapids and surrounding areas were interviewed on the extent of support given and received, relationship quality, and life satisfaction. Findings showed that a balanced give-and-take between adult daughters and their mothers led to greater intimacy and fewer conflicts between them. The results also suggest that providing support is more beneficial than receiving support.

*\*Principal Investigators of this project are Gisela Trommsdorff, University of Konstanz, Germany and Bernhard Nauck, Technical University of Chemnitz, Germany. The project is funded by a grant from the German Science Foundation; part of the U.S. study by CSCE.*

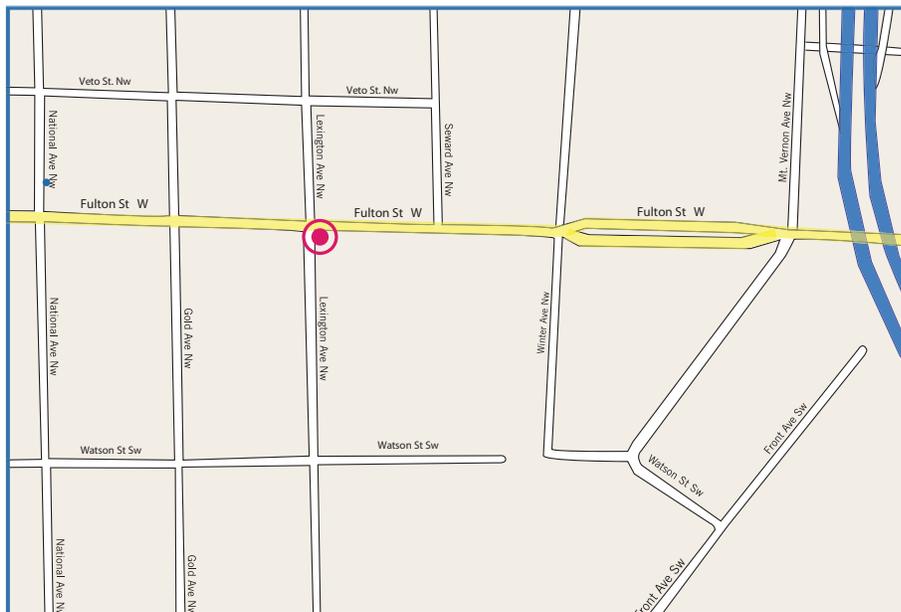
### Selected Publications

- Cieslinksi, A., & Friedlmeier, M. (2011, February). Predictors of filial anxiety among American adult daughters. *Poster presented at the 6th Annual GVSU Gerontology Conference in Grand Rapids, MI.*
- Sabatier, C., Mayer, B., Friedlmeier, M., Lubiewska, K., & Trommsdorff, G. (in press). Religiosity, family orientation, and life satisfaction of adolescents in four countries. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology.*
- Friedlmeier, M., & Friedlmeier, W. (2010, November). Support between adult daughters and their mothers, relationship quality, and life satisfaction. *Paper presented at 63rd Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America in New Orleans, LA.*

Address:  
**632 Fulton Street W.**  
**Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6386**

How to get to the Behavioral Center?

- \* The lab is located in the SW corner of Fulton/Lexington
- \* The entrance to the parking lot is a small driveway before crossing Lexington if driving to downtown/coming from Ball Park.
- \* We have free parking spots reserved at the rear of the building for the parents who participate in our studies.



Rear view: Entrance



Front View

## Behavioral Research Form

If you are interested in participating with your child/children in one of our studies, please fill out the form below, or contact the Psychology Office for more information about currently ongoing projects: 616-331-2195.

Fill out the form below, and return it to Grand Valley State University, 1 Campus Drive, 2224 AuSable Hall, Allendale, MI 49401.

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Last Name

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First Name

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