Sed justo.

2014 has been another successful and busy year for the staff and students in the CCD Person Perception Program!

Keep reading for a summary of some of the findings from our research this year. Highlights from 2014 include our findings related to face processing abilities in children with autism, as well as recently completed theses from our students.

We are looking forward to 2015 being another big year for person perception research so stay tuned!

A Big Thank You...

... to all the families, schools, and collaborators who have helped us along the way this year. We really appreciate your support and assistance! We hope to continue to work with schools and families in Perth to involve children in our research.
Spotlight on Autism Research

A key research project in our program has been our investigation of person perception in children with autism spectrum conditions, coordinated by Dr. Louise Ewing. One of the research questions we investigated was whether children with autism would judge trustworthiness in faces in a similar way to typically developing children.

We asked typically developing children and children with autism to make judgments about how much they would trust a series of faces. Results indicated that both groups judge facial trustworthiness similarly. To see how these judgments affected social behaviour we created a second task/game: Token Quest. In Token Quest, children were given the opportunity to share a set of tokens with a series of pretend partners (who all looked either very trustworthy or very untrustworthy). They were told that these partners would be given three times as many tokens as the child chose to share, and would then get to choose how many (if any) of their tokens they would like to return to the child.

Results revealed that token ‘investments’ by the typical children were strongly influenced by the appearance of their partners (i.e. they showed more trust in those partners with a trustworthy face, than an untrustworthy face). The same was not true for the children with autism. For them, the way a face looked did not affect how they shared with that person. This may be an important step in understanding differences in social behaviour between typically developing children and children with autism.

Long time member Dr. Louise Ewing has headed off to a new position in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Birkbeck College, University of London. She is still working in the field of person perception - now on a project investigating face perception in typical children and individuals with Williams Syndrome – a genetic condition characterized by (among other things) developmental delays, atypical maturation of the visual system and highly social personalities. She and her team are working to improve our understanding of the development of the processing strategies people use when asked to make decisions about faces (e.g., identity, expression and gender), collecting data at both neural and behavioural levels from their participants. Very exciting work but we all miss her around here!

Our youngest member yet!

Congratulations to Kate Crookes on the birth of her gorgeous baby girl, Khushi. We are all putting our hands up for babysitting!

Where are they now?

Example of a trustworthy looking face from the Token Quest game.
Students in the Person Perception Program

After three years of hard work one of our PhD students, Samantha Leivers, finished her thesis this year. Her research investigating the relationship between sperm quality and social behaviours in humans has generated lots of media interest being mentioned in the West Australian, Men’s Health Magazine and online science pages. Visit our Facebook page for pictures and links.

www.facebook.com/CCDPersonPerception

This year Frances Caulfield completed her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, and has taken up a new position as a Clinical Psychologist at the Autism Association of WA. Frances provides specialist services to school aged children with autism and their families.

Well done Sam and Frances!

Quiz: Who’s in that face?!?

In the image on the right we have combined facial features from 3 celebrities, can you name what feature belongs to whom?

Tom Hanks (Head), George Clooney (Eyes and nose), Brad Pitt (Mouth)

Interested in participating in research?

A visiting PhD student is running a study about facial expression recognition in autism. The study involves 3 computerised tasks that can be completed over the internet. If you have a child with autism, aged 6-16, and would like to find out more about participating please contact sarah.griffiths@bristol.ac.uk

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