Prof. Ulrike Hahn was Elected Fellow of the US Association for Psychological Science as well as of the German National Academy of Sciences “Leopoldina”.

Prof. Mark Johnson received the Huttenlocher Award and delivered the associated lecture *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience: Progress and Prospects* at the annual FLUX congress in Leiden, Netherlands, 16-19th Sept 2015.

Prof. Johnson being introduced by Prof. Beatrice Luna (a former PhD student of his)
Dr. Iroise Dumontheil was interviewed on Channel 4 News on 22nd September to talk about the use of smartphones during adolescence, and on BBC Radio Wales on 25th November to talk about a recently published paper on social cognition and multitasking during adolescence and adulthood (dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.150117).

The research of the BabyLab was featured in the pages of *Nature*:  

In September, Prof. Ted Melhuish was interviewed on ABC radio in Australia about his proposal that Australia should provide free 15 hours of early education for all 3- and 4-year olds. It attracted a lot of press comment and substantial political reaction.

Prof. Annette Karmiloff-Smith took part in a debate on the use of technology in today’s digital world, at The Sunday Times Festival of Literature.
Prof. Denis Mareschal (PI), Dr. Iroise Dunontheill & Prof. Michael Thomas are part of a Centre for Educational Neuroscience team including members of the UCL-Institute of Education who were awarded a £998,000 grant from the Wellcome Trust and Education Endowment Foundation to carry out a large scale feasibility study for a cognitive neuroscience based science education intervention. The UnLocke Project is based on the finding that expertise in scientific reasoning is predicated in part on the ability to inhibit pre-potent naïve concepts. The team will develop and evaluate a new computerised game aimed at helping primary school-aged children to use their inhibitory skills more effectively in the context of math and science lessons. While the full-scale intervention will involve 9000 children, a smaller subset of children will also undergo extensive cognitive testing and neuroimaging in order to better understand the mechanisms at play during scientific reasoning.

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects/counterintuitive-concepts/

Dr. Iroise Dumontheil obtained an ESRC-CASE studentship with Prof. Michael Thomas and John Rogers (Delosis) to work on the Study of Cognition, Adolescents and Mobile Phones (SCAMP).

Dr. Natasha Kirkham and Prof. Denis Mareschal have been successfully awarded an ESRC CASE studentship, exploring the role of ambient noise on children's classroom performance.

Dr. Emma Meaburn was awarded a Birkbeck Wellcome Trust ISSF (Institutional Strategic Support Fund) to study: An autism DNA bio-resource for evaluation of female resilience to inherited ASD risk variants. Amount: £39,460

Dr. Angelica Ronald received a Wellcome Trust ISSF grant to establish her international project on genomic mega-analyses of psychotic experiences in adolescence.

Prof. Martin Eimer received a Leverhulme Trust, Research Project Grant: Neural and cognitive mechanisms of multimodal working memory (£185,528). Start date: 1 February 2016
Dominika Sieradzka passed her viva in December 2015, her thesis title being *Investigation into the contribution of common genetic variants to the aetiology of dimension-specific psychotic experiences in the general population of adolescents and the association with schizophrenia*. She was supervised by Dr Angelica Ronald (first supervisor) and Dr Emma Meaburn (second supervisor). Her examiners were Professor Stanley Zammit (Bristol) and Dr Andrew McQuillin (UCL).

Massimiliano Papera successfully defended his thesis, entitled *A study of the mechanisms of attention and memory that are associated with neglect of unexpected visual stimuli*, on 3rd December 2015. Supervisor Professor Anne Richards (primary) and Prof. Richard Cooper (second supervisor).

Prof. Matthew Longo gave departmental seminars at the University of Barcelona, the University of Essex, and the University of Sussex. He was also a commentator at the workshop on 'The Body and the Mind, Revisited' at the University of Copenhagen.

Prof. Denis Mareschal was an external examiner for Fabrice Damon at the *Department de Psychologie, Universite de Grenoble*. The thesis was entitled "The emergence of visual preference in infants" and supervised by Olivier Pascalis.

Xiaofei Qi passed her examination for the degree of PhD in October, 2015, entitled: “Does preschool matter: The impact of preschool experience on children's school readiness in rural China”. Her supervisors were Prof.Ted Melhuish and Prof. Jacqueline Barnes. Her examiners were Paul Leseman (Utrecht) and Lynn Ang (UCL).


Parketny, J., Towler, J., & Eimer, M (2015). The activation of visual face memory and explicit face recognition are delayed in developmental prosopagnosia. Neuropsychologia, 75, 538-547.


Dr Iroise Dumontheil gave research talks titled *Rostral prefrontal cortex, social cognition and executive functions* on 9 October at the British Psychological Society Division of Neuropsychology Scotland AGM, in Glasgow; *Different approaches to training executive functions during childhood and adolescence* at the Current Issues in Educational Neuroscience workshop on 20 November in London; and *Social cognition development during adolescence* at a research group seminar at the University of Birmingham on 8 December.

Dr Iroise Dumontheil also gave more general talks on *What does neuroscience say about children’s physical, cognitive, social and emotional development* on 26 September to teachers and parents at the Maria Montessori Institute in London, a presentation on *Learning, reasoning and science education in the developing brain* to teachers at Latymer Upper School on 21 October, and a talk on *The Teenage Brain* to 6th form students at University College School on 27 November.

Prof. Matthew Longo gave departmental seminars at the University of Barcelona, the University of Essex, and the University of Sussex. He was also a commentator at the workshop on 'The Body and the Mind, Revisted' at the University of Copenhagen.

F. Tasker. Transgender parents and their children. Centre for Family Research Seminar Series, 20th October, 2015, University of Cambridge, UK


Prof. Annette Karmiloff-Smith gave a keynote address in October at the *Harmonize in Europe for Williams Syndrome* in Rome. She also gave a keynote address in November at the Spanish Linguistics and Speech Therapy conference in Barcelona.
INVITED TALKS


The Ministry of Education for Japan invited Prof. Ted Melhuish to give an address to a conference on Early Childhood Education: Research & Policy, Tokyo, Japan, 1st September, 2015.

Prof. Ted Melhuish gave a keynote address on Early Experience, Self-regulation and Later development to the Inaugural Early Start Conference, University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia, September, 2015.


The Department of Education of the Australian Government invited Prof. Ted Melhuish to hold a workshop on Early Childhood Research and Policy for civil servants from Education, Treasury & Employment, in Canberra, Australia, 12th October, 2015.

The Australian Research Association for Children and Youth (ARACY) invited Prof. Ted Melhuish to give a keynote address on Research on Early Childhood at their conference in Melbourne, Australia, 14th October, 2015.

On October 23rd Prof. Ted Melhuish gave an invited address on Early Experience, Literacy and Emotional Development to the conference of the Family Day Care Association of Australia, Sydney, Australia.

In November, Premier Jay Weatherill of South Australia invited Prof. Ted Melhuish to give an address on Early Childhood and the Wealth of Nations to the Early Childhood: Nation Reform Symposium, Adelaide, Australia. This symposium led on the recommendations that were presented to the Commonwealth of Australian Governments (COAG) on the future funding of early education in Australia.
With Dr. Emma Meaburn, Prof. Michael Thomas gave a public lecture on genetics and education on November 18th (The Inaugural Annual Learnus Lecture, Church House, Dean's Yard, London).

Prof. Thomas dealt with the following topics: It is familiar to hear that the ‘gene’ for this or that behaviour has been discovered, or that certain skills are ‘highly heritable’. Can this help educators? Can knowing what abilities are more or less heritable directly help improve teaching techniques or educational outcomes? To explore this question, Professor Thomas will describe the contemporary methods used to relate genetic variation to individual differences in high-level behaviours such as academic skills and educational achievement. These methods include twin studies and genome-wide association studies. He will then address the key question of what genetic data imply about the ability of educators to optimise educational outcomes for children across the range of abilities. As was recently asked in a Guardian podcast with Professor Robert Plomin, might true equality in education mean testing children's genetics at the age of four, so that any learning difficulties revealed can be accommodated right from the start of primary education? Or alternatively, does a focus on genetic differences distract our attention from differences that stem from inequalities in the environment, which are more readily addressed?

Dr Emma Meaburn discussed cutting-edge developments in measuring and relating DNA variation to educationally relevant abilities. She also explored emerging research on the biological effects of the environment on DNA expression (so-called ‘epigenetic’ studies).

N.B. THE PINK TIE!!
Prof. Mark Johnson, Dr Teea Gliga, and Dr Luke Mason all taught at the Italian School of Neuroscience in Bressanone, Italy, October 3-8th.


In November 20th, Dr. Iroise Dumontheil and Prof. Michael Thomas contributed to a one-day workshop organised by the Centre for Educational Neuroscience and held at Birkbeck, for which the keynote speaker was Prof. Daphne Bavelier (University of Geneva). Prof. Bavelier presented on the topic of 'Learning and transfer: Lessons from action video games'.

Dr. Dumontheil spoke on the topic of training executive function skills, while Prof. Thomas spoke on the topic of the cognitive neuroscience of socio-economic status.


On October 2nd, Carina de Klerk and Sinead Rocha organised a highly successful training workshop on the use of surface EMGs for studying infant development. The workshop involved international speakers and brought together a community for local London researchers interested in this method.


Papera, M. & Richards, A. Processing capacity limits in the early stages of visual processing are associated with neglect of unexpected visual stimuli. (poster presentation) European Conference on Visual Perception, University of Liverpool, 23rd-27th August 2015.
Forthcoming Visitors
Dr. Pedro Alexandre Costa (Faculty of Psychology and Education - University of Porto (FPCE-UP)) visited the Department October-December 2015 and will return again to visit Birkbeck in April 2016. Pedro has conducted a pioneering research in Portugal on lesbian and gay parenting. During Pedro’s visit to Birkbeck, Dr. Fiona Tasker will be collaborating with him on a research project entitled “Mapping Family Relationships: A cross-cultural comparison of child and adolescent well-being in gay and lesbian adoptive families in Portugal and in the United Kingdom” funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) in Portugal.

Jan-Ole Harald Gmelin (Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Groningen) is visiting the department October 2015-January 2016) on an Erasmus+ training placement. During Pedro’s visit to Birkbeck, Dr. Fiona Tasker will be collaborating with him on a research project entitled “Young Gay Men’s Identity Formation in Germany”.

Forthcoming Conference
Abstract submissions and registration are now open for the 11th International Conference on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology, held in Roehampton University, London on 18-20 July 2016. Dr Angelica Ronald will be giving a keynote talk on why autism often co-occurs with other conditions.
WOMEN SCIENTISTS UNITE!

FOR YOUR DIARY!

Thursday, 3rd March 2016, 6-7pm, in Room B-34

INAUGURAL WIPS LECTURE
(Women In Psychological Sciences lecture series)

Remedying the (Still Too) Slow Advancement of Women

Professor Virginia Valian

Virginia Valian is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Hunter College and a member of the doctoral faculties of Psychology, Linguistics, and Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences at the CUNY Graduate Center, New York. She is co-founder and director of Hunter's Gender Equity Project, and Director of the Language Acquisition Research Centre. In a recent Chronicle of Higher Education article on 'What book changed your mind?', Valian's book, Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women was one of 12 showcased non-fiction books published in the last 30 years.
Birkbeck School of Sciences welcomed the New Chief Executive of Science Council, Belinda Phipps, to give the final talk of the year in the Equalities and Wellbeing series. Belinda Phipps, who is also Chair of the Fawcett Society spoke about how inequality can be measured in time, including time doing unpaid work, time in which jobs accumulate when women are at home, compared to the time that men have for leisure which may get used to enhance their job prospects. She went on to talk about some of the changes she had made in the organisations she has run, including the National Childbirth Trust, an NHS trust and a blood transfusion service.

Assistant Dean for Equalities, Belinda Brooks-Gordon stated: “I am delighted to welcome Belinda to Birkbeck. We can learn a great amount from outstanding achievers like her. Belinda Phipp’s talk really shows how equality change in an organisation can be made. It starts with our baseline measures and the challenge to change. Then with support people can be enabled to change, especially when the right rewards are in place. Athena Swan gives us that challenge and reward.”

The talk is the third this year. The first was by Professor Tom Welton from Imperial College. The second was by Jo Swinson MP the Minister for Equalities in the Coalition government.

The Equalities and Wellbeing series is part of Birkbeck’s Athena Swan programme which is to inspire and retain more women in science.

Prof. Carolyn Moores (Biological Sciences) and Dr Belinda Brooks-Gordon (Psychological Sciences and Assistant Dean for Equalities in the School of Science) travelled to the University of Oxford to collect the award from eminent scientist Professor Dame Julia Higgins FRS FREng. The ceremony was held in the Examinations Schools on 16th December. The Award to Birkbeck’s School of Biological Sciences received an Athena Swan Bronze Award will be on display at Birkbeck to inspire other departments.
The Dept. of Psych Sciences isn’t just about brain imaging, reaction time, and questionnaires. We also produce participants for the studies in the Babylab!

Prof. Matthew Longo has recently started a period of paternity leave to look after little Sophia (pictured), from January to June, 2016.

Dr Angelica Ronald welcomed baby Astrid on 6th November 2015. Mother and baby are doing well!

Dr.Emily Jones gave birth to Ariadne Grace Gold on the 16th November at 9lb 12 oz. Arthur looks very pleased (until of course healthy sibling rivalry sets in!)
The Dept. of Psych Sciences isn’t just about brain imaging, reaction time, and questionnaires. We have lots of fun too!

On Friday 25 September Dr. Esha Massand, postdoc, took part in the UK's highest freefall abseil (262ft) at the Arcelor Mittal Orbital in London's Olympic Park, to raise funds for Autistica, a charity which both funds and campaigns for medical research to understand the causes of autism, improve diagnosis and develop new evidence-based interventions.

The Departmental Christmas Party organised by Bree Pall and Declan Clear from CBCD, was its usual success.