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Decision making strategies in children and adolescents

PARENT / GUARDIAN INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics Approval Reference: R59371/RE001

We would like to invite your child to take part in a research project investigating children and adolescents decision-making. However, before you decide whether you wish for your child to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information about the study. Please feel free to contact us if there is anything you would like more information on.

Who is conducting the research?

The research is being conducted by MaryAnn Noonan, a Doctor in the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Oxford. More information about her research is at <https://www.devneurolab.com/>. She is being aided by research assistant Maximilian Scheuplein and three undergraduate psychology students at Oxford University: Morwenna Rickard, Linette Chan and Juliette Westbrook. This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee for research involving human participants (Project Number: R59372/RE001). All researchers possess full and up-to-date DBS certificates and have completed training in working with young children.

What are we trying to find out?

We are investigating children's decision-making and risk-taking assessments and behaviours. Learning to choose the best option is not a trivial problem, particularly when there are multiple potentially valuable choices and the value of these options changes over time. How children and adolescents learn in these situations and how that differs from adults' is still unknown. We wish to find out more about how decision strategies develop during childhood. It is ultimately important to understand decision-making in adolescents because of the long-term impact of choices taken during this stage of life. Adolescence has long been associated with poor decisions and risky behaviour, and research such as this is the first step in elucidating the actual processes that may govern decision-making in this volatile period of life.



Why has my child been invited to take part?

You have been contacted because your child's school is collaborating with us for this research. We are writing to all parents/guardians with children in Years 7-to-13 to invite their child to take part.

What will happen if my child takes part?

If you agree for your child to take part, we would like the child to access a game online from home. They will be invited to complete this short game, in which they see pictures on a computer screen and make a simple decision about them. According to their choice, they may receive positive or negative feedback, which will correspond to gaining points, which they collect during the game. Following this, they will complete two short questionnaires, aimed at assessing risk-taking behaviour and impulsivity. This should take no longer than 10 minutes.

Are there any potential risks in taking part?

No, there are no potential risks in your child taking part in this study. The questions used on the risk-taking questionnaire assess risk-taking behaviours indirectly, for example, "I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening. Do you agree?" The questions used on the impulsivity questionnaire are simple statements, for example, "My mind wandered when I should have been listening."

The knowledge we gain from the study will help us understand how children learn to choose the most valuable option and how these skills develop with age, potentially benefiting other children in the future.

What happens to the research data collected?

Responses from each child are completely anonymous. No personal data, including no IP address, is collected or recorded and individual children cannot be identified from their responses. Only members of the research team will have access to the anonymous research data, stored in password protected files. A summary of our overall findings will be available to interested families, which we will distribute to participating schools. The research will also be used as part of student theses. We also aim to publish our findings in scientific journals but this may be a year or two from the end of the study. At that time the anonymous data may be deposited on a public data depository so that other researchers can use them. In line with University policy, research data will be stored for a minimum of three years.

Data Protection

JATOS is the data controller with respect to your personal data and, as such, will determine how your personal data is used. Please see their privacy notice here: <https://www.jatos.org/Data-Privacy-and-Ethics.html>. JATOS will share only fully anonymised

data with the University of Oxford, for the purposes of research.



Does my child have to take part?

No, they do not. We are using an 'opt-in' consent policy, such that all children, with parental permission, can choose to participate if they would like to do so. However, there is no obligation for your child to take part; they do not need to give a reason for not wanting to take part and there will be no negative consequence for not taking part. If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have any questions afterwards) please contact MaryAnn Noonan (contact details at the beginning of this letter).

What happens next?

If you are happy for your child to participate then please follow the link (<https://www.devneurolab.com/participate.html>) to the online study.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our research project. We hope that you are keen for your child to participate.

Additional Information

It is extremely unlikely any concerns or complaints should arise as a result of our study. If you have a concern about any aspect of the project, please speak to MaryAnn Noonan via telephone: 01865 274490 or email: maryann.noonan@psy.ox.ac.uk. We will do our best to acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how we intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (using the contact details below) who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner.

Chair, Medical Sciences Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee

Email: ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk

Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JD