



Vanderbilt University

# Developmental Newsletter

December 2013

Department of Psychology & Human Development

The second year cohort proposes a new annual tradition where the current second years collaborate to create a newsletter with the goal of introducing all of the new faces in Peabody's Developmental Psychology programs. We would like to thank our department chair, Amy Needham, for encouraging and overseeing this endeavor! We hope you enjoy this newsletter, and please introduce yourself to these wonderful people when you see them around! Happy Holidays! - Sarah, Sara & Colleen



*From Left to Right:*  
Katherine Musacchio,  
Emilie Hall, Emily  
Conder, and Jessica  
Thurmond

## 2013 Child Development Masters Students

**Katherine Musacchio** is a Nashville native, and graduated with honors from East Tennessee State University in 2013. She is currently working under the guidance of Tedra Walden and members of the Developmental Stuttering Project. Katherine enjoys Dr. Walden's hands-on approach to research, and she is particularly excited for the opportunity to collaborate with researchers from many different fields including Psychology and Speech and Hearing. Katherine likes watermelon and The Big Bang Theory (and the second-years are wondering if she and Jessica are planning any Big Bang Theory marathons and if toddlers are welcome...).

**Emilie Hall** comes to Vanderbilt from Ohio, where she graduated from Youngstown State University in 2013, and she is excited to be working with Bethany Rittle-Johnson in The Child Learning Lab. Broadly, her interests include early learning and academic achievement, and she is looking forward to exploring her career options through the program. Emilie recently returned from studying in Istanbul, Turkey for 9 months—she highly recommends that we all add Istanbul to our travel bucket lists!

## 2013 Child Development Masters Students cont'd

**Emily Condor** graduated from Furman University in South Carolina in 2011. She spent 2 years working in marketing before finding her way to Vanderbilt to work in both The Early Development Lab and The Education Neuroscience Lab last summer. Inspired by her work with Dr. Georgene Troseth and Colleen Russo investigating the social processes behind children's bullying, Emily decided to focus on a career in research. She hopes to earn a PhD after completing her current program. In addition to her research interests in bullying, she is also interested in the social and emotional development of children who are sensitive, shy, or introverted. Emily likes chocolate chip pancakes and Modern Family (possibly at the same time), and she can't wait to find opportunities to travel the world as part of her research career.

**Jessica Thurmond** graduated last May from The University of West Florida and came to Vanderbilt to study developmental neuroscience. She is working for the Educational Cognitive Neuroscience lab under Bruce McCandliss. She is also working on the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth under David Lubinski and Dean Camilla Benbow, studying how childhood trauma (e.g., abuse, toxic stress) affects information processing in the brain. Jessica has a passion not only for research, but also advocacy on behalf of children. Over the summer, Jessica presented her independent research at APA in Hawaii and received the APA/Psi Chi Society Research Award. She looks forward to furthering her education here at Vanderbilt. Lastly, Jessica enjoys sushi and The Big Bang Theory.

## 2013 First Year Cohort

We are proud to welcome two terrific young scientists to our doctoral graduate program this fall: Abbey and Sofia! Similar to us (the current second year cohort), these two are practically inseparable! In fact, their advisors should be proud to know that they already have plans to collaborate together in the future – both responded under “career aspirations” that they planned to open a brewery together ;).



**Abbey Loehr** (advisor: Bethany Rittle-Johnson) and  
**Sofia Jimenez** (advisor: Meg Saylor)

## 2013 First Year Cohort cont'd

**Abbey Loehr** may be new to this program, but she's been hanging out with us in the department the past year, being a rock star in Bethany's lab. Prior to that, she graduated from Purdue University in 2011. Abbey is interested in ways to promote children's mathematics learning by applying cognitive science to educational settings. She has learned that you can never know what to expect kids to say, and she is fascinated by the way kids view the world and the sheer amount we can learn from them. Her favorite foods are pizza and green curry, and favorite TV show is Breaking Bad.

**Sofia Jimenez** comes to us from sunny San Diego where she graduated from UCSD in 2012. After graduation, she was a research associate at the Center for Neurological Study in La Jolla, CA, and although she enjoyed not having homework, she still had recurring nightmares about exams! Sofia is interested in many factors influencing language development, including: individual differences, bilingual language education, and pre-literacy. She is constantly impressed by all the cognitive changes that are happening early in children's lives, and how quickly some of these changes take place. She enjoys Indian food and anything with cheese, and her favorite TV shows are Downton Abbey and Parks & Recreation.

## 2013 Second Year Cohort

Because we didn't have a newsletter introduction last year, we were asked to officially introduce ourselves now! The three of us hit it off from day one and have definitely become one of Vanderbilt's closest cohorts! When we aren't in our individual labs, you can find us:

- Throwing awesome statistics study parties
- Participating way too much/asking tons of questions in our classes ☺
- Playing with Magnolia (Sara's adorable one year old daughter!)
- Around town listening to Sara perform in venues such as The Bluebird Café
- Drinking chai lattes together



**Sarah Wiesen** (advisor: Amy Needham), **Sara Beck** (advisor: John Rieser), and **Colleen Russo** (advisor: Georgene Troseth)

**Sarah Wiesen** came to Vanderbilt directly from Notre Dame, where she excelled academically while working in *three* different research labs. She is now studying babies' reaching, grasping, and object exploration. She is inspired by babies' curiosity – how they take advantage of every opportunity to learn about the world and are fascinated by the simplest things! Sarah enjoys spending time in the Infant Learning Lab, which she describes as a fun and happy lab. Sarah looks forward to continuing a career in research, but also looks forward to the opportunity to further develop her teaching skills.

## 2013 Second Year Cohort cont'd

**Sara Beck**'s path to grad school is quite unique. After undergrad (at Vanderbilt!), she became a successful singer-songwriter, releasing several albums and touring around the world. She is now applying her musical expertise to her research of how children perform the skilled action of singing under various feedback conditions. In particular, she is interested in how children use auditory and proprio-kinesthetic feedback to monitor their pitch and tempo as they sing. She's also interested in the role of movement in emotional responses to music. Sara has particularly enjoyed her experiences as a teaching assistant and looks forward to incorporating more of her research into what she brings to the classroom.

**Colleen Russo** came to Vanderbilt directly from Denison University where she enjoyed conducting many research projects. Her current research interests include children's learning from interactive media such as touchscreens, as well as negative effects of viewing antisocial behaviors on television. This past spring, Colleen received a National Science Foundation fellowship to continue this latter line of work. Colleen truly loves working in the Early Development Lab and mentoring an amazing group of research assistants. She's also obsessed with her two young nieces and is inspired by them daily.

## 2012 New Faculty Member

**Gavin Price** is originally from Cape Town, South Africa, but he grew up in the United Kingdom. He arrives at Vanderbilt after getting his BSc in Psychology from The University of York (UK), his MSc in Cognitive Neuropsychology from The University College London (UK), and his PhD in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience from The University of Jyvaskyla (Finland). His research focuses on the brain systems involved in processing numbers, how those systems develop, and how they relate to math learning. Describing his interests, he says: "Numerical cognition represents a fascinating intersection between culture and biology. Humans are endowed with a brain system for understanding quantity that has a long evolutionary history and is shared with many other animal species. Humans uniquely combine this system with a culturally invented symbol set (Arabic digits) to give us math. This combination has enabled incredible advances in civilization, from economics to medicine to space travel." Dr. Price is a fan of cheese, and he counts The Sopranos as his all-time favorite TV show and Man Men as his current favorite.

