Working with Babies

Code of Conduct for Oxford BabyLab

Please remember we are researchers, not professional carers. Although we are happy to play and engage with other people’s children, our role is not one of basic care. Bearing this in mind, here are some do’s and don’ts:

1. Ensure parent and child remain together in the same room.

2. Avoid being alone in a closed room with a child.
   - If Mum is just popping down the corridor to the loo, offer to accompany her (with baby).
   - If you are looking after an additional sibling outside the BabyLab, stay in the kid-safe open area, where others can find you easily. Do not take a child into a closed-off room, including your office. Don’t worry about noise – we are used to occasional disturbances.

3. Never leave a child unattended
   - If Mum brings other siblings with her, find another ethically approved researcher who can keep an eye on them for a while.
   - If Mum suggests a very young infant will be ok sleeping in a buggy, try to find another ethically approved researcher who can accompany them in the open area.

4. Avoid taking infants into the Control Room of the BabyLab
   - There are many potential hazards and distractions.

5. The yuck stuff
   - We have a changing mat & nappy disposal bags available for changes.
   - We have baby-wipes available for messes (including coloured pens).
   - As researchers, not carers, we don’t do nappy changes.
   - Similarly, for potty training children, accompany Mum to the loo, but let her take care of the toilet routine.

6. Informed consent
   - Clearly describe experimental methodology on the day (as well as in advance), including any potential risks or upsets.
   - Make sure Mum is aware it is ok to stop at any time, for any reason.
• Make sure that the parent of the infant signs the consent form before starting the experiment.

7. Confidentiality

• All records containing names and personal details (addresses etc.) must be kept in secure locations and on password protected PCs.

• All records of individual babies’ performances should be anonymised before being discussed or presented to people outside the immediate research group.

• We need explicit permission from a parent for use of images of them or their babies.

8. Responsible Researchers

• All BabyLab researchers go through face-to-face interviews, before acceptance into the group.

• All BabyLab researchers undergo police background checks.

• All BabyLab researchers must sign their agreement to these working practices, before they may supervise or work directly with infants.

• All BabyLab researchers must read the necessary professional guidelines listed in the Protocol for their research.

 Oxford BabyLab  
Draft Guidelines: 19/03/2008  
Reapproved: 21/11/2013

Signature of Investigator Collecting Data

Print name

Date
Dear Parent,

We’re writing to tell you a bit more about the studies you’re taking part in. We’re going to be using a method to get an idea of what’s going on in your baby’s mind. This technique is called the ERP (event-related potential) technique, and is very similar to EEGs that you might have already seen in use in hospitals and other clinics. Over the past decade, EEGs have also been used in many infant laboratories around the world to test young infants’ knowledge of their native language.

In order to find out how your baby responds to the pictures and sounds that we show them, infants taking part in these experiments will wear little caps that look very similar to the one in the picture. The hat has a few tiny sensors attached to the inside and can provide us with an estimate of the amount of activity in baby’s brain during the experiment. It is almost like taking baby’s temperature – nothing comes out of the sensors and it cannot change anything in our babies – just like a thermometer cannot change your temperature. This technique is completely non-invasive and entirely safe. It has been approved by the NHS ethics committee (A98.055, A00.028). Once our babies are wearing the hats, we pour a tiny amount of gel into little holes on the sensors – allowing us to get a good reading from our ERP “thermometer”. The sensors measure normally occurring activity in the brain, which tells us which parts of the brain are “interested” in the pictures we’re showing baby. We can show you how the baby’s brain responds to different kinds of activities, like blinking, boredom and muscle movement. Once we’ve shown you this and had a little play, the games begin! The games that our babies take part in during the study will be very similar to studies that you may have already seen in the Babylab. They usually last about 5 minutes, when we will show your baby some pictures of objects that we know babies like and direct their attention towards one or more of the pictures using an engaging pre-recorded voice. Our babies usually leave the lab, wanting more – as you might already know if you’re a Babylab regular!

Please feel free to ask any questions you might have about this method, before coming or once you arrive at the BERP lab. We look forward to seeing you and sharing this exciting experience with you and your baby. If you have any questions you wish to ask before your appointment, or any problems arise with regard to your appointment time, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us: 01865 271393 or email <Insert Researchers’ email address>. 
IMAGE RELEASE AGREEMENT

In the course of our studies, we collect visual recordings of you and your child. In our standard procedure, all recordings will be stored confidentially, and will only be accessible to ethically approved researchers. From time to time, it is useful for our work if selected images can be presented to scientific audiences, and to the general public. For example, it is helpful to show images of children enjoying our studies to parents thinking of participating. It is also helpful to show other scientists what our playroom looks like, and how children react to our tasks. For this reason, we would like permission to use recordings of you and your child. We will never sell the rights to these images, and we will never use your child’s real name along with their image.

Parent / Guardian
I allow the Oxford BabyLab to use images of my child recorded during this visit for the following purposes:

a) Scientific training Yes / No
b) Scientific illustration/demonstration Yes / No
c) BabyLab publicity (website, newsletters etc.) Yes / No

In addition, I am happy if my own face is visible in the recording: Yes / No

Parent/Guardian
Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________

Parent/Guardian
Printed Name: ____________________________________

Further Details:

a) Scientific training occurs when staff, students and academic visitors to the Department of Experimental Psychology observe a video of your child, in order to learn our scientific methods. Scientific training is supervised by an ethically approved BabyLab researcher, and the trainee does not gain rights to use the recordings outside training.

b) Scientific illustration is the use of still or video images to illustrate our methods to a scientific audience. This use includes printed publication in academic journal articles, printed display on posters, and still or moving display in oral presentations at national and international scientific conferences, and during academic visits to scientific institutions. Some of the resulting documents will be accessible online. Distribution rights will only be transferred to reputable academic publications, for single use, in a relevant research article.

c) BabyLab publicity (website, newsletters etc.) includes the use of recorded images for BabyLab publicity in domains which are accessible to the general public. These uses include (but are not exclusive to) use on the BabyLab website, in BabyLab newsletters distributed to participating parents, and on recruitment materials which will be available in local Hospitals, health care centres, nurseries and play groups.

If you have any concerns or complaints you wish to raise, you can contact the Director of the Oxford BabyLab, Prof. Kim Plunkett (e-mail: kim.plunkett@psy.ox.ac.uk; telephone: (01865) 271384; or in writing to the above address).