# Tamar Kushnir

## Web Bio

## Information

### Biography

**Biographical Statement**

Tamar Kushnir is the Evalyn Edwards Milman Assistant Professor of Child Development in the Department of Human Development, and the director of the [Early Childhood Cognition Laboratory](). She received her M.A. in Statistics and Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, and was a Post-Doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Kushnir's research examines mechanisms of learning in young children. Her previous work has addressed 1)how children use statistical evidence to learn new causal relations, 2)how new evidence interacts with children's prior causal beliefs, and 3)how causal learning is influenced by children's developing social knowledge and also by their own experience of action. She continues to explore the role that children's developing knowledge - in particular their social knowledge - plays in learning, a question with implications for the study of cognitive development as well as for early childhood education.

## Teaching

## Professional

## Research

## Extension

## Education

## Courses

## Websites

**Related Websites**

[Early Childhood Cognition Laboratory]()

## Administration

## Publications

**Selected Publications**

**Kushnir, T.**, Gopnik, A., Chernyak, N., Seiver, E., & Wellman, H. M.(in press). Developing intuitions about Free Will between ages 4 and 6. *Cognition.*

Vredenburgh, C. & **Kushnir, T.** (in press). Young Children's Help-Seeking As Information Gathering. *Cognitive Science.*

Vredenburgh, C., **Kushnir, T.,** & Cassasola, M. (2014). Pedagogical Cues Encourage Toddlers' Transmission of Recently Demonstrated Functions to Unfamiliar Adults. *Developmental Science.* DOI: 10.1111/desc.12233

Deisendruck, G. Salzer, S., **Kushnir, T,** & Xu, F. (2014) When choices aren't personal: The effect of statistical and social cues on children's inferences about the scope of preferences. *Journal of Cognition and Development.* DOI: 10.1080/15248372.2013.848870

Chernyak, N., **Kushnir, T.** (2014). The self as a moral agent: Preschoolers behave morally but believe in the freedom to do otherwise. *Journal Of Cognition And Development, 1 5*(3), 453-464. doi:10.1080/15248372.2013.777843

Chernyak, N., **Kushnir, T.** (2013). Giving preschoolers choice increases sharing behavior. *Psychological Science, 24(10),* 1971–1979.

Chernyak, N., **Kushnir, T., **Sullivan, K., Wang, Q. (2013). A Comparison of American and Nepalese Children's Concepts of Freedom of Choice and Social Constraint. *Cognitive Science, 37(7),* 1343-55. doi: 10.1111/cogs.12046.

Sobel, D. M. **& Kushnir, T** (2013). Knowledge matters: How children evaluate the reliability of testimony as a process of rational inference. *Psychological Review.*

Yu, Y. & **Kushnir, T.** (2014).  Social Context Effects in 2- and 4-year-olds' Selective Versus Faithful Imitation. *Developmental Psychology, 50(3). Developmental Psychology.* doi: 10.1037/a0034242

**Kushnir, T.** (2013). How children learn from and about people: The fundamental link between social cognition and statistical evidence. In M. Banaji and S. Gelman (eds). *The development of social cognition.* Oxford University Press.

**Kushnir, T.**, Vredenburgh, C., & Schneider, L. A. (2013).  "Who can help me fix this toy?:" The distinction between causal knowledge and word knowledge  guides preschoolers' selective requests for information. *Developmental Psychology.  49(3),* 446–453.

Xu, F. & **Kushnir, T.** (2013). Infants are rational constructivist learners. *Current directions in psychological science. 22(1)* 28–32.

**Kushnir, T.** (2012). Developing a concept of choice.  In Xu, F. & **Kushnir, T** (eds), *Advances in Child Development and Behavior: Rational Constructivism in Cognitive Development.* Waltham, MA: Academic Press.

Xu, F. & **Kushnir, T.** Eds (2012). *Advances in Child Development and Behavior Volume 43: Rational Constructivism in Cognitive Development.* Waltham, MA: Academic Press.

Kortenaar, M., **Kushnir, T**. and Trautmann. C. (2012) The Curiosity Corner: A Place for Young Scientists to Explore and Learn. *Informal Learning Review.*

**Kushnir, T.** & Chernyak, N. (2010). Understanding the adult moralist requires first understanding the child scientist. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 33 (4),* 343-344.

**Kushnir, T.,** Xu, F. & Wellman, H. M. (2010). Young children use statistical sampling to infer the preferences of others. *Psychological Science, 21,* 1134-1140.

**Kushnir, T.,** Gopnik, A., Lucas, C., & Schulz, L.E. (2010). Inferring hidden causal structure. *Cognitive Science, 34***,** 148-160.

**Kushnir, T.,** Wellman, H. M. & Gelman, S. A.(2009). A self-agency bias in children's causal inferences. *Developmental Psychology, 45,* pp.597-603.

**Kushnir, T.,** Wellman, H. M. & Gelman, S. A.(2008). The role of preschoolers' social understanding in evaluating the informativeness of causal interventions. *Cognition, 107,* pp.1084-1092.

**Kushnir, T.** & Gopnik, A. (2007). Conditional probability versus spatial contiguity in causal learning: Preschoolers use new contingency evidence to overcome prior spatial assumptions. *Developmental Psychology, 44,* 186-196.

Schulz, L. E., **Kushnir, T.,** & Gopnik, A. (2007). Learning from doing: Interventions and causal inference. In A. Gopnik & L. E. Schulz (Eds.), *Causal Learning; Psychology, Philosophy and Computation,* 67-86. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sobel, D. M. & **Kushnir, T.** (2006). The importance of decision-making in causal learning from interventions. *Memory & Cognition, 34*. 411-419.

**Kushnir T.** & Gopnik, A., (2005). Children infer causal strength from probabilities and interventions. *Psychological Science, 16,* 678-683.

Gopnik, A., Glymour, C., Sobel, D., Schulz, L. E., **Kushnir, T.,** & Danks, D. (2004). A theory of causal learning in children: Causal maps and Bayes nets. *Psychological Review, 111(1),* 3-32.