

# Sarah L Kiefer

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## EDUCATION

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### Ph.D. in Psychology

**Expected 2027**

Department of Cognitive & Psychological Sciences, Brown University, Providence, RI  
Proposed Dissertation: Children's understanding of productive failure in learning and persistence  
Committee: Dr. David Sobel (Chair), Dr. Daphna Buchsbaum, Dr. Julia Leonard

### Sc. M. in Cognitive Science

**May 2024**

Department of Cognitive, Linguistic & Psychological Sciences, Brown University, Providence, RI  
Thesis: "I Wanted to Challenge Myself!": Children's Developing Metacognitive Understanding of Effort in a Building Task  
Committee: Dr. David Sobel (Chair), Dr. Daphna Buchsbaum, Dr. Amitai Shenhav

### Bachelor of Science, Psychology (Psychological Science)

**May 2019**

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

## PUBLICATIONS

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\*MENTORED STUDENT

### Manuscripts in Preparation and Under Review

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Modesti, G., McHugh, S., & Sobel, D. M. (in prep). Fostering STEM engagement in spatial thinking from parent-child interaction in preschoolers: A remote study.

McHugh, S., Modesti, G., **Kiefer, S. L.**, & Sobel, D. M. (in progress). Parent-child interaction and children's learning and engagement with engineering principles. Brown University.

Modesti, G., McHugh, S., **Kiefer, S. L.**, & Sobel, D. M. (in progress). Parent-child interaction during an online scientific demonstration and children's handwashing: A replication study. Brown University.

McHugh, S. R., **Kiefer, S. L.**, Modesti, G., & Sobel, D. M. (in progress). Children's developing understanding of science as a process. Brown University

### Peer-Reviewed

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Sobel, D. M. (2026). Children's decision to challenge themselves on a novel task relates to their metacognitive monitoring of their ability. *Child Development*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/chidev/aacaf045>

Vaisarova, J., **Kiefer, S. L.**, Şen, H., Todd, P. M., & Lucca, K. (2024). Where should I search next? Messages embedded in storybooks influence children's strategic exploration in Turkey and the United States. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 153(8), 2174–2192.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001619>

Şen, H. H., **Kiefer, S. L.**, Aksu, E., Lucca, K. (2024). Developmental differences in children and adults' enforcement of explore versus exploit search strategies in the United States and Turkey. *Developmental Science*, e13520. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.13520>

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Caballero, A.\*, Lucca, K. (2023). The role of effort type and intensity in children's decisions about effort-based outcomes. *Infant and Child Development*.

Matthews, N. L., Smith, C. J., Skepnek, E., Mammen, M., James, J. S., Malligo, A., Lyon, A., Mitchell, M., **Kiefer, S. L.**, Smith, C. J. (2021). Feasibility and acceptability of a telehealth model for autism diagnostic evaluations in children, adolescents, and adults. *Autism Research*. DOI: 10.1002/aur.2591

Matthews, N. L., Christenson, K., **Kiefer, S.**, Smith, C. J. (2019). A Mixed-Methods Examination of the Gap between IQ and Adaptive Functioning in Autistic Young Adults without Intellectual Disability. *Autism*. DOI: 10.1177/13623613211018334

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

\*MENTORED STUDENT

### Oral Presentations

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Sobel, D. M. (2025, May). Children's decisions about difficulty during novel tasks relate to their metacognitive monitoring of their ability. *Talk presented at the Society for Research in Child Development*. Minneapolis, MN, USA.

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Caballero, A.\*, Lucca, K. (2022, November). The role of effort type and intensity in children's decision making. *Flash talk at the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual workshop on mental effort*. Providence, RI, USA.

### Poster Presentations

**Kiefer, S.L.**, Vezina, O.\*, Sobel, D. M. (2025, May). "That was easy!" Children's definitions and examples of easy and hard experiences. *Poster presented at the Society for Research in Child Development*. Minneapolis, MN, USA.

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Sobel, D. M. (2024, March). "I wanted to challenge myself!": Children's developing metacognitive understanding of effort allocation in a building task. *Poster presentation at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Meeting*. Pasadena, CA, USA.

Vaisarova, J. (presenting author), **Kiefer, S. L.**, Şen, H. H., Todd, P., & Lucca, K. (2024, March). Where Should I Look Next? Using a Storybook Intervention to Promote Children's Strategic Exploration in a Virtual Search Task Across Cultures. *Poster presentation at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Meeting*. Pasadena, CA, USA.

Özalp, D., **Kiefer, S. L.**, Uğur, G., Hanım Sancar, B., Ateş, S., Selalmaz, E., Uçal, A., Nur Deveci, A., Akpinar, B., Karaoğlu, M., Şen, H. (presenting author), Lucca, K. (2023, January). Associations between mothers' and children's curiosity in the Turkish context. *Poster Presentation at the Budapest CEU Conference on Cognitive Development*. Budapest, Hungary.

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Caballero, A.\*, Lucca, K. (2022, November). The role of effort type and intensity in children's decision making. *Poster presentation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual workshop on mental effort*. Providence, RI, USA.

Johns, A. (presenting author), Anbar, J., **Kiefer, S. L.**, Smith, C. J. (2022, May). Building inclusive informal STEM learning opportunities for people with ASD. *International Society for Autism Research Annual Meeting*. Austin, TX, USA.

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Şen, H., Akpinar, B., Smith, B.\*, Nur Deveci, A., Selalmaz, E., Snodgrass, N.\*, Özalp, D., Patel, S.\*, Uçal, A., Lucca, K. (2022, April). Navigating the explore-exploit dilemma: a cross-cultural examination of 3–6-year-olds' own behavioral strategies and enforcement of

strategies onto others. *Poster presentation at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Meeting*. Madison, WI, USA.

**Kiefer, S. L.**, Caballero, A.\*, Lucca, K. (2022, April). Worth the wait: the role of cognitive and physical effort in shaping children's value judgments, preferences, and behavior. *Poster presentation at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Meeting*. Madison, WI, USA.

Saguid, L.\*(presenting author), Johnson, N.\*, **Kiefer, S.**, Scirpo, K.\*, Patel, S.\*, Hinojosa, A.\*,

Snodgrass, N.\*, Kupfer, A., Lucca, K. (2021, September). Investigating the relations between early creativity, confidence, curiosity, and persistence. *Poster presentation at the Marconi Institute for Creativity Conference*. Online.

Christenson, K., **Kiefer, S.**, Tracey, S., Matthews, N. L., & Smith, C. J. (2019, May). A qualitative examination of the transportation experiences and needs of young adults with ASD without intellectual disability. *Poster presentation at the International Society for Autism Research Annual Meeting*. Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

## INVITED TALKS

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**Kiefer, S., L.** (2025, November). Unpacking children's understanding of productive failure in learning and persistence. Invited speaker for the Developmental Brown Bag, Brown University.

**Kiefer, S., L.** (2022, January). Clues to Explore: The Effects of Linguistic Priming on Children's Exploration in an Online Search Task. Invited speaker for Cognition and Learning Center, Rutgers University.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

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*Peter D. Eimas Graduate Research Award*, Brown's Department of Cognitive and Psychological Sciences, 2025.

*NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program Honorable Mention*, 2024.

*Graduate Conference Travel Award*, Brown University. 2024, 2025.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

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Ewing, R. (2022, August 15) Emerging Minds Lab receives NSF CAREER grant to expand access to research. ASU News. Available at <https://news.asu.edu/20220815-emerging-minds-lab-receives-nsf-career-grant-expand-access-research>

Greguska, E. (2021, April 6). Tiny volunteers help ASU lab study curiosity. ASU News. Available at <https://news.asu.edu/20210405-solutions-baby-einsteins>

## PRE-DOCTORAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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**[Emerging Minds Lab](#)** | PI: Dr. Kelsey Lucca | Tempe, AZ

June 2021 – June 2022 | **Lab Manager**

Feb. 2020 – June 2021 | **Project Coordinator**

Oct. 2019 – Feb. 2020 | **Research Assistant**

**Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center (SARRC)** | Phoenix, AZ

Jan. 2021 – May 2021 | **Research Study Coordinator**

Dec. 2018 – Dec. 2020 | **Research Study Recruiter**

May 2018 – May 2019 | **Research Intern**

**REACH Institute, Bridges to High School Program** | PI: Dr. Nancy Gonzales | Tempe, AZ

Jan. 2018 – May 2019 | **Data Management Research Assistant & Phone Interviewer**

Aug 2017 – Dec. 2017 | **In-home Interviewer**

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### Teaching Assistant

Spring 2026	Children's Thinking: The Nature of Cognitive Development
Fall 2025	Social and Moral Development
Spring 2025	Children's Thinking: The Nature of Cognitive Development
Summer 2024	Psychology Across Species, <a href="#">Summer@Brown</a> pre-college program
Spring 2024	Statistical Methods

### Guest Lectures

Jan. 2026 Children's Thinking: The Nature of Cognitive Development  
Brown University, Dr. Daphna Buchsbaum

Feb. 2025 Children's Thinking: The Nature of Cognitive Development  
Brown University, Dr. Dave Sobel

Sept. 2021 Cognitive Development  
Arizona State University, Dr. Kelsey Lucca

Feb. 2020 Cognitive Development  
Arizona State University, Dr. Kelsey Lucca

### Select Professional Development

*Brown University Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning: Sheridan Teaching Seminar Certificate, Fall 2024*

*Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL): Pedagogies of Care: Accessible Teaching, Systemic Barriers, & Care in Your Discipline Workshop, January, 2026*

## MENTORING EXPERIENCE

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### **Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award: Students Supervised**

- Similolu Fadel, Brown University (Spring 2026)

- Samaira Gupta, Brown University (Spring 2026)
- Katherine Kupsaw, Brown University (Spring 2024)
- Seidy Idris, Brown University (Spring 2024)

### **Honors Students Supervised**

- Nicole Johnson, Arizona State University, 2021-2022
  - Recipient of the Barrett Honors College Thesis Funding Award
- Kaitlin Van Houghton, Arizona State University, 2021-2022
  - Recipient of the Barrett Honors College Thesis Funding Award
- Sonia Patel, Arizona State University, 2021-2022
  - Recipient of the Barrett Honors College Thesis Funding Award
- Kalie Scirpo, Arizona State University, 2020-2021
  - Recipient of the Barrett Honors College Thesis Funding Award

## **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

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**Programming:** Proficiency in R, Jamovi, JASP, SPSS. Some proficiency in JSON (i.e., for programming experiments on [childrenhelpingscience.com](http://childrenhelpingscience.com))

**Computer/Web Applications:** Adobe Suite (Illustrator, Photoshop), Squarespace, Datavyu, Salesforce, REDCap, Qualtrics, MTurk

**Administration of behavioral experiments with children:** over 600 participants tested to date.

**Assessments:** Experienced in administering cognitive and behavioral assessments with individuals throughout the lifespan, including the Mullen Scales of Early Learning and the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test. Received extensive training on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised, Preschool Language Scales, and Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (full certification not complete due to COVID-19 interruptions).

## **ACADEMIC SERVICE**

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<b>Spring 2024 – Present</b>	Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Committee, Community Outreach Subcommittee, Department of Cognitive, Linguistic & Psychological Sciences at Brown University
<b>Fall 2023 – Spring 2024</b>	Graduate Student Council Representative for the Department of Cognitive, Linguistic & Psychological Sciences at Brown University

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND WORKSHOPS**

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<b>Spring 2025 - Present</b>	Member of the Society for Research in Child Development
<b>Spring 2022 - Present</b>	Member of the Cognitive Development Society
<b>Summer 2023</b>	Computational Cognitive Models of Learning and Development Workshop – Harvard University
<b>Fall 2021 and Fall 2022</b>	Workshop on Mental Effort
<b>Spring 2019 – Spring 2020</b>	Member of the International Society for Autism Research

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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### **Spring 2023, 2024**

[College Day at Brown](#) facilitator for the Department of Cognitive & Psychological Sciences

### **Spring 2023 – Fall 2024**

In collaboration with Dr. Amitai Shenhav, facilitated motivation and effort guest lessons for 4<sup>th</sup> graders at William D'Abate Elementary in Providence. We visited weekly across four weeks with two cohorts of 4<sup>th</sup> graders.