

LaMarsh Centre for Child & Youth Research Newsletter

Winter 2024 Issue | March 2024



The LaMarsh Centre for Child & Youth Research is a collaborative group of faculty and students that supports community-engaged interdisciplinary research in health, education, relationships, and development of infants, children, adolescents, emerging adults, and families everywhere. The Centre conducts leading edge research and mobilizes knowledge in ways that improve wellbeing and resilience for children and youth.

Our newsletter aims to share some of this incredible work and provide updates to the LaMarsh Community.

[Visit our website](#) to learn more about the research that is done at LaMarsh.

Director's Message

Dr. Rebecca Bassett-Gunter, LaMarsh Centre Director



Hello LaMarsh!

Here we are, March 2024! The year has already brought about much to celebrate, as well as our fair share of challenges. As we navigate some difficult times at York and more broadly, it is important to balance this with recognition of our successes individually and as a community. Our winter newsletter highlights the many outstanding achievements of our members. It is particularly rewarding to celebrate those achievements that spotlight collaborations between LaMarsh faculty members and students.

In honour of climate month activities taking place at York in March, we have included in our newsletter some reflections from LaMarsh members about the role of climate change for children and youth research. I invite everyone to take this opportunity to reflect on ways to integrate climate considerations into your own research activities.

Lastly, I wanted to take this opportunity to connect with our community about some changes at LaMarsh. As you're likely aware, we are currently operating without a centre coordinator. Although this has brought about many challenges, it has also presented an opportunity for us to reimagine some aspects of LaMarsh operations. In the coming weeks I will look forward to connecting with members to gain your valuable input regarding the future of LaMarsh. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need any support. Best wishes as we embrace spring and the sense of hope and optimism that often accompanies the change in seasons.

Rebecca

Article of the Season

Each season, the LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth research highlights a recent article that has been produced by one of our members. Check out this issue's research spotlight, which comes from **Drs. Meghan Harlow** and **Jessica Fraser-Thomas**!



Describing early years sport: take-up, pathways, and engagement patterns amongst preschoolers in a major Canadian city

In Canada, it is common for children to begin participating in organized sport programs before six years of age (i.e., during the 'early years'). Despite this practice, Drs. Harlow and Fraser-Thomas recognized a lack of research on this demographic in sport. To bridge this gap, they set out to explore what early years sport programming looks like, including what skills and activities are taught during practices, and the overall experiences of young children who participate.

In their study, Dr Harlow observed five distinct early years sport programs throughout a season, including indoor soccer, hockey, gymnastics, rugby, and multi-sport. She also interviewed 10 parents whose children were enrolled in the respective programs. Together, these approaches revealed parents' supporting roles and motivations for enrolling children in early years sports, and first-hand insights into what occurs during early years sport classes.

The research highlighted commonalities among the early years sport programs, such as session layouts with a focus on fundamental movement skills like running, kicking, and passing. All programs also taught sport-specific skills, such as stick handling, somersaulting, and passing to peers. Interestingly, all programs involved elements of challenge or competition like races, relays, or even modified, half-ice games (hockey). The researchers considered these program elements in relation to the Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity Model (LTD Model), a framework that is meant to guide sports participation in Canada. While the model recommends child-led free play and structured gymnastics and

swimming programs during the Active Start stage (0 to 6 years), the study revealed deviations in how the pre-schooler sports programs align with the LTD Model.

Families also shared that nearly all children had prior experience in organized sport, despite only being 3-5 years old at the time of the study. Parents expressed enthusiasm for their children's early sports involvement and believed in sampling different sports to discover their child's interests and strengths. These patterns ultimately contradict health organizations' recommendations that children should wait until around age six before participating in sports.

Moving forward, the researchers stress the need for larger and more diverse samples to understand how preschoolers should participate in sports for positive early sport experiences. This research can inform future revisions of models like the LTD, optimizing preschoolers' physical and psychosocial development. Recognizing the decreasing age of entry into sports in Canada, the researchers advocate for continued efforts to explore whether and how early years sport can be offered in a developmentally appropriate way.

Climate Change Month

Getty Images



In honour of **Climate Change Month** activities going on at York, we wanted to take a moment to think about how we can integrate considerations around climate change into LaMarsh research. This generation of children and youth will suffer the consequences of climate change more so than any previous generation. The *LaMarsh Centre* supports research and knowledge mobilization to minimize the impact of climate change and enhance resiliency among children and youth, in particular those who are most vulnerable and will be disproportionately affected by climate change. Researchers from LaMarsh reflect on how climate change will affect their research area:

Yvonne Bohr:



Much has been written recently about the significant impact of climate change on the wellbeing of Inuit in Arctic communities. My team and I have been working on community participatory mental wellness projects with Inuit youth in Nunavut since 2014 (see Bohr et al., 2023). We have had the opportunity to witness first-hand the role that climate change may play as a determinant of youth health in that

territory, where relationship with the environment, and connection to community and culture are two factors that substantially contribute to resilience. Indeed, in the context of two of our studies conducted during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Thomas & Bohr, 2022), worries were shared by participants about the dire consequences of shorter winter seasons for land /sea activities such as hunting and fishing, which play an important role in not only physical subsistence of communities, but also in boosting resilience in the face of psychological challenges. Further, there was concern about the cancelling of Winter games and other activities that require travel, cancellations that may be occurring more often with the increase in intense storms brought about by climate chaos. When considering the historic and continuing effects of colonization on Inuit youths' sense of control over their lives, and the potential for climate change to endanger that sense once again, we believe that it will be important to incorporate resilience strategies that are specific to dealing with the uncertainties brought about by climate change into any mental wellness tools that are developed in the context of our collaborative projects with Inuit communities of youth.

Jessica Fraser-Thomas, Karl Erickson, and Rebecca Bassett-Gunter:

We have seen the effects of climate change impact sport and physical activity opportunities for children and youth. Sporting events have been canceled due to extreme weather. Last summer many children could not even enjoy being active at recess because they were required to stay indoors due to forest fires and resulting poor air quality. Systematic review evidence highlights the relationship between climate change and physical activity through sport and play (Bernard et al., 2021; Orr et al., 2021). Physical activity is a critical part of healthy development for children and youth. Climate change action is critical to preserve every opportunity for physical activity for children and youth. In addition, there is a need for research to inform policies and strategies to both minimize the impact of sport and physical activity events on climate change, as well as uphold sport and physical activity opportunities during times of climate crisis.

Thanujeni Pathman:



In our lab, we study how memory develops across childhood. Through a partnership with the Toronto Zoo, we conducted studies showing children as young as 4 years of age learn and remember facts about animals and conservation. We would like to expand this research in new ways. For example, how we can harness what we know about memory and future thinking (which depends on memory for past events) to

maximize future conservation-related actions (e.g., talking to their families about climate change; actions that conserve energy, promote reusing re-using and recycling, convincing parents to purchase sustainably sourced palm oil products because that is better for the habits of Orangutans)? Children and youth are going to be most affected by climate change, but they also hold a lot of power. I would love to use our research to contribute to positive change, even if in a small way.

Heather Prime:

I recently discussed the importance of building family resilience now to help families withstand the challenges and uncertainty that will come with the effects of climate change. As I wrote in *Canadian Psychology* (Prime, Walsh, & Masten, 2023), resilience to adversity is built on relationships, and supporting families to cope with, problem-solve, and grow closer together during times of strife will help prepare families for future health emergencies and other crises. A student member of LaMarsh, Alexandra Markwell, plans to catalyze research on the impact of climate change on families in her PhD work. She will systematically review the literature on the short- and long-term consequences of climate change on family relationships and child development. Knowledge gained will inform prevention and intervention efforts needed to build families' coping abilities. Moreover, they will be used to advocate for climate action.

Recent Events

- **Dr. Nazilla Khanlou**, the Women's Health Research Chair in Mental Health in the Faculty of Health and Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at York University, played a pivotal role in the success of the recent **Pan-Canadian Nursing Research Webinar**. Serving as an organizer and moderator, Dr. Khanlou's expertise contributed to insightful discussions for the event, hosted by the Pan-Canadian Collective of Nursing Educators and Researchers. Congratulations Nazilla!

Upcoming Events and Updates

We are excited to host the following events through the Centre:

- **Dr. Lara Pierce and Lab Virtual Research Talk**
Thursday, April 25th 12:00-1:30pm EST
Join via ZOOM: <https://yorku.zoom.us/j/95499825109>
- **Annual LaMarsh Graduate Student Seminar**
We are excited to announce that this annual event will feature a new format this year and serve as a valuable platform for trainees and faculty to connect, exchange ideas, and expand their professional networks. Based on feedback from our student members who completed a brief survey, the seminar will include a guest speaker from our partners at Unsinkable. The speaker will share insights on stress management. We will also enjoy a round-table lunch during which time students and faculty can connect and discuss all things child and youth research related! We are working to secure a date for this event in the spring of 2024! Looking forward to seeing you there!
- **Jackman Scholars Learning Forum – Rescheduled for Fall 2024**
For the past few years, we have had the privilege of hosting a Scholars' Learning Forum supported by The Jackman Foundation. Keynote speaker **Dr. Andrea Cross** will co-present with a community partner on their work around the “F – words for Child Development” – In the spirit of the Jackman Foundation, this event will target knowledge exchange and spark discussion around community-engaged research and impact. We look forward to this event in Fall 2024. More details to follow.
- The annual **York University Social Personality Area (YUTSPA) Conference** is set to take place at York University in May. Although LaMarsh will not host this event, we are sure many of our members will enjoy the conference, which showcases research conducted by graduate students from both York University and the University of Toronto in the Social and Personality Areas.

Welcome to our newest community member:

Margaret Spoelstra

Title: CEO, Autism Ontario



Marg Spoelstra's career has focused on supporting people with a variety of learning differences, with a primary focus on autism. As an educator she has worked with children, teens and adults, their families and the professionals and community leaders who support them in the U.S. and Canada in various community, educational and research/knowledge translation settings. She currently serves as the CEO of Autism Ontario. She is the team lead for the Patient Advisory Committee for the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders Network and is a partner in the work of the Laurier Autism Research Consortium. She was appointed as a Member to the Order of Canada in December 2011.

Welcome to our newest community member:

Dr. Lauren Tristani

Title: Research and Evaluation Specialist, Autism Ontario

Email: lauren.t@autismontario.com



Dr. Lauren Tristani is the Research and Evaluation Specialist at Autism Ontario. Autism Ontario is dedicated to supporting the autistic community through advocacy, programs, and resources. Autism Ontario is the province's leading source of information and referral on autism, and one of the largest collective voices representing the autism community. Lauren is deeply passionate about working with special populations and health promotion, with a keen interest in the experiences of the supportive other (e.g., parents, care persons, teachers etc.).

Call for Community Partner Members: Do you have a community partner that you would like to invite to become a member of the LaMarsh community? If so, please reach out to Lamarsh@yorku.ca!

Articles, Hot Off The Press!

A few recent publications from the amazing researchers at LaMarsh!

- Cyr., E. N., Kroeper, K. M., Bergsieker, H. B., Dennehy, T. C., Logel, C., **Steele, J. R.**, Knasel, R. A., Hartwig, W. T., Shum, P., Reeves, S. L., Dys-Steenebergen, O., Litt, A., Lok, C., Ballinger, T., Nam, H., Tse, C., Forest, A. L., Zanna, M., Staub-French, S., Schmader, T., Wright, S. C., & Spencer, S. J. (2023). Girls are good at STEM: Opening minds and providing evidence reduces boys' stereotyping of girls' STEM ability. *Child Development*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.14007>
- **Khanlou N**, Khan A, Vazquez LM, Pashang S, Gateri H, Ohiku T, Hutchinson N, Alawiye R. (2023). Social support for racialized families of children and youth with developmental disabilities: COVID-19 pandemic inequities. Toronto, ON. York University.
<https://nkhanlou.info.yorku.ca/files/2023/06/Info-Sheet-19.June-2023.pdf?x46752>
- **Khanlou N**, Vazquez LM, & Pashang S. (2023). Chapter 10: Gender-based violence and COVID-19 pandemic: Addressing a pervasive public health issue through an upstream multi-systems approach. In Santos L. (Editor). Cultures of silence: The power of untold narratives. Oxfordshire: Routledge (Taylor & Francis). (pp. 172-189)
- Larocca, V., Latimer-Cheung, A. E., & **Bassett-Gunter, R. L.** (In Press). The effects of physical activity messages on physical activity support behaviors and motivation among parents of children with disabilities. *Health Communication*.
- Saxler, F. M., Dorrough, A. R., Froehlich, L., Block, K., Croft, A., Meeuseen, L., Olsson, M., Schmader, T., Schuster, C., van Grootel, S., Van Laar, C. [...], Lapytskaia Aidy, C.* , [...] **Steele, J. R.**, [...], & Martiny, S. (Accepted). A cross-national investigation of descriptive and prescriptive norms about gender equality at home before and during COVID-19. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.
- Sellitto, T., **Fraser-Thomas, J.**, **Bassett-Gunter, R. L.**, Lee, V., Lunsy, Y., Balogh, R., & **Weiss, J.A.** (2023). The Role of Thriving in Mental Health Among People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*.
- Taylor, L.G., Vanderloo, L. M., Yates, J, **Bassett-Gunter, R. L.**, Stanley, M, & Tucker, P. (2023). Physical Activity among Young Children with Disabilities: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 1-22. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1123/apaq.2022-0100
- **Vashi, N.**, Ibrahim, A., Pouyandeh, A., & **Weiss, J. A.** (2024). Coherence of parental representations following therapy for autistic children. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-024-06252-2>



Recent Presentations

LaMarsh members continue to mobilize knowledge to academic communities and beyond:

- **Bassett-Gunter, R. L.** (2023, November). Ontario Parasport and Adapted Physical Activity Summit, Ontario Parasport Collective. *Getting Your Message Across: Tips and Tricks for Developing and Disseminating Physical Activity Information for Families of Children with Disabilities*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Khanlou N.** (24 June 2023). Social Support for Racialized Families of Children / Youth with Developmental Disabilities. Mental Health (Developmental Disability, Autism): Impact on Racialized Communities and Solutions Global Women Ambassadors Canada & 3C Autism & Mental Health Support Services.
- Khan A, Vazquez LM & **Khanlou N.** (June 19, 2023). Advancing knowledge on health inequities experienced by racialized families with developmental disabilities in context of the pandemic. CARRFS (Canadian Alliance for Regional Risk Factor Surveillance) 2023 Symposium. Annual theme “Addressing the social determinants of health inequities through public health surveillance.”

- **Steele, J.R.** (2023, November). *Stereotyping at the intersection of gender and race: Examining associations between Asian women and mathematics*. Breaking barriers and building bridges conference: Turning rigorous research into concrete strategies for challenging gender biases in STEM. Hosted by Engendering Success in STEM (ESS) and Gender and the Economy (GATE), Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Steele, J. R.** (2024, February). Associations with Asian women and math: Asian women = women. In A. Gonzalez & J. Steele (Chairs), *Developmental insights into dismantling barriers for women and girls in STEM*. Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Convention, San Diego, California, USA.
- Allen, E.* & **Steele, J. R.** (2024, February). *Pro-wealth or anti-elite bias? Examining attitudes towards the wealthy*. Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) 24th Annual Convention and Social Cognition Pre-Conference, San Diego, California, USA.
- Lapytskaia Aidy, C.*, Colaco, P.*, Robinson, K.*, & **Steele, J.R.** (2024, February). *Examining intersectional race- and gender-stereotypes about South Asian women in STEM*. Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) 24th Annual Convention and Social Cognition Pre-Conference, San Diego, California, USA.

Community Partnerships

Community Engagement Spotlight

Dr. Jennifer Steele is actively involved in the following community partnerships:

- Project Implicit Scientific Advisory Board Member
- Engendering Success in STEM (ESS) Fellow
- Data collection with the Toronto District School Board, which focuses on examining the impact of the new Grade 12 elective, “Deconstructing Anti-Black Racism”

Well done, Dr. Steele!



Awards & Achievements

- **Congratulations to Dr. Rebecca Bassett-Gunter** and colleagues for the remarkable achievement of having their paper chosen as the *2023 Paper of the Year* by the journal Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly. The awarded paper, titled 'Evidence-Informed Recommendations for Community-Based Organizations Developing Physical Activity Information Targeting Families of Children and Youth with Disabilities' provides valuable insights and evidence-informed recommendations for community-based organizations to support quality physical activity for children with disabilities.

For those interested in exploring the details of this research, the paper is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.2022-0130>.

- **Congratulations to Dr. Jennifer Steele** and Dr. Andrew Baron (UBC) who received the following SSHRC Insight Development Grant for *How Wealth Cues and Race Shape Children's Intergroup Biases*. **\$237,450**
- **Congratulations to Dr. Rebecca Bassett-Gunter** and **Jonathan Weiss** and colleagues who received the following SSHRC Insight Development Grant for *BINGOCIZE! Evaluating the Feasibility of a Physical Activity Program for Autistic Children*. **\$74,034**
- **Congratulations to Dr. Lisa Farley** and the research team who received the following SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant. This project partners with the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) to address the challenge of how to represent difficult knowledge with children in ways that invite social inquiry and responsibility for a more just present and future: *Children's Museums and the Role of Storytelling in Learning from "Difficult Knowledge"*. **\$24,962**
- **Congratulations to Kayla Robinson** in **Dr. Jennifer Steele's** lab who was awarded the Bennett Family Graduate Scholarship for Black and/or Indigenous Students.

In the Media

Our LaMarsh faculty member **Dr. Nazilla Khanlou** was recently interviewed by MedScape for their insightful article, titled '**Refugees in Canada: Do They Receive Adequate Prenatal Care?**'. Dr. Khanlou provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by refugees in Canada concerning prenatal care. To read the full interview and explore the in-depth analysis, we invite you to visit the article on MedScape's website:

https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/990503?reg=1#vp_3

Announcements

Join the NEW LaMarsh LinkedIn Group!

We have recently established a LinkedIn group for the LaMarsh Community. The goal of this group is to provide a platform for LaMarsh members to support one another.

You're invited to actively engage with this virtual community in ways that are most meaningful to you. For example, you can use the LinkedIn group to contribute to discussions, ask questions, share announcements, seek out mentors, schedule meetups, and network with fellow LaMarsh members.

We hope this platform will serve as a helpful tool to foster communication among our Community. This group will evolve based on your contributions and needs, and we welcome your suggestions to improve the service.

Please use this link to join the LaMarsh LinkedIn group:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14155534/>

Follow Us On Social Media

Be sure to **follow** LaMarsh on social media to stay up-to-date with the latest news and events from the Centre. We also encourage you to **tag @LaMarshCentre** in your posts, so that we can re-share your work with our community!

Instagram: [@LaMarshCentre](#)

X (Twitter): [@LaMarshCentre](#)

LinkedIn: [LaMarsh Centre for Child & Youth Research at York University](#)

Call for Newsletter Content

Would you like to be featured in the next edition of the LaMarsh newsletter or have your research highlighted as the article of the season? Kindly send content and photos to lamarshmedia@gmail.com by **May 31, 2024**. This newsletter is designed to highlight YOUR accomplishments, including:

- Scholarships/grants awarded
- Articles/book publications
- Conference presentations
- Community partnerships developed
- Past or upcoming events
- Any other newsletter-worthy materials!

We look forward to continuing to circulate the LaMarsh newsletter each quarter.

Interested In Joining Our Trainee Network?

The LaMarsh Trainee Network is a group of undergraduate students, graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows studying in the area of child and youth research from a variety of disciplines at York University. The aim of the Trainee Network is to help students establish meaningful academic relationships with researchers in their field of interest, share research with peers, and give talks at symposium events for learning and development purposes. The Network is also designed to broaden interest and awareness of child and youth research, encourage multi-disciplinary research, and provide a means for skill development.

To get involved, email the LaMarsh Centre for Child & Youth Research lamarsh@yorku.ca

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