



2027 Summer Research Project Template

Help us present your project in a way that connects with the right students. Thoughtful, engaging descriptions tend to attract stronger and more suitable applications. Thank you for putting a project forward - these programs rely on your contribution, and we couldn't do it without you.

Section	Description
Project title	Talking with Children: Language, Gender and Social Understanding
Hours & delivery	- Hours of engagement: 36 hours per week - Delivery mode: Hybrid (primarily on-site; St Lucia) - Weekdays and some weekend days
About the project (150–250 words)	How children learn to understand other people's thoughts, emotions, identities, and social differences is a central question in developmental psychology. One important influence is the language children hear from adults. Mental state language (MSL)—talk about thoughts, emotions, desires, and beliefs—and more elaborated forms of conversation can support children's developing understanding of minds and social relationships. However, adults do not necessarily talk to all children in the same way. This project brings together research examining how adults' language choices vary according to children's gender expression, gender conformity, and the social context of an interaction. It also considers how adults' beliefs and stereotypes may shape these language environments. A complementary strand will examine how children themselves understand and respond to social difference. This may include exploratory work adapting and validating a vignette-based measure of children's tolerance developed by Dr Christopher Osterhaus and colleagues for use in an Australian-English context. Together, these studies aim to better understand how language, gender, social cognition, and tolerance develop and interact across childhood.
What you'll do (100-150 words)	Students will contribute to one or more studies within a broader program of research on children's social-cognitive development. Activities may include assisting with adult or child participant recruitment and data collection, preparing and piloting online or child-friendly research tasks, and working with vignette-based measures of language, gender, and social judgements. Students may help with the adaptation and piloting of measures for an Australian context, including emerging work examining children's tolerance of social difference. Other activities may include structured literature searching, questionnaire development in Qualtrics, transcription or coding, data cleaning and entry, and preliminary statistical analysis. The exact combination of activities will depend on the stage of each study during the Summer Research Program.
What you'll learn (100–150 words)	Students will gain practical experience conducting developmental and social psychological research across multiple stages of the research process. They will develop an understanding of mental state language, gender development, social cognition, and the measurement of children's social attitudes and judgements. Depending on project activities, students may gain experience recruiting and testing children and families, administering vignette and questionnaire measures, developing and piloting research materials, and adapting measures for use in new cultural contexts. Students will also build skills in literature searching and synthesis, research ethics, data management, coding, and preliminary statistical analysis. Importantly, the project provides experience translating theoretical questions about language, gender, and social development into research designs that can be used with children and adults.
Project outcomes (75–125 words)	By the end of the project, students are expected to have made a meaningful contribution to one or more active studies examining language, gender, tolerance, or children's social-cognitive development. Outputs may include completed literature



	reviews, adapted or piloted research materials, participant recruitment and data collection, cleaned and coded datasets, preliminary analyses, or documentation supporting measure development and validation. Depending on the stage of the research, students may contribute to the Australian adaptation and evaluation of a child-focused tolerance measure or to ongoing studies examining how adults' mental state and elaborated language varies according to children's gender expression and conformity.
Who should apply? (75–125 words)	This project is suitable for UQ School of Psychology students with an interest in Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology, gender development, or social cognition. It will particularly suit students interested in how children understand other people and social differences, how adults communicate with children, or how psychological measures are developed and validated. Previous experience working with children is desirable but not essential. Students should be organised, reliable, curious, and comfortable working across different research activities, which may involve both adult questionnaire studies and child-focused research. Students undertaking direct research with children and families will need a valid Working with Children Blue Card.
Team & supervision (75–125 words)	The project will be supervised by Dr Callyn Farrell, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the UQ School of Psychology. Students will work within a broader developmental and social psychology research environment examining mental state language, gender development, social cognition, and children's social experiences. The existing research program involves UQ researchers and international collaborators with expertise across developmental psychology, social psychology, language, gender, and social cognition.
Additional opportunities (optional)	The project may provide a pathway into further research experience in developmental or social psychology, particularly for students interested in children's social relationships, identity, and social cognition.
Additional requirements (if applicable)	Students must hold a valid Working with Children Blue Card.
Contact	(Yes/No), students (may/may not) contact the supervisor before applying. Direct enquiries to: c.farrell@uq.net.au