

Glen students scamper for Terry



For the third year in a row, Glen Williams Public School ran for Terry Fox raising roughly \$2,000 on Friday morning. The run consisted of at least nine laps around the Glen Williams baseball park. (Herald photo)

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Deception learned early

Children begin to understand the concept of deception at the age of four, a U of T graduate student in the Centre for Applied Cognitive Science has found.

In a study conducted with 72 preschoolers, Joan Peskin concluded that it is when they are four or five years old that children grasp the notion that what people believe determines how they act.

"It is this understanding which leads them to attempt to change another's actions by changing the person's beliefs," she said.

Peskin's experiment required children of three different age groups to conceal their preference for a sticker from a "bad" puppet. In the experiment, when the puppet character was given a choice of stickers, he always chose the one the child wanted, and the only way to avoid this was for the child to conceal the information as to which sticker was desired, either by misinforming or by refusing to tell the puppet when asked.

The results show a dramatic development from the age of three to five years in the children's ability to prevent the puppet from selecting their favorite sticker. On the basis of two out of four correct trails, only two of 24 three-year-olds were able to hide their preference, as compared to 14 of 24 four-year-olds, and 19 of 24 five-year-olds.

The youngest children were more likely to depend on physical solutions such as hiding or covering the stickers, than on attempting to influence the puppet's behavior by refusing to tell or by providing it with wrong information. While 87 per cent of the three-year-olds knew to physically exclude their competitor, only eight per cent knew to influence the puppet's mental state.

"The success of the older children in concealing their intentions indicates their new representational understanding that people's actions depend on their beliefs - beliefs which can be erroneous," said Peskin.

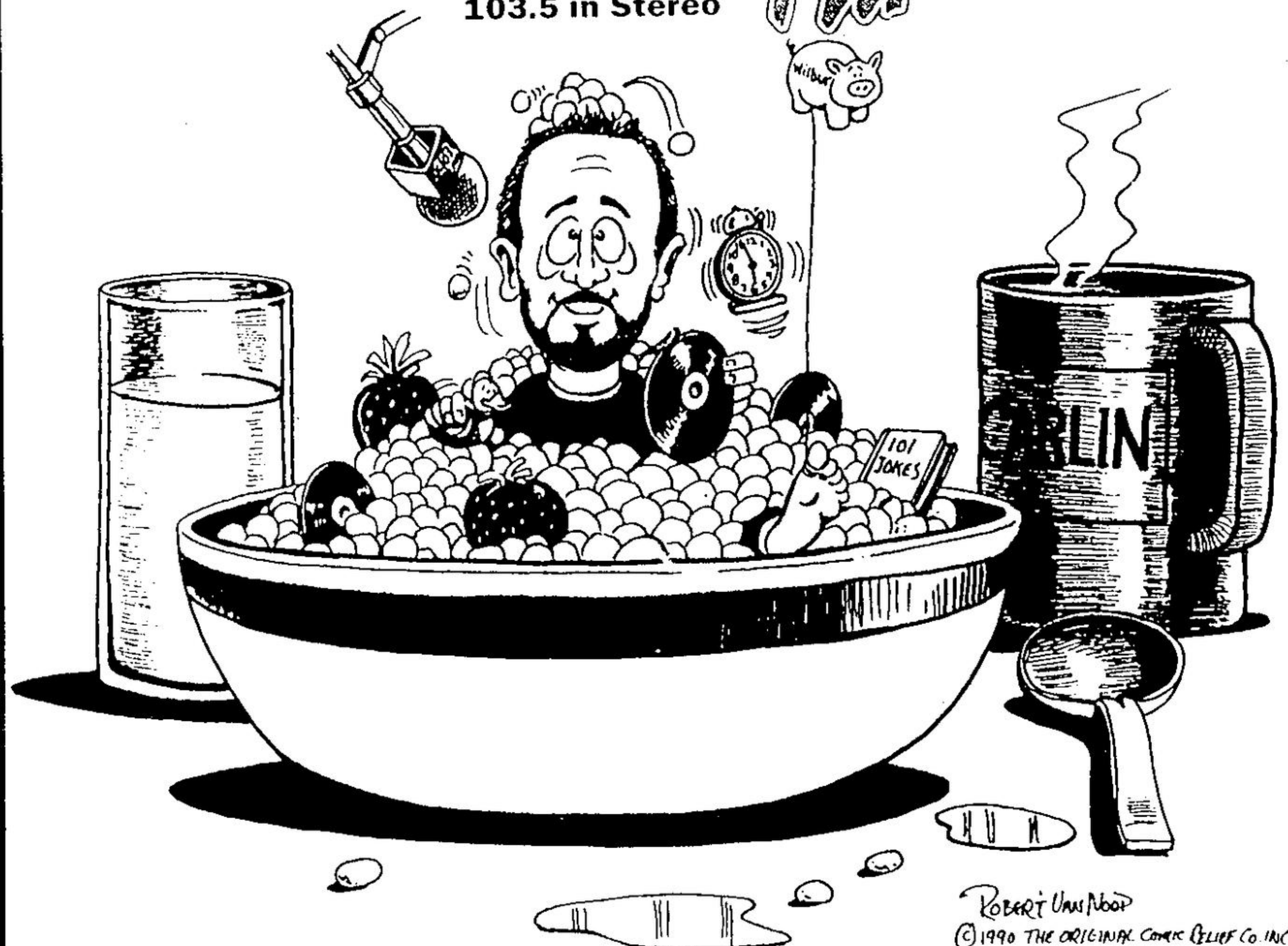
The point at which a child is able to grasp the notions of belief and intention is an important one in their cognitive development, as it has implications on his or her social behavior, explained Peskin.

Peskin's experiment using the valued stickers is different from previous research in this area, because children were emotionally involved participants in actual social behavior as opposed to being presented with hypothetical situations.

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