



EMORY INFANT AND CHILD LAB

DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH LABORATORY

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Letter to the Parents

Article by: Philippe Rochat, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology, Head of the Emory Infant and Child Lab

After a two year “COVID hiatus”, the Lab is finally re-opening and will be fully functioning again with the beginning the new 2022 academic year. At last, we will be able to welcome children and parents for new in-person studies. That is very good news and we are all excited to turn this pandemic page, hopefully for good. With this new beginning, let me welcome Naomi Green as our new Lab manager and coordinator. Naomi did independent studies and volunteered at the lab before obtaining her Bachelor of Science degree in Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology from Emory this past Spring. We are very fortunate and happy to have her working with us, juggling and orchestrating all of our lab activities.

Sara Valencia Botto, former graduate student at the Lab and lecturer in our Department, accepted a two year contract to teach and do infant and child research at Harvard University. We are very proud of her achievement.

Congratulations also to former Graduate student and collaborator, now Doctor Cynthia Guo who obtained her Ph.D. last May and accepted a teaching position at William College in Massachusetts, as you may know a top liberal art college. Her work on what drives young children to deceive led to some important publications, with more in the work (see below her progress report with references).

Nikita Agarwal joined the lab last year from her native India where she was teaching undergraduate psychology courses at the University of New Dehli. She started her graduate studies at our Lab on the topic of moral reasoning, protest and “good trouble” in young children. She started collecting data and spent part of the summer in her hometown of Calcutta to collect more with Indian children that should provide her with a cross-cultural perspective on moral development and moral protest in children (see her summary presentation and progress report below).

Meet the Lab Director



Dr. Philippe Rochat

Philippe Rochat was born and raised in Geneva, Switzerland. He was trained by Jean Piaget and his close collaborators, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Geneva, Switzerland in 1984. He then began a series of post-doctoral internships at Brown University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Johns Hopkins. The main focus of his research is the early sense of self, emergence of self-concept, the development of social cognition and relatedness, and the emergence of a moral sense during the preschool years in children from all over the world. His research emphasizes differences in populations growing up in highly contrasted cultural environments, as well as highly contrasted socioeconomic circumstances.

Over the past year, Nikita has been testing children remotely, via Zoom, and is eager now to continue her future doctoral studies with children being finally tested in person at the Lab.

In the past year, Maxime Ryser, a graduate student from Switzerland, visited the Lab and opened up a new project on children's understanding of gifts and other gratuitous donations. We intend to continue investigating gift understanding in children, what we see as a rich and important topic. We will pilot new studies this Fall inviting children to the Lab.

We are also hoping to open a novel collaboration with the new Emory Decatur hospital, hopefully to launch new projects with newborns!

We are particularly interested in how newborns explore their environment by orienting to sounds depending on how familiar they are. If all goes well, we hope to be able to convey some new insights on the topic by next year.

Once again, our research effort would not be possible without all the help of parents bringing their child to the lab, or letting them interact with us remotely. We do indeed depend on you! In retrospect, but also in advance, we thank you for all your help and facilitation in our effort to understand infants and young children in their development.

We hope to see you soon at the Lab and please do not hesitate to contact us for any further information.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET MORE INVOLVED?

Visit our Child Study Center website at psychology.emory.edu/child-study-center//index.html to learn how to get more involved not just in lab's our studies, but also in other studies in our department!

To register your child into the Child Study Center database so labs can easily contact you, use the link below:

https://emorycollege.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5gXxoBs0aRhiJkq

You can keep up with the progress of our lab on our website! There you can find our annual newsletters and current staff and students. You can also learn about the many facets of social and cognitive development we study, and the individual research interests and ongoing projects of our graduate students, as well as directions to our lab. www.psychology.emory.edu/cognition/rochat/lab/

Be on the lookout for our new and improved website coming soon!

<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/rochatlab/>

WHAT MOTIVATES CHILDREN TO TELL THEIR FIRST LIES?

ARTICLE BY CYNTHIA XINRAN GUO

Children start to lie by 2 ½ years of age, but what motivates them to tell their first lies? In my study, we hoped to understand the motivation behind children's earliest deception, and how this motivation changes in early development.

We invited children to a laboratory and put them in a situation where they can either lie or tell the truth about a small transgression. Children were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions:

- 1) they could lie to protect themselves to avoid punishment
- 2) they could lie to protect others by helping them avoid punishment, or
- 3) they could lie for both reasons.

Results from the study show that children's first lies are primarily driven by self-serving motivations. They lie to cover up something they did wrong to avoid potential punishment. But around age 4 is an important transitional period, when children also start to lie pro-socially to make others feel better or help others.

Thanks to the help for many local families, we were able to finish data collection for this in-person project in January 2022. Following Emory's COVID guidelines, all our researchers were vaccinated and masked throughout the study. We are currently writing up the results from the study, and hopefully publish the paper later this year!



The images show a child in the condition where he could lie to protect a third-party transgressor. A) Experimenter 1 told the child that Experimenter 2 was not allowed to look or touch the gift hidden under the white towel. B) Experimenter 2 transgressed the rule in Experimenter 1's absence. C) The child had the opportunity to either reveal the transgression to Experimenter 1 or lie and cover up for the transgression.

Meet the Lab



Cynthia Guo
Recent Graduate

Cynthia Guo was born and raised in Beijing, China. She received her B.A. in Psychology from UCLA in 2016, and she recently graduated from Emory University with her Ph.D. in Psychology. In Fall 2022, she will start her position as a Visiting Assistant Professor in Psychology at Williams College in Massachusetts. She will be teaching courses in Introductory Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Cultural Psychology. She will also be continuing her research in social moral development. You can visit cynthiaguo.com to follow her work.

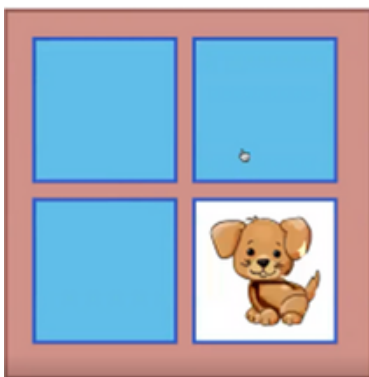
In addition to her role as a researcher, Cynthia is passionate about teaching and empowering students through knowledge. She was awarded the Mellon Interventions Public Scholarship Teaching Fellowship from 2021-2022. She has taught many courses during her time at Emory, including Cognition, Quantitative Theory & Methods (R statistics), Research Methods in Psychology, upper-level seminar Cultural Psychology, and interdisciplinary course What Does It Mean To Be Human.

HOW DO CHILDREN BEGIN TO PRODUCE PROSOCIAL “WHITE” LIES?

ARTICLE BY CYNTHIA XINRAN GUO

Although lying and deception are typically associated with negative connotations, we often regard lies that benefit others as less negative, or even positive. These are prosocial lies, or white lies, and they often aim at protecting another's feelings or helping others in general. By 4 years of age, children start to tell prosocial lies to appear polite, to elevate another's mood, and to help someone else obtain a prize. The question is, how do prosocial lies emerge in development?

In a study spearheaded by two undergraduate researchers, Hanna Lee and Stephanie Revoredo (both had graduated and pursuing advanced degree now!), we invite 4-7-year-old children to play an online memory card game via zoom.



Children have multiple opportunities to tell prosocial lies by lying about the outcome of the game so that they could win a prize for another child.

Crucially, children are randomly assigned to three experimental conditions, and they were given 1) a positive reputational cue, 2) an irrelevant reputational cue, or 3) no reputational cue in the beginning of the study. Based on the existing literature, we hypothesized that children in the positive reputational cue condition would be more inclined to tell prosocial lies than in the other two conditions.

We have collected data from 48 children so far for the study, and we hope to finish data collection by Spring 2023. Stay tuned for the results!



The image shows our experimenter Hanna showing a child participant how to play the memory card game via zoom.

What's new?

Dr. Cynthia Guo and Dr. Rochat published a paper on children's cost-benefit assessment of lies across three distinct cultural environments: rural Samoa, urban China, and urban United States. In this study, they discovered some interesting findings. Take a look at their paper using the link below:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022096521002733>

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO OWE BACK?

ARTICLE BY MAXIME RYSER

Reciprocity is a key aspect of human social behavior. When we receive gifts or favors, we usually feel surprised, sometimes indebted, and obliged to return the favor. In my study, I tried to understand better what are the reasons that make us feel that we owe things back, that we have a debt to pay to others

We hypothesized that owing back is linked to the reception of underserved benefits. Starting from here, my research tried to find theoretical arguments to support this hypothesis and explored the possible influence of merit in reciprocal sharing. In my experiment, we measured if children who were undeserving of acquiring a big number of candies from their partner would be more inclined to reciprocate than children who were deserving of acquiring a lot of candies.

Our preliminary results showed that before 6, children do not seem to understand principles of reciprocity, nor do they account their own merit. After 6, children start being concerned with giving as much as they previously received, and between 7 and 8, children seem to consider how deserving they were when they acquired candies from their partner. Indeed, at this age, more “undeserving” children tried to reciprocate what their partner gave them compared to “deserving” children.

Because we did not test enough participants, these results are to be taken cautiously. However, they invite us to consider that there are interesting shifts in the development of reciprocity between the ages of 7 and 8, and that merit is a promising explanation of why we owe things back.

Meet the Lab



Maxime Ryser
Visiting Scholar
2021-2022

Maxime was a visiting researcher from Neuchâtel, Switzerland. He visited Emory's Infant and Child Lab between September 2021 and March 2022. During his time at the lab, he explored various research directions to tackle the principles of human reciprocity and learned how to conduct developmental research under the supervision of Dr. Philippe Rochat. He is now finishing his Master Thesis in Cognitive Science at the University of Neuchâtel.

Outside the lab, Maxime spends his time biking around Atlanta, visiting breweries, hiking and reading old books he got from the library.

"GOOD TROUBLE" IN DEVELOPMENT

ARTICLE BY NIKITA AGARWAL

When do children start to understand rules and norms, and how may children value a protest when it is against an unfair rule? In other words, when do children start to perceive "good trouble"?

At the lab, we are trying to answer this particular question through various studies. Our first attempt at this was an online study conducted with 4-8-year-olds. We invited children to watch various stories from a town where the dwellers (two groups - the orange and green people or the red and blue people) follow rules for everything including food distribution, labor division and other arbitrary rules like sleeping time and using a door to go to work. The rules were unfair to one group of people and therefore, one of the protagonists, the rule challenger, protests and says they disagree with the rule, and it should be equal for everyone. However, another protagonist, the rule follower says one should agree with rules simply because they are rules.

We then invited children to decide to be friends with one of them and further, distribute candies/spiders to each one of them. The idea was to see how children evaluate 'Good Trouble' i.e., making trouble to establish a better and fair world.

Existing research tells us that children are strict rule-followers at 3.5 years of age until 5, when they begin to understand that rules can be flexible because they are created by people. However, we also know that children question unfairness from 3 years of age if things are unfair to them. And by 8-years questioning unfairness develops into a willingness to reject a distribution that is advantageous to them, but unfair to another child.

The goal in this study, therefore, was to see that when faced with a dilemma i.e., befriending one of the two protagonists - a rule follower or a rule challenger, what do children do? Do they stick to principles of fairness and side with the rule challenger, or they decide that rules should be followed irrespective and side with the rule follower.

We are finding that children above 5 years of age select the rule challenger as their friend significantly more than children below 5. This was especially seen in the food distribution vignette telling us that children perhaps understand an unfair resource distribution more nuancedly than other norms of unfairness.

Meet the Lab



Nikita Agarwal
Graduate student

Nikita is a COVID graduate student as all her decisions including enrolling in school and arriving to the United States (in 2021) was controlled by COVID waves. She was born and raised in India. Before graduating with a master's in psychology, Nikita was a school teacher and after her degree, she was a professor of psychology and teaching undergraduate students in Delhi University, India. Needless to say, she loves teaching.

In research, broadly, she is interested in the role norm-based-morality plays in children's understanding of protest and making 'Good Trouble'. Apart from research, Nikita is typically found feeding other people her food. She is an avid chef and can bake a storm in the kitchen.

Close to the food vignette, children above 5 years were more likely to disagree with the different sleep time rules, finding it unfair. Finally, children gave significantly more candies to the rule challenger in the unfair food rule vignette, and to a lesser extent in the unfair sleep rule vignette, followed by the unfair labor distribution context.

We wish to thank all the families who willingly participated in the study. You enrich our research experience and help us achieve goals of good science at the Infant and Child lab.

WELCOME TO THE LAB, NAOMI!



Meet Naomi Rika Green, our newest Lab Coordinator! Naomi is both a Japanese and U.S. citizen. She spent most of her childhood in Fukuoka, Japan and Chinhae, South Korea. Though, she has spent all of her teenage and adult years in the U.S. and calls the U.S. her home. She graduated in May 2022 from Emory University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology. Naomi started in the Infant and Child Lab as an undergraduate research assistant in the Fall of 2021, where she developed an interest in social development in children. Following graduation from Emory, Naomi became the Lab Coordinator and has been involved in several of the projects occurring in the lab. Currently, she is in the process of applying to graduate school to obtain her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology or Neuropsychology.

In her free time, she loves to draw, play piano, take walks, volunteer at the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and watch Disney movies!

CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



Yasmeen Ahmed
Neuroscience and
Behavioral Biology,
Arabic
2024



Hallie Toren
Psychology, Biology
2023



Annelise Ross
Psychology
2023



Karen Valle-Frias
Psychology, Chemistry
2024



Edith Wang
Psychology, Film and
Media Studies
2023



Emma Estroff
Psychology
2025



Hannah Kreuziger
Psychology, German
2023



Matt Yoo
Neuroscience and
Behavioral Biology
2024



Vidhi Kapadia
Psychology, Business
2025

We couldn't do this without YOU!

You are receiving this newsletter because you and your child have participated in one of our studies or have expressed interest in taking part in one. We invite you to involve yourself in our current studies. If your child is under the age of 10, and you would like to be contacted about our studies, please call or email us at: [\(404\) 727-6199](tel:4047276199) or infant.and.child.lab@gmail.com

Your visit will only take about 30 minutes, and your child will be given a small token of appreciation at the end. We are located at:

[36 Eagle Row, Atlanta, GA 30322](#)

We are on the Emory Campus, near Druid Hills, Decatur, Candler Park and other nearby Atlanta Neighborhoods.

We provide parking validation upon arrival at our lab. Check our website for directions: www.psychology.emory.edu/cognition/rochat/lab/

THANK YOU!!!

