



Emory Infant and Child
Development Research Laboratory
Newsletter
Spring 2012

Letter to Parents:

Article by: Philippe Rochat Ph.D.
Head of the Emory Infant and Child Lab

At the Infant and Child Lab, we continue to collect data and learn about your children and their development. We are also trying to learn about us: Where do we come from? What might be the constitutive elements of our adult mind? Children are indeed the secret keepers of our origins. From them we gather insights on how we think, feel, perceive, get attached to, and eventually judge and make decisions about our surroundings. We continue trying to find answers and, obviously, there is no end in sight on such a quest. Each project is progress toward a better approximation of what seems to drive our psychology, one that develops at birth (probably even prior to) and shapes us as adults, no matter what.

So, once again, what did we learn in the past few months? The following are some of the highlights of our research:

We continued investigating the phenomenon confirmed by the Master's thesis work of Bentley Gibson (now working toward her Ph.D. at the lab) indicating that the majority of African American preschoolers, in the Obama era, continue to prefer playing and identifying with a white rather than a black doll of the same gender. Furthermore, the data collected by Bentley Gibson demonstrates that this phenomenon is independent of whether the child is in a predominantly African-American preschool, highly Afro-centered preschool, or a predominantly Caucasian preschool. We think that beyond "skin color", the actual ethnicity marker stands for economic wealth and power, which children already detect and identify by the age of three. Last summer we confirmed this finding by reproducing Gibson's phenomenon with children of color living in

majority communities of independent nations in the South Pacific. In particular, the remote islands of Samoa and Vanuatu. This phenomenon does not appear to be exclusively a U.S. phenomenon expressed by minority African American children only since we find it in children of color from all around the world. For her dissertation, Bentley Gibson wants to investigate further explicit and implicit (not conscious and "automatic") ethnic preferences that are at odds with the typical "same group" preference found in Euro-American (White) population. Spearheaded by Theresa Moehrle (Lab coordinator), we also started to investigate the propensity of 3-7 year-old children from various ethnic origins to engage in so-called "stigma by association" based on skin color. For example, does a child prefer a black doll that is depicted as being friend with a white doll, rather than a black doll? We are in the process of analyzing the data we recently collected with over 200 children located in various areas of the Greater Atlanta region (see Bentley Gibson's and Theresa Moehrle's report for more details).

Last summer we traveled to the South Seas with a group of students, collecting data in Samoa and Vanuatu on 3-7 year-old children. This data pertained to these children's spontaneous propensities to share, take risks, compete, and make decisions in simple economics games. While visiting villages there, we also tested the adult population on their moral reasoning, problem solving, and decision-making processes based on simple stories depicting a moral dilemma. These tests probed participants' judgment calls as to who should be blamed or condemned for particular outcomes. We found interesting evidence of large cross-cultural differences in moral judgments between Samoa, Vanuatu, and the United States. Here in the U.S., we continue to investigate what might shape children's inclination to be more or less generous and giving with a new project conducted by Katherine "Kit" Jayne who just started our Graduate Program (see Kit Jayne's description below for details).

Last, but not the least, we are very excited by a new line of research with infants, orchestrated by Erin Robbins. This research has

Meet the Lab: 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, emerging 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 socio-economic circumstances.



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been performed in collaboration with Dr. Lisa Parr of the Yerkes Primate Center who will eventually try to replicate our research and findings with non-human primates for comparison. This will add an evolutionary theory aspect to our studies at the lab. In a series of experiments using an Eye Tracker, we analyzed 2 to 12 month-old infants' spontaneous exploration of face and non-face objects, probing their visual preference in relation to familiarity and ethnicity. Our first findings are promising, confirming that from a very early age, infants tend to prefer faces that

are familiar to them, in terms of ethnicity and specific features, particularly those of the eyes. We are especially interested in investigating the central role the eyes play in early face discrimination.

As always, more research is on the way, and for this we need all the help we can get from parents like you who are so generously willing to bring your children to play with us.

Once again, we thank you for your support and look forward to future collaboration. We certainly depend on and need you in our shared passion for infant and child psychology. Do not hesitate to contact us for more updates and information. We are always eager to share our research progress.

Face Exploration in Infants

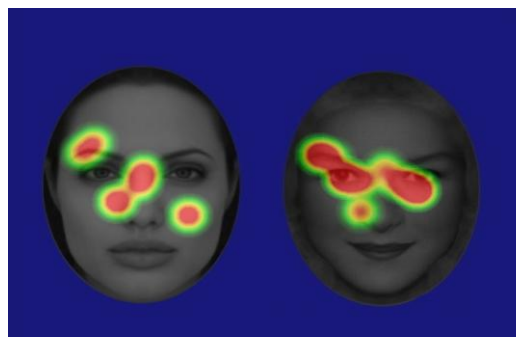
Article by Erin Robbins

For the past few months we have investigated how 2-12 month-old infants' process faces. For example, one of the things we wanted to know is how infants visually explore complex scenes with many images including faces (humans and monkeys) and non-face objects (like cars and clocks). In another study we showed infants pictures of an adult looking to the top right or top left of the screen before showing infants the complex visual scene. We wondered whether infants would use this "cue" about where to look on the following image. In a third study, we examined what features of the face infants seem to focus on the most when forming categories about different kinds of faces.

To test these questions, we would measure an infant's gaze using a

sophisticated piece of equipment called the Tobii Eye Tracker. The Eye Tracker presents images on a computer monitor and then uses infrared light and cameras to track where on the monitor an infant looks, and for how long. The data looks like a "hot spot" or Doppler radar map this tells us where infants were directing the most attention. (See below)

The study is on-going, but to date our data suggest that even very young infants are systematic about how they explore visual displays. They pick up on subtle cues about where to look, and they prefer to explore faces over non-face objects. We are excited to present these projects at the International Conference on Infant Studies in Minneapolis, Minnesota this summer.



Meet the Lab:

Theresa Moehrle

Theresa Moehrle is the Lab Coordinator at the Infant and Child Lab. She received her Master's In Experimental Psychology from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2009 and joined the lab shortly after.

Theresa is mainly involved in the daily running of the lab, the scheduling of appointments, and overseeing the administrative duties. She is also in charge of making sure all studies meet the requirements of Emory's IRB.

Her research interests includes "Stigma by Association," discrimination and group processes. She is currently working with Bentley Gibson on the "doll" study. She has worked on other studies including the Authority Study.



What Does it Mean to be Fair?

Article by Erin Robbins

Economic Games and Fairness

During the fall semester we collected a second wave of data for our Economic Games project. These short games presented 3-7 year old children with short sharing games in which they were sometimes asked to rectify unfairness. We think such “inequity aversion” might be related to children’s relative competitiveness and risk-taking, so we also asked children to play quick guessing games to measure their tendency to take chances, even when they or a partner could end up losing. The data we collected at our lab in Atlanta complements the data we collected this summer at our research sites in Samoa and Vanuatu. So far, our results suggest that children growing up in communal, traditional societies like those in the South Pacific tend to be more generous in their sharing than American children. U.S. children also take more risks and are more competitive than their counterparts in the South Pacific.

We also told children a story about two friends who worked together and decided to share their earnings. One friend stole all the money when the other friend wasn’t looking. We asked children to determine whether that was fair, and if not, how the situation could be fixed. The results were fascinating! In all three cultures children thought the situation was unfair, but their solutions varied quite a bit. In Samoa and Vanuatu, which are more collectivistic cultures, children frequently replied that the problem should be fixed by redistributing the stolen money, or by giving money to the victim. U.S. children responded that the thief should be punished. These data are exciting to us because they suggest that although a sense of fairness may be universal, the means for creating and maintaining fairness may be culturally-specific. To test these

hypotheses, established another research site in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica and where we will continue to collect data.



Spontaneous Sharing in the South Pacific

We conducted several projects in the South Pacific this summer, and one of the most interesting was our Spontaneous Sharing game. Most studies of sharing by children are done under the watchful eye of an adult, which could make children share more fairly than they might naturally. To test this hypothesis, we devised a game where we gave pairs of same-aged children (5-7 year olds) toys that could only be used by one person at a time and then left them alone to determine without adult influence how the object could be used. It seems that even without an adult authority figure immediately present, children in Samoa and Vanuatu spontaneously engage in turn taking and spend equal amounts of time with the toys. We hope to replicate these findings in the U.S. this spring semester.



Meet the Lab:

Erin Robbins

Erin graduated with her BSBA from Birmingham Southern College. As a 6th year PhD student, Erin is in the final stages of her dissertation work on the emerging sense of fairness in children 3-7.

Her other research projects center on the emergence of social cognition in infants and children, with a specific interest in how culture plays a role in development.

Erin has traveled to traditional villages in Samoa, Vanuatu, and Costa Rica with Dr. Rochat to study social cognition and decision-making in children and adults.



Racial Preferences in Children of Various Cultural Backgrounds

Article by Bentley “Ginger” Gibson

The Emory Infant and Child Lab makes a priority to study the racial attitudes of children in the United States and abroad. The majority of research has examined European American children and found that they tend to show a strong bias for other European Americans (White) over ethnic minorities. Racial in-group bias corresponds to the preference one has for other individuals that are perceived as belonging to one’s own racial group. This in-group bias exists for various categories, from gender and race, to categories that are minimally defined in paradigms where participants are randomly assigned to novel groups. Recent research suggest that this in-group bias is not universal and that racial/ethnic minorities do not always exhibit a preference for their racial in-group.

The goal of the current study was to further examine the existence of a White, racial out-group preference bias in children of color in the United States and abroad. We tested a total of 245 children between three to eight years old divided into 5 different ethnic groups:

1) 117 African American children from Atlanta, GA, between ages 3 and 5. Half of the children attended predominantly White middle-class preschools. The other half attended all Black, middle-class preschools with strong Afro-centric cultural curricula and activities.

2) 41 European-American children from predominantly White middle-class families of Greater Atlanta, GA between 3 and 5 years old.

3) 35 first generation Latino-American children from lower-middle class families of Greater Atlanta, GA

4) 34 Samoan children living in a rural, traditional chief system, primarily subsistence living village (population approximately 600) on the island of Savai’i

in independent Western Samoa which lays in the heart of Polynesia.

5) 18 Ni-Vanuatu children from a rural, traditional, primarily subsistence living village (population of approximately 1500) governed by a chief system on the island of Motalava in the far North archipelago of the Banks in the Torba Province of Vanuatu, in the heart of Melanesia, North East of Australia and South West of Papua New Guinea.

Children were asked which of two dolls they liked the most (one same race and one different race) and which doll was most like them. All dolls were matched to the child’s gender. The majority of European American children preferred the White doll over the Black doll. Likewise they also identified more with the White doll than the Black doll. On the other hand, African American and Latino American children were split in their preference with neither group showing a significant bias for their same race doll over a White doll. Children in the South Pacific showed a very strong preference for the White doll over the Black doll. Although all children did not prefer the doll of their racial group, they did significantly identify with the doll of their racial in-group.



Meet the Lab:

Bentley “Ginger”
Gibson

Bentley (Ginger) Gibson has spent the past four years studying the development of minority children’s racial preferences and racial identity. She received her Master’s replicating the original Clark and Clark (1947) doll study on modern-day African American preschoolers.

Her research goal is to continue to examine how people identify with their own ethnic group. Some of the questions that drive her research are:

What role does our racial identity and racial stereotyping play in the way we think and feel about others? When do children develop racial attitudes and own racial identity? What racial stereotypes stand out for children and do these stereotypes change over time?



Development of Sharing Behaviors in Children

Article by: Kit Jayne

Through our lab, and the field of social development in general, has done much to help us understand universal patterns in how children develop an awareness of concepts like fairness and generosity, less is known about patterns of individual variation within those universal trends. For example, when given the opportunity to distribute a set of coins between themselves and a researcher, most three year-olds will behave in a way that maximizes their portion and give themselves the majority of coins, while most seven year-olds will allocate the coins more equitably. However, even though these patterns are observed in the majority of children, there are still variations in the level of self-maximization and egalitarianism demonstrated by individual children, and even children who demonstrate totally different patterns of development.

For my first study here at the lab, I'm working to increase our understanding of what factors might shape these individual differences. On the one hand, the study utilizes some of the game paradigms we've established and used repeatedly with 3, 5, and 7 year-olds in the past. Each game involves the child either deciding how to distribute a set of coins between themselves and a researcher or two dolls, or choosing between sets of coins that have already been distributed. These games allow us to establish baseline levels of inequity aversion, generosity, and the tendency toward self-maximization for each child, and for each age group in general. Unlike past studies, however,



we're now conducting follow-up studies with all the children who participated in the first round of games. These follow-up appointments consist of the same series of games, and give us a way to measure and compare how consistent children are in their sharing behavior over a short span of time.

In addition to information about differences in the consistency and equity of children's sharing behavior, we're also collecting data from parents regarding their own behaviors and their children's temperaments. Parents who have been kind enough to fill out these questionnaires have provided us with valuable information we'll be comparing with their children's behavior, in order to see if there are commonalities in the ways members of a family behave. Parental reports on children's behavior also give us the opportunity to look at different behavioral styles as possible factors shaping different sharing styles.

Taken together, all these measures give us several paths down which we can approach the question of what might contribute to individual differences. We are still testing children and bringing families back in for follow-up appointments, but by the end of spring, we should have enough data collected to start piecing together a meaningful story. We're very grateful to all the parents and children who have participated in this study and are so excited to see how their contributions will help shape our understanding of these important issues.



Meet the Lab:

Kit Jayne

Kit Jayne started as an honorary lab assistant in 2010 after she graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in German Studies and Psychology, but became a full-fledged graduate student at Emory last fall.

Since starting at the lab, she's worked on several projects, all of which examine factors that contribute to children's developing understandings of fairness and generosity. Now working on her own study, she's excited to see how different measures and perspectives can inform basic questions about how some children become more fair-minded than others.



What is Stigma by Association?

Article by Theresa Moehrle

Stigma by Association (SBA) occurs when an individual is stigmatized because of his or her association (close-relationship) with a member of a stigmatized group, even when he himself does not belong to said group.

Researchers at Cardiff University examined children's (ages 5-10) willingness to befriend children who are presented with other children that are either average weight or overweight. They found that children are less inclined to befriend an average sized peer that has been seen with an overweight individual.¹

Building on this phenomenon we designed a study that examines cross-racial friendships. Participants were presented with otherwise identical white and black dolls that the child had to choose as a future friend. (See Picture)



The goal was to see how early in development racial SBA might emerge. For this we tested 3, 5 and 7 year old children of various ethnicities who reside in different locations including Urban and Rural areas of Atlanta, Samoa and Vanuatu. We now completed the data collection for this study and are currently analyzing the results.

¹Penny, H. and Haddock, G. (2007) Anti-fat prejudice among children: The "mere-proximity" effect in 5-10 year olds. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. 43. 678-683

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 or tmoehrle@emory.edu

Your visit will take less than a half an hour, and your child will be given a small token of appreciation at the end. Thank you again; we cannot do it without you.

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

36 Eagle Row,
Atlanta, GA 30322

Free Parking is available. Check our website for directions:

www.psychology.emory.edu/cognition/rochat/lab

Student Research Assistants

Thomas Chernow (Senior) is from NY. He is a Psychology Major. He is working on the Sharing Project.

Crystal Gayle (Senior) is from NY. She is a Psychology/Education Major and plans to become a School Psychologist. She has worked on the Doll Study.

David Molho (Junior) is from Washington DC. He is a Psychology Major and plans to become a Medical Doctor. He has worked on Econ Games and the Ambition Study.

Karim Lalani (Senior) is from Pakistan. He is a Psychology/Biology Major and plans to become a Medical Doctor. He has worked on the Authority Project.

Marianna Ruiz (Junior) is from Costa Rica. She is a Psychology Major. She has worked on Toads and Frogs.

Divya Shenoy (Sophomore) is from MS. She is a Psychology Major and plan to become a Medical Doctor. She has worked on Econ Games and the Doll Study.

Yoana Villarreal (Junior) is from Mexico. She is a Psychology Major and plans to become a Family Therapist. She has worked on the Sharing Study

Yaying Wang (Sophomore) is from TN. She is a Psychology Major and plans to become a Medical Doctor. She has worked on the Sharing Study.

