



Emory Infant and Child
Development Research Laboratory
Newsletter
Spring 2011

Letter to Parents:

Article by: Philippe Rochat PhD.

Head of the Emory Infant and Child Laboratory

At the Infant and Child Lab, we keep learning about your children and their development as much as we learn about us: where we come from, and what might be the constitutive elements of our adult mind.

So, what did we learn in the past few months? Here are some of the highlights:

We learned with the Master's work of Bentley Gibson that the majority of African American preschoolers of the Obama era continue to prefer playing and identifying with a white rather than a black doll of the same gender. More accurately, like it has been demonstrated with the seminal research of Clark & Clark, in the 1960's African American children do not show an expected same race preference which was the source of wide public outcry at the time (indeed, why would they tend to prefer someone that does not look like them?). Furthermore, the data collected by Bentley Gibson demonstrate that such 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, something that children already detect and identify by the age of three. However, this is still speculative and we are continuing our investigation to try and confirm and refine the findings discovered so far. We are planning new experiments that we will certainly report and discuss in a future Newsletter.

Some of us had the chance to go to far away islands (Vanuatu and Samoa) in the South Pacific to test 5 -7 year-old children on their

response and understanding of adult authority. We are in the process of discovering quite striking

similarities in the way US children and children from remote places in the South Seas respond and sense adult authority, despite markedly different ecological, cultural, and economic circumstances surrounding these children (i.e., much less material wealth and much more collective and "respect for the adult" values). These circumstances do not seem to influence in a major way the child's developing sense of what is right and what is wrong. At least that is our first impression based on the first rough analyses of our recordings of various sharing and abides to promises (trust) games played with the children in these various, highly contrasted regions of the world. More subtle differences might emerge in further analyses that we will of course report in subsequent newsletters.

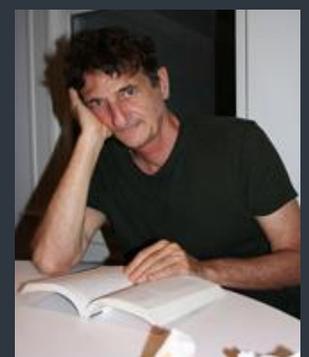
Finally, we found some tentative evidence, here in the US, that infants as young as 6 months discriminate between a generous and a stingy puppet....one that tends to give to another as opposed to just offering and then taking the "goodies" away. We used a preferential looking and visual habituation paradigm to study this early ability and we are in the process of running some additional studies that would confirm (or disconfirm, the name of the science game....) the very early roots of our propensity to differentiate good (pro-social) from bad (anti-social) actions in others.

More research in on the way, and we need all the help we can from parents like you who were so generously willing to bring their child to play with us. These children revealed some of the secrets of their minds at work.

We thank you wholeheartedly for your support and look very much 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.

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.



Racial and Gender Preferences in the African American Preschoolers

Article by “Ginger” Gibson

It has long been suggested children and preschoolers prefer and identify with others that are similar to themselves. The majority of studies making these conclusions have examined Caucasian children. Over the past year, the lab has tried to create a balance in the field by studying both race and gender in minority children. Two studies were done in order to better understand racial and gender preferences and how they impact preschoolers sharing behavior.

In experiment 1, 55 children between ages 3 and 5 (half from predominantly Black preschools, half from predominantly White preschools) were tested in a modified version of the Mamie & Kenneth Clark doll paradigm. All children were asked to indicate which of two dolls they preferred, would befriend and the doll that was most like them in three conditions with two dolls in each: (1) same race (Black) and different gender (boy vs. girl) dolls, (2) same gender as participant, different race dolls (White vs. Black), and (3) two identical dolls, same race and gender as participant (sharing control condition). Participants were also asked to distribute coins amongst themselves and the two dolls. Results revealed no overall differences in preference by school type, age or gender. Although the majority of children identified with the Black doll, they did not a significant preference for the Black doll. A significant gender in-group preference was reveal with children preferring and identifying strongly with the doll of the same gender as them. Fortunately, children were not prejudiced in their sharing behavior and gave each doll equal coins.

Experiment 2 tested an additional 64 children in conditions allowing them to participate in all possible combinations of a Black girl doll, Black boy doll, White girl doll and a White boy doll. The sharing

game was also modified, removing the participant as a reward recipient. Result again revealed no significant racial in-group preference, but a strong effect of gender in-group preference. It may be difficult for children of stigmatized racial groups to form an in-group bias. As in Study 1, children in predominantly African American schools were equally likely to prefer the Black doll as those in predominantly White schools. There were small, yet significant differences in the number of goods participants shared between dolls.

Results suggest that this may be the early onset of bias sharing behaviors, giving more to the White girl doll over the Black girl doll, the Black boy doll over the White boy doll, and in favor of the White girl over the White boy.

Experiment 2 was also conducted using Hispanic-American children and South Pacific children. Preliminary analyses have shown that Hispanic children are similar to African American children in that they do not have a significant in-group racial preference. On the other hand, results examining children in the South Pacific are revealing a very strong racial preference not for their in-group (Black doll) but rather for the racial out-group (the White doll).



Meet the Lab:

Bentley “Ginger” Gibson

Ginger has always been interested in different cultures and the role one's culture plays in the development of their sense of self. Her interest in this area was heightened when she discovered the 1950's doll study by psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark. This study is what prompted the government to integrate the American public school system because young minority children had a negative sense of self due to segregation. This study has recently been replicated and although schools have now been integrated, the same results were found. This has inspired Ginger to want to further understand how a child views self and others.

Exciting Results from Our Fairness Studies!

Article by Erin Robbins

Thank you to all the parents who participated in our series of studies about fairness. These experiments are helping us better understand what children understand about the social world.

We want to know what factors children take into account when they have to decide whether something is fair or unfair. Here's what we've found to date:

Fairness and Inequity Aversion: This experiment was a follow-up to a study we ran last year.

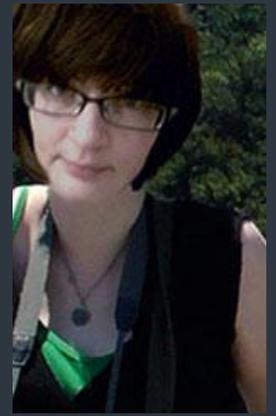
Five-year-olds played a sharing game with two identical puppets. In the original study, the puppets were either very stingy or very generous in how they shared coins with the children. Typically children would respond by giving more coins to the generous puppet and fewer coins to the stingy puppet. When given the chance, children would even sacrifice their own coins to punish the stingy puppet! We wondered whether this was because children were reacting to the character of the puppets, or whether it was the unequal number of coins that made children share differently.

In our new study, the puppets did not actively split the coins themselves. Instead, we presented the puppets and children with coins that had already been divided. Just like before, sometimes the puppets got more or fewer coins than the child, but because the puppets did not split the coins, we hoped children would not think they were responsible and view the puppets as explicitly stingy or generous. After showing children these distributions, we gave them a chance to split coins themselves. Unlike the original study, in our new experiment children did not treat the two puppets differently, and they were not motivated to punish either puppet. It seems children only change their sharing when their partners purposely act fair or unfair. We think these results are exciting because they suggest that when children reason about fairness, they consider both inequity and moral norms. This is one of the first studies that demonstrate children take an 'ethical stance'

and are motivated to fix an unfair outcome, even when it comes at a personal cost.

Economic Reasoning: What do children understand about risk, competition, and generosity? In this experiment, 5 and 7 year olds played a series of short games that tap into economic reasoning. In one game they had to decide the best way to split some coins with an anonymous partner (they could do this equally or not). In other games children had to think about risk: would it be worth it to take a risky gamble if it meant winning a lot, versus playing it safe and winning only a little? Would it matter whether they were making this decision for themselves or someone else? We decided to take this experiment to our research sites in the South Pacific. These are very remote islands that do not have much of a cash economy, and their cultures emphasize community and equal distribution of resources. We thought that these children would have a very different approach to risk than children in the United States. So far, our findings suggest that indeed, children in Samoa and Vanuatu are less risky than children in the United States, especially if they have to make economic decisions for a partner. Children in the

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Meet the Lab: Erin Robbins

Erin's primary research interest is in the origins and development of social cognition, particularly moral reasoning. She has addressed this question using game theoretical paradigms, as well as measures of perspective-taking and Theory of Mind. As part of her Master's thesis, Erin studied how children (3- to 7-years-old) gradually come to have a concern for social evaluation and reputation, and she is currently working on projects that examine cross-cultural variations in the expression of strong reciprocity, inequity aversion, and loss aversion in children.

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U.S. appear to be much more competitive and risk tolerant, which we think is related to growing up in a culture that emphasizes individual achievement. There is still a lot to learn about the role culture plays in children's reasoning, so we plan to continue this line of research this summer!

Probability: One reason children may be more or less risky (or fair) is because differ in their understanding of probability. How do children think about chance and randomness? Do they look for patters to understand the likelihood of something happening? Finally, we wondered whether children in different cultures (U.S., Samoa, and Vanuatu) would think about probability in different ways. We test these very questions, we asked 5-7 year old children to play a guessing game. They got to see different proportions of orange and white balls, which were then put into a paper bag and shaken up. We reached into the bag, picked a ball, and asked children to guess

what color it would be. Children who think probabilistically should take into consideration the proportion of orange and white balls when they make their guesses. For example, if there were 4 white balls and 2 orange ones, they should guess that the ball is white. In another game, we told children there was a 50/50 chance of getting a white or orange ball. We showed children a couple draws from the bag and then asked them to guess what came next. Would children understand that the outcome was random, or would they look for patterns?

We are still examining the data, but it seems that in all cultures, older children are more likely to consider probability when making their guesses. However, this should be taken with a grain of salt, because children of both ages (and in all 3 cultures) have a hard time thinking about randomness: they look for patterns even where patterns do not exist. Adults do the same thing—it seems there is a strong temptation to find order in randomness!

Meet the Lab:

Theresa Moehrle

Theresa joined the lab in April of 2010.

Theresa received her BLA from the University of Missouri in the Spring of 2005. She recently received her Master of Science in Experimental Psychology from the University of Texas at Arlington. As a graduate student Theresa's primary research was focused on Social Psychology with an interest in Stigma by Association, Discrimination and Group Processes.

At Emory Theresa has been working on the Authority Project. She plans on working with Ginger to expand the Doll Study focusing on the effects of Stigma by Association.

Theresa is pictured below with her daughter Shyla.

New Location of the Child Study Center



Emory Infant and Child Lab - Emory Child Study Center

36 Eagle Row, Atlanta, GA
30322

(404) 727-2979

We have moved to a new location on campus! We are now on the ground floor of the beautiful new Psychology Building on Emory's main campus. Parking is still free and conveniently located just across the street from our offices.





Research Assistants

From Top Left:

Kit Jayne (Fall 2010) has worked on numerous projects with Erin. She recently graduated from Rutgers University where she majored in German Studies and Psychology. She plans to peruse her PhD in Developmental Psychology

Nina Omeku (Summer 2010) has worked on the Doll Study with Ginger. She plans on graduating from Emory with a degree in Psychology and Sociology in the Spring of 2012. She plans pursuing a law degree after graduation.

Emma Satlof-Bedrick (Spring 2010) has worked on numerous projects with both Tanya and Erin. She plans on graduating from Emory in the Spring. She plans to pursue a PhD in Developmental Cognitive Psychology.

Adelia Witten (Fall 2010) has worked on numerous projects with Erin. She plans on graduating from Emory in the Spring with a degree in Psychology. She plans to pursue a PhD in Developmental Psychology.

Karim Lalani (Summer 2010) has worked with Authority with Theresa. He plans on graduating from Emory with a degree in Psychology and Global Health next summer. He plans on attending Medical School and becoming a Pediatrician.

From Bottom Left:

Kristen Williams (Fall 2010) has worked in the lab with Theresa. She is a recent graduate of Emory University where she majored in Neuroscience. She plans to pursue a PhD in Social Psychology and Cultural Anthropology.

Veronica Roman (Summer 2010) has worked on Authority with Theresa. She plans on graduating from Emory with a degree in Psychology and Religion in the spring. She plans on pursuing a graduate degree in Student Affairs.

Luisa Cuervo (Fall 2009) is an Honors student and works on an expansion of the Doll Study. She plans on graduating from Emory with a degree in Psychology and French. She plans on pursuing a graduate degree in International Studies.

Emily Auerbach (Fall 2009) has worked on many projects with both Tanya and Erin and recently ran her own project Toads and Frogs. She will graduate from Emory with a degree in Psychology and Economics. She has been accepted to study law at University of Virginia.

Chisom Mogbo (Fall 2010) is a SIRE student and is currently working with Theresa and Ginger on an extension of the Doll Study. She is a sophomore at Emory.

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 tmoeuhl@emory.edu

Your visit would 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. Free Parking is available. Check our website for directions:

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