



You are receiving this newsletter because your child participated in a study with us in the past year. Feel free to forward this newsletter on to other families who might be interested in what we do. We could not do our work without wonderful families like yours!

With thanks, The Emory Infant and Child Lab



Welcome from Dr. Rochat

The Infant and Child Lab continues to strive in harvesting new data on how the mind of children works and grows. The driving idea behind our research is that children provide us incomparable keys to unlock basic, continuing questions regarding human nature:

- How do we come to symbolize?
- How do we come to know what we know about things and people?
- What are the origins of prejudices and preferences toward certain people?
- How do we come to possess and feel possessive about objects and people?
- What is the role of cultural values in children's social and moral development?
- How and why do children become eventually judgmental of others?

In the past year, we kept raising and tackling these questions, testing over 400 children here at the Emory Infant and Child Lab and in Atlanta area preschools, but also in other welcoming local preschools from China, Brazil, as well as remote places in the South Pacific on small traditional islands in Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu. The overarching theme of our current research continues to be the development of self-consciousness. This includes children's early sense of embarrassment,

reputation, ownership, and property.

What we keep finding and documenting, regardless of extremely contrasted cultural and environmental circumstances, is that from 3 years of age children start to become "righteous". They begin to understand that their behavior might affect others' opinions of them. Between 4 and 5 years, we find that children all over the world take what we call an "ethical stance" toward others. They become increasingly "moral" individuals living in a "moral space". We continue to be very interested in trying to figure what this early sense of morality might be and what it might cover.

We are also now thinking about how to tackle the difficult question of what mechanisms are involved in triggering the first signs of a moral sense in children: what it takes for them eventually take an "ethical stance" toward others, and saying for example: "No! That is not right and I will not accept it!"



Philippe Rochat, PhD

Director, Emory Infant and Child Lab
Professor, Department of Psychology

In the past year, we started and are completing research on the following four themes, all related to self-consciousness and the origins of an ethical stance in children:

1) Origins of possession

We tested hundreds of preschool children from China, Vanuatu, Samoa, Brazil and the US on their emerging sense of property. We played a game with them where they had to decide which one of two dolls fighting over an object deserves to get it. We are finding that, across cultures, children between 3 and 5 years of age develop remarkably similar understandings as to what determines and should rule property rights. We are now trying to understand what “psychology” underlies the early understanding of possession and property. We are particularly interested in young children’s rationale and emotions associated with the early resolving of the basic question that is at the core of human social transactions: Who should own what, and why? We view the understanding and resolution of this question by children as an important aspect of children’s socialization across cultures.

2) Origins of reputation and costly punishment

One of the central questions at our lab is how children start to evaluate themselves in relation to others. For example, what do children understand about fairness? We want to know when children begin to follow social norms, and what these norms mean for the child. To do this, we play a series of sharing games with children. Over the last two years we

have been collecting data from such studies, and we are happy to finally share these results with you!

In our Reputation study, we asked children (3-7 years-old) to share coins between them and an experimenter in conditions that were either private or public. In public sharing, the child split coins under the supervision of the experimenter, but in private conditions, sharing was secret and the experimenter did not watch how the child divided coins. Sometimes, children were recipients of the game. Other times, they distributed coins between two identical dolls and did not get to keep any coins. Overall, children in all age groups were more equitable when splitting coins between the dolls. Age differences were noticeable only when examining how children share with an experimenter. Our results demonstrate that concern for reputation and social evaluation emerges between 5 and 7-years of age. Compared to younger children, 7-year-olds are more sensitive to the public/private context and are much more equitable in sharing with the experimenter when the outcome is public. In general, egalitarian sharing behavior also appears to be connected with successful perspective-taking: Children who put themselves in someone else’s shoes are more likely to be equitable in their sharing. We think these results are exciting because they suggest that even at young ages, children are capable of keeping track of social interactions. Even more intriguing, from around 5 years of age, children appear to recognize socio-moral norms and may even be motivated to stay accountable to these norms!

We have also collected data for our Strong Reciprocity study in which 3- and 5-year-old children



shared coins with two puppets, one who was generous and one who was stingy. Children were given several opportunities to share with the puppets. We wanted to know whether children would reward or punish the puppets based on there sharing history. Our results suggest strongly that children indeed take the stingy or generous 'character' of the puppets into account. Both 3- and 5-year olds tend to share less with the stingy puppet. When given the opportunity to punish the puppets at the end of the game, 5-year-olds in particular discriminate between the generous and stingy dolls, typically opting to punish only the stingy puppet. We have conducted this game in Atlanta and have begun to collect cross-cultural data from children in Samoa and Vanuatu. This study should contribute to our knowledge of how moral reasoning and reciprocity emerge in development.

Together, our two sharing studies suggest that children's understanding of social relationships may be more complex than previously suspected. Children as young as 3 years may recognize socio-moral norms, but it is not until later in childhood (around 5 years) that they are motivated to act in ways that are consistent with these rules. In future studies, our goal is to uncover what factors influence this motivation. We already started examining sibling relationships and pre-school exposure, but we are also interested in cultural attitudes toward risk and competition.

Thank you again for your participation in these studies! The response was overwhelming—over

200 children played our sharing games! We thank you for your time and cooperation, and invite any questions that you might have about the studies. Please feel free to contact Dr. Philippe Rochat (psypr@emory.edu) or Erin Robbins (eerobbi@emory.edu) to learn more.

3) The origins of prejudice

The project is currently run by Bentley (Ginger) Gibson a first year student in the Cognitive and Developmental Psychology program. She completed her undergraduate work at Spelman College in 2008. Her research examines how children develop a sense a self via labels such as race and gender. She is using the Mamie and Kenneth Clark 1950's doll study, which examined how African American children identify with dolls that were either Black or White. The results of this original study showed that African American children tend to prefer and identify with being white.

Unlike the original study, Bentley is *also* examining gender identity and preference in preschool children. The original doll study asked very leading questions such as "which one is good or bad." This study will instead allow kids to freely respond to which doll they prefer. The goal of this research is to see if African American children in predominantly Black schools develop a sense of identity and preference that is different from



African American children in predominantly White schools.

Bentley Gibson is working with Dr. Philippe Rochat who has examined how children of this same age share goods. His work has also utilized dolls, but they were identical and did not have human features.

Another goal of Bentley's research is to see if children distribute their goods differently depending on the doll that they prefer or identify with (Black vs. White, girl vs. boy).

This research is just starting and only a few children have been tested. So far, it can informally be said that African American children do not share differently based on the dolls' race or gender. She looks forward to seeing if there are differences between the children attending the predominantly white or black school settings.

4) **Mother-Infant interaction**

across cultures

This past fall, Tanya Broesch collected data for her dissertation in a small traditional island in Fiji. She observed mother and their infant (aged 3-12 months) while engaged in a playful face-to-face interaction. The goal is to compare them to North American mothers engaged in similar affective exchanges with their infant. Tanya wants to explore and eventually establish variations and possibly universal aspects across cultures in the timing and overall non-verbal format of mother-infant interaction. She plans to analyze all the videos in the coming months and will have more to report in the next newsletter.

Students and staff are eager to dive further into our systematic inquiries of the developing minds of young children. Thank you parents and teachers for all your generous help. Our research would be impossible without your collaboration.



Our lab is fortunate to have a number of research assistants volunteering to work each year, assisting with our child studies. We would like to take this space to give them "a few lines of fame".



Esta Denton

Esta Denton is a junior at Emory University and is fulfilling a dual major in Psychology and Marketing. She is currently a Resident Advisor living in Trimble Hall, plays ultimate Frisbee on the women's club team, and serves as Co-president of the American Marketing Association Chapter at Goizueta School of Business. Esta hopes to apply her Psychology major and research experience towards admission to a graduate school in international business and marketing.

Greer was born and raised in Boulder, Colorado. She has spent the past four years studying Spanish and Psychology as an undergraduate student at Emory University. She has worked as a research assistant at the Child Study Center for a year, during which time she has assisted with several studies, mainly cross-cultural, self-recognition and sharing in young children. Next year, she hopes to pursue a PhD in Counseling Psychology. Her dream is to work with neglected and abused children.



Greer Hansen



Elizabeth Heller

Liz is originally from New Jersey and is in her senior year at Emory College. She is currently completing a double major in psychology and linguistics and is very interested in moral and language development. Next semester she will be entering her third and final semester in the Child and Infant lab, as she will be graduating in May, although she really never wants to leave.

Thank you for your Participation!

1635 N. Decatur Road
Atlanta, GA 30307

Phone:
404-727-2979

E-Mail:
thais.council@
emory.edu



Studying infants and
children at Emory
since 1991



**EMORY CHILD STUDY
CENTER**

1635 N. Decatur Road
Atlanta, GA 30307



OUR MISSION...

The Emory Infant and Child Lab is currently focusing on issues of early social cognition, and early emotional and moral development. In general, we are interested in understanding how young children develop self-consciousness and an awareness of themselves in relation to others. Through our research we aim to make strides in the field of social, cognitive and developmental psychology.

TO: YOUR FAMILY

