Emory Infant and Child Lab

2009/2010 Newsletter

From Dr. Rochat

It has been another rich year at the Emory Infant and Child Lab. We continued various projects on possession and sharing by 3 and 5 year-olds around the world and started a new project with 6 and 10 month-old infants on the early detection of generous acts. We also are observing infants from different cultural backgrounds in relation to parent-child interactions as well as young children's early inclination to prefer others based on race. We are intrigued by what might be the developmental roots of racial prejudice and stereotyping. This is a delicate topic that one of us (Ginger Gibson) courageously decided to embrace for her Master's thesis.

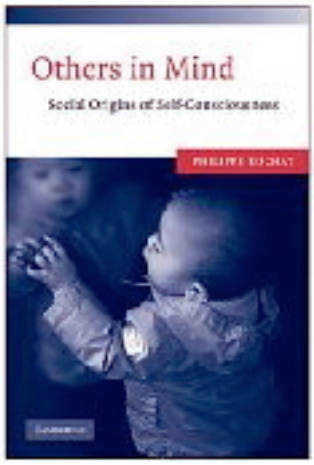
Also, many publications came out of the Lab, including a book I authored called Others in Mind: Social origins of self-consciousness published by Cambridge University Press in the spring of 2009. Obviously, I encourage all you to read it, especially those of you who, like us, are fascinated by how children develop and what is on their minds.

Thank you for your continuing interest and support. We will never be able to fully express our appreciation for all of your help and your child's help in participating in our on-going research enterprise. We do depend on you. We wish a happy new year to you and your family.

We moved!

We are now located at 36 Eagle Row on the Emory University campus in the new Psychology Building.

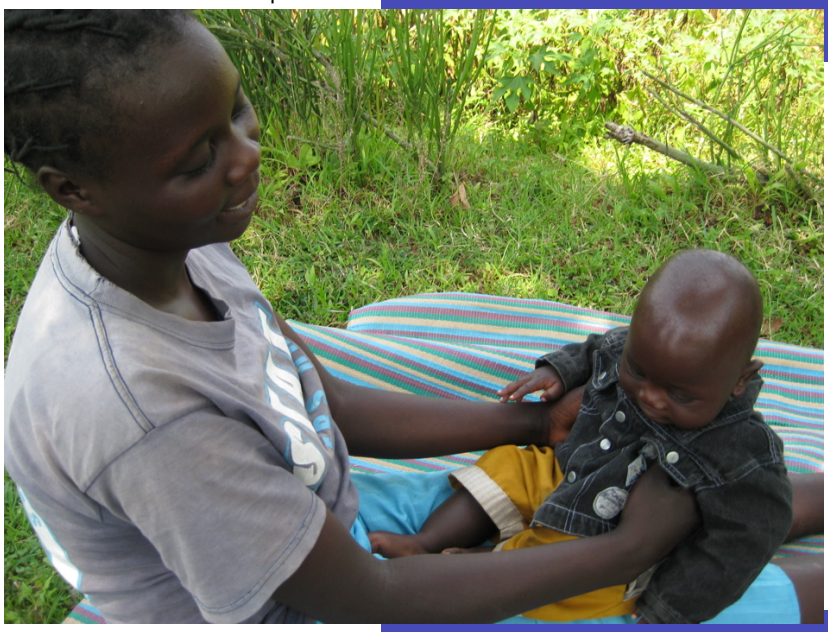
Come see us!



Featured Book:
Others in Mind
by Philippe Rochat, PhD
Published in 2009

Caregiver-infant interactions: Universals & cultural specifics

An abundance of work has been done outlining the importance of forming early parent-infant bonds in the first year of life. Recently, research has documented specific features of this relationship that appear to be necessary and healthy for social and emotional development. To date, very little of this work has been done across cultures. My work examines the early caregiver-infant relationship across diverse cultural settings, to determine common features of this relationship.



To do this, I tested mothers and infants, as well as fathers and infants, here in Atlanta, and also in Kenya and Fiji. I videotaped 'natural' interactions of the dyads for 10 minutes and later watched these videos for behaviors such as emotional imitation and infant directed speech. 'Emotional imitation' occurs when the infant smiles or frowns and the parent smiles or frowns immediately following (within one second). 'Infant directed speech' refers to the way parents or adults change their tone of voice when speaking to an infant, child or toddler. Typically, they raise the pitch, slow down the speech rate and extend their words.

I observed evidence for emotional imitation and infant directed speech in all three cultures, yet I found significant variations in the amount produced by the parents. In addition, I found that parents here in the US respond to their infants with more vocal responses whereas parents in other cultures tend to respond with more tactile responses. These findings indicate universals in the early parent-infant interaction; however, we do not yet know the impact of variations across cultures. To do this, I added another condition to my study in which I asked parents to produce a 'still face' to their infant in the middle of their interaction. This method has been used in developmental psychology for years to determine infants' response to a break in social interaction. I expected infants in cultures where there is more emotional mirroring and facial and vocal responding to be more sensitive to this break in social interaction. This study is ongoing, yet preliminary results indicate that all infants are sensitive to this disruption. More sensitive coding of the behaviors will determine whether cultural differences exist.

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Tanya Broesch

Infants and Generosity

Many of you came to our lab this fall to participate in a study on infant detection of generosity. We enjoyed working with you and your 5-12 month-old infants. Generosity, "*the disposition and practice of giving good things to others freely and abundantly*" is universally detected and often viewed as a sign of moral excellence. But what determines this detection and the valued recognition of generosity early in life? That is the question driving our current research.

In order to begin answering these questions we showed infants movie clips of puppets acting either generously (giving candy to a puppet) or acting selfishly (taking candy away from a puppet). We then showed the children the puppets in real life, on a board in front of them, to see if there was a reaching preference. The results were striking. Only 3 of the 11 younger infants (avg. 6 months old) preferred to reach for the generous puppet. In contrast, 9 of the 14 older infants (avg. 10 months) preferred to reach for the generous puppet. These preliminary findings would suggest that by 10 months, infants would begin to show unmistakable signs of detecting and preferring generous as opposed to non-generous (stingy) actions in others. A very early tendency indeed!

In the future we hope to explore further what might lead certain children to better understand these concepts at earlier ages than others. We are testing another 15 infants in January and February so please pass our information along to your friends if they have 5-12 month old infants and would like to participate.

Britt Berg and Philippe Rochat

2009 Lab Publications

Broesch, Callaghan, Henrich, Murphy & Rochat (in press). Cultural variations in children's mirror self-recognition. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology.

Rochat, P. (2009) Others in Mind – Social Origins of Self-Consciousness. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.

Rochat, P. (2009). The innate sense of the body develops to become a public affair by 2-3 years. Invited contribution to the Special Issue on The Sense of the Body, A. Tessari, (Ed.). Neuropsychologia.

Rochat, P. & Passos-Ferreira, C. (2009). Three levels of intersubjectivity in early development. In A. Carassa, F. Morganti, & G. Riva (Eds). Enacting Intersubjectivity: Paving the way for a dialogue between Cognitive Sciences. Switzerland: Lugano 2/13-14, 2009.

Rochat, P. (2009/in press). Social-affective origins of mind reading and meta-cognition. Commentary on How we know our own minds: the relationship between mind reading and metacognition by Peter Carruthers Behavioral and Brain Sciences.

Rochat, P. (2009/in press) Sens de Soi et Sens de l'Autre au Début de la Vie (Sense of self and sense of others early in life). A. Berthoz & Andrieu, B. (Eds.) Volume pour le Centenaire de la naissance de Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.

Rochat, P. (2009/in press) Self-conceptualizing in development. In P. Zelazo, Oxford Handbook of Child Development. Oxford (GB): Oxford University Press.

Rochat, P., Dias, M.D.G., Guo, L. Broesch, T. Passos-Ferreira, C., Winning, A. & Berg. B. (2009). Fairness in Distributive Justice by 3- and 5-Year-Olds across 7 Cultures. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40(3): 416-442.

Rochat, P. (2009/in press). Emerging Self-Concept. In J.G. Bremner & T.D. Wachs (Eds). *Blackwell Handbook of Infant Development.* (2nd Edition). London: Blackwell Publishers.

Rochat, P. (2009). Foreword for Michel Heller's Manuel des psychotherapies corporelles. Bruxelles: De Boeck Editeur.

By 5 years, children prefer to share fairly and will take advantage of opportunities to punish selfish characters.

Preschool Studies

Erin Robbins

Economics in Childhood

The lab is starting a new series of experiments investigating children's attitudes toward competition, risk, and fairness. We have already collected data from two sites in the South Pacific and are in the process of testing children in the Emory area. We have already noticed some interesting differences between our non-Western samples, and we can't wait to learn more. We have a lot more to do, but so far it appears that children in collectivistic, small-scale traditional societies are fairly egalitarian (i.e., fair-minded) and unlikely to be competitive or prone to risk-taking behavior. We expect to find that American children are more competitive and risky, perhaps as a result of growing up in a more individualistic culture.

Generosity and Sharing

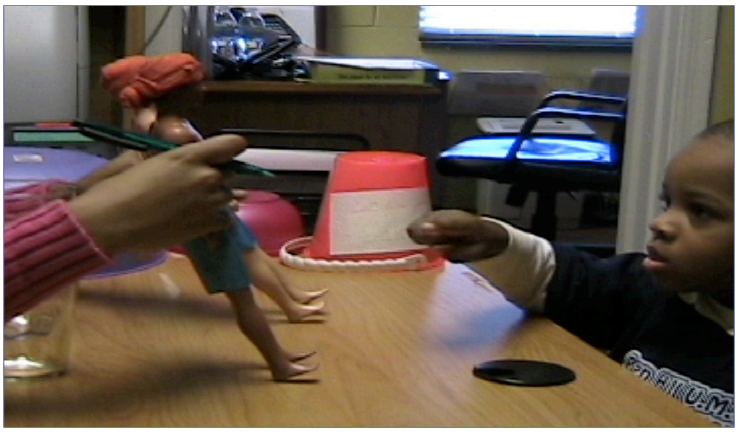
Many of you had children participate in our strong reciprocity study in which children shared coins with a stingy and a generous puppet. We have analyzed our American sample, as well as a small sample of children from the South Pacific. Our results demonstrate that 3-year-olds prefer to keep more coins for themselves and do not distinguish between the stingy and generous characters. However, by 5 years, children prefer to share fairly and will take advantage of the opportunity to punish the selfish puppet. Furthermore, American children are more assertive about punishing the stingy puppet than are children in small-scale, collectivistic cultures. We think these results are exciting and shed some light on the origins of fairness in childhood.

How does race affect social development?

Ginger Gibson

This study compares 3-5 year old African American children, in predominantly African American preschools, to same-age African-American children in predominantly Caucasian preschools. Children are asked to report the difference between varying pairs of dolls and to also identify their preference. They are then asked to distribute eight goldfish between "the two dolls that have not eaten all day long." We are using a forced choice game to examine the impact of racial and gender identification/preferences on pro-social behavior. All children participate in 6 conditions:

(1) black girl doll and white girl doll
(2) black boy doll and white boy doll
(3) black girl doll and black boy doll
(4) black girl doll and white boy doll
(5) white girl doll and black boy doll
(6) white boy doll and white girl doll



Preliminary results indicate no difference in preference/identification between African American children in predominantly Caucasian schools and their counterparts in predominantly African-American schools. Gender preference for in-group seems to be more constant than preference for racial in-group. Thus far, it seems that African American girls have a stronger affinity towards their racial out-group doll (Caucasian) than African American boys. Results will be more definitive in January, after all data has been collected and analyzed.

Please let your friends know about us. If you have friends with children who would like to take part in our studies, have them email

childstudies@emory.edu

or call
(404) 727-7432

Emory Infant and Child Lab

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Thank you again for your participation!