Recent Findings from the SCD Lab at Yale

Investigating How Children Understand the Social World

Spring 2016

Understanding children's social reasoning

We are a developmental psychology lab at Yale University, focusing on how children construct an understanding of the social world and especially how they understand other people. We set up games and surveys that give us insight into topics like the development of fairness, friendship, and group affiliation and work with children between the ages of 3 and 12.

This newsletter summarizes a few recent projects. **If you would be interested in having your child participate in studies at our lab, please fill out an information sheet so we can get in contact.**

Feel free to contact us with any questions!

How do children understand groups?

Every day, children have to figure out which individuals belong to which groups as well as how members of those groups relate to one another. What sorts of features of people do children use to make these decisions?

Children learned about two groups that were identified by different labels ("This group is called The Flurps") or different food preferences ("These children like to eat a food called Flurps"). Do children treat these two different kinds of information in the same way when reasoning about how the group members will interact?

We found that, by age 7, children were more likely to use the information about shared preferences to make decisions about other people's shared activity preferences, peer preferences, and social obligations. However, when making decisions about social obligations, children were equally likely to use both types of information.

These results indicate that children can successfully use information about groups based on food preferences and novel group labels to reason about how others relate to each other.

How do children think about sharing?

How do children evaluate the generosity of others?

We told participants fictional stories about characters with different numbers of toys. Some characters had 8 toys and some characters had 3 toys. We asked participants to guess which character would give one of their toys to a child with none and which character would keep all their toys instead of giving.

We found that all age groups expected those with more toys to be more likely to give.

Recently, we replicated our results with a sample of lower-income children in India, indicating that our findings are not limited to children from New England.

Our results show that young children in the diverse cultural contexts of the United States and India use information about quantities of objects to form rational expectations about the sharing behavior of others.

Want to help with current studies? Fill out an information form!

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