



THE ANNA FREUD CENTRE
Dedicated to the well-being of children



Baby Lab Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2008

Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter '08/'09 newsletter. During the summer a number of new studies began at the lab and new gaze-tracking equipment was installed. We also welcomed Tarik Bel-Bahar to the Centre. Tarik has just completed his PhD at the University of Oregon, and with his EEG expertise he will be advising Baby Lab on our new EEG study (see over).

Over the past few weeks we have been busy visiting baby clinics and groups. We would like to give a special welcome to all our new parents and babies - we hope you enjoy this newsletter and if you think your friends or baby group would be interested in taking part in our research then please get in touch!

Research Update

How parents think about bringing up children: Links between attitudes towards parenting and children's behaviour

In this study we invited parents to come along to the centre when their babies were 10- and 12-months-old. Over 120 of you took part in this study, which has now finished. Data analysis has begun and a submission for a poster presentation of the early findings has been made to the International Society of Child Development for their Biennial meeting being held in Denver in April.

Social and cultural systems for processing emotional expressions

Being able to interpret emotional expressions is a quick way for babies to learn new information from other people. This study looks at how 14-month-olds process emotional expressions when they are directed towards people and objects.

The second phase of the study has just finished and the next phase begins at the end of November.



Susan and Theo taking part in our emotional expressions study

What infants know about seeing and knowing

Can babies of 12 or 14 months of age understand that other people might not know what they know? And can they take the other person's lack of knowledge into account? This looking-time study examines babies' ability to take another's perspective (something called "Theory of Mind") and in turn judge their actions as normal or strange.

When do babies interpret actions as having goals?

At what stage of development do babies start to interpret actions as having a purpose behind them? One study which looks at this with 12-month-olds is already in progress and another with 6-month-olds is due to begin soon. In both experiments the infants watch short animations of shapes "chasing" each other or moving around obstacles to be together while we record their reactions.

Open Day Success

The Centre's annual Open Day was held on Sunday 14th September. The aim of this event was to raise awareness of the centre within the community. Around 200 mums, dads, children and local residents came along to enjoy arts and crafts, the cake stall, raffle, book stall and find out more about the Centre's valuable work with families.



Mum Marie, toddler Marc and baby Evangelina - All ages were kept busy at our open day.

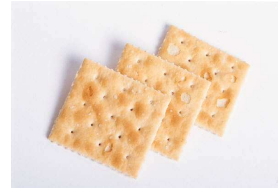
Get involved in cutting edge research!

During December the lab's first study incorporating EEG is due to start. This ground-breaking research will link babies' brain responses to different emotional expressions to their temperament and social behaviour.

EEG (or electroencephalogram) uses a sensor net to pick up the tiny electrical impulses caused by your baby's brain activity when they do different tasks. The net looks like a baby's bonnet made of stretchy elastic threads and spongy sensors and feels similar to a bonnet when worn (we know, we've tried it!).

If you are particularly interested in taking part in this study you can contact us to find out more.

Did you know...?



Crackers or broccoli? Do babies take into account personal preferences?

In a study at the University of California, 14- and 18-month-old babies watched a researcher taste a cracker and some broccoli. The researcher showed disgust to one of the foods and pleasure at tasting the other. When she then put her open hand between the two foods and said "can you give me some?", the 18-month-olds were better at giving her the food she said she liked than the 14-month-olds, who tended to give her the crackers (which most preferred themselves) even if she said she liked the broccoli. This suggests that by 18 months of age toddlers are able to take into account another's preferences, even if they differ from their own.

6 month old babies prefer a helpful character to an unhelpful one. Babies watched a circle attempting to climb a hill twice. On the third attempt a triangle pushed it up the hill, or a square pushed it back down. When given a choice between the square and the triangle to play with, they chose the "helpful" triangle.

Contact Us

If you know someone who may be interested in taking part in our research, they can call or e-mail us on:

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Or you can simply cut out this slip!