



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



Baby Lab Newsletter

Summer 2009

Welcome

Welcome to the Summer '09 newsletter. It's been a long time since we sent you a new update as we've been extremely busy in the lab but now we have a chance to update you on all our research!

We'd especially like to welcome all our new parents and infants. There are now well over 1,000 infants registered with us, allowing us to carry out even more valuable research.

Anna Freud Centre named Sainsbury's O2 Centre Charity of the Year!

We are pleased to announce The Anna Freud Centre has been named Charity of the Year for the O2 Centre branch of Sainsbury's. This means Sainsbury's will be supporting the Centre with in-store fundraising and publicity throughout the next year. They will also be involved with our annual Open Day in September (see more below).

Contact Us

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

020 7443 2208/020 7443 2238

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Or you can simply cut out this slip!

Congratulations to Mikolaj!

Researcher Mikolaj and his wife celebrated the arrival of their second daughter in May. Baby Sophie is already registered with the lab to help out with her daddy's studies.

Research Update

Understanding how early infant relationships affects infants' ability to process emotional expression

In January the lab's first study incorporating EEG began. This ground-breaking research babies wear a sensor net which picks up their brain responses to different emotional expressions. We are searching for links between these responses and their temperament and social behaviour.

To date, 42 infants have taken part as 7-month-olds, and in the past few weeks the first of these have been coming back to the lab for their 12-month follow up visits. The project is due to run for two years and part of the project will form the basis of Sam's PhD.

Social and cultural systems for processing emotional expressions

From very early on in their development babies are able to tell different emotional expressions apart. Being able to interpret emotional expressions would be a quick way for babies to learn new information from others about people (the social system) and objects (the cultural system). This study looks at how 14-month-olds understand and learn using emotional expressions when they are directed towards people and objects.

There are a number of experiments planned on this topic and the second is just coming to an end.

When do babies interpret others as having goals and intentions?

At what stage of development do babies start to interpret actions as having a purpose behind them? We have two studies for 12-month-olds and one for 6-month-olds investigating this topic, in which babies watch some short, colourful animations of shapes moving around and “interacting” whilst we monitor their looking-time or where they look on the screen.

The quickest study in our lab lasts only 10 seconds! Still it is long enough to show that at 12 months babies have clear expectations about where one should look when chasing somebody. Twelve month old babies were shown two animations of a green and blue dot moving in a “chasing” sequence. The only difference between the animations was the placing of the face on the blue “chaser” dot. Like adults, 12 month olds notice when this feature and 72% of them paid more attention to the unusual animation, where the blue dot appears to chase the green one backwards. The study continues as we try learn more about what exactly makes babies understand such simple social events. Meanwhile the results gathered so far will be presented at the annual European Society for Philosophy and Psychology conference in Budapest this August.



An example from the unusual backwards “chasing” animation. Backwards and forwards animations were shown alongside each other.

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

This was the lab's first piece of research and over 120 of you took part in by visiting the lab when your baby was 10 months old and then again at 12 months.

Data collection for this study ran until the end of last summer. We are very excited that the data

analysis has recently been completed and preparation for writing up the research findings has begun!



Open Day



The Anna Freud Centre's annual Open Afternoon will be held on Sunday 13th September from 2.00 until 5.30. Please bring your friends and family along to enjoy the fun. Last year's event included cake and book stalls, arts and crafts activities, a raffle and the opportunity to find out more about the Centre's work and history. With the help of Sainsbury's, this year should be our biggest Open Afternoon yet!

Did you know...?

Findings from Infant research around the world

Emotional expressions affect how 3-month-olds respond to objects

Researchers in Germany and the US used EEG to investigate 3 month olds' brain responses to an object. Babies first saw an adult look at an unusual object with a scared or neutral expression. When they were shown the object again on its own, infants who had seen the adult being fearful of the object had different brain responses to those who had seen the adult show a neutral expression.

(Hoehl, Wise & Striano, 2008)

Neonates prefer to look at their mother's face than a stranger's

(Bushnell, 2001)

Three month-olds show different brain responses to a new face than a familiar one

(Pascalis, de Haan, Nelson and de Schonen, 1998)