

# Recent Findings from the SCD Lab at Yale

Investigating How Children Understand the Social World



## Understanding children's social reasoning

You may remember hearing about research on children's social reasoning that has occurred at Frenchtown over the last few years. Well, we're back again and wanted to give you a little more information about who we are and what we do.

We are a developmental psychology lab at Yale, focusing on how children construct an understanding of the social world and especially how they understand other people. We set up little games or surveys that give us insight into the topics like the development of fairness, friendship, and group affiliation. This newsletter summarizes a few recent projects. If you would be willing to let your child participate this year, please sign and return the attached permission form. Feel free to contact us with any questions!



*In the preferences study, one puppet has the same preferences as the child and the other puppet does not. Who do children prefer?*

### Groups and Fairness

Do children take team membership into account when assessing fairness? We gave 6- to 10-year-old children "tokens" that could be traded for small prizes. Children were assigned to either a red or blue "team" and then decided how many of 10 tokens they wanted to share with an anonymous classmate. The other child then responded to that offer by accepting it or rejecting it. If it was rejected the tokens were lost to both children. Thus, to be successful children had to anticipate the decisions that their peers would make. Results showed that younger children made fairer offers (closer to 50/50) and that all children were more likely to accept fair offers. Team membership did not affect rates of acceptance or rejection, suggesting that children think of fairness as universally enforceable regardless of group membership.

### Shared and Non-shared preferences

How do young children (ages 3-6) reason about others who share or don't share their preferences, or who share some and don't share others?

We determined children's preferences based on their ratings of different foods, and introduced them to puppets that expressed the same or different opinions about the foods. We then asked children to make judgments about these puppets, such as which puppet's favorite food they would rather eat and which puppet's favorite toy they would rather play with. Results showed that children considered shared likes as more important than shared dislikes, and that they preferred the puppet that shared their likes. Our findings suggest that children make surprisingly sophisticated judgments about others based on shared and non-shared social preferences.

Want to help with upcoming studies?  
See the attached forms!