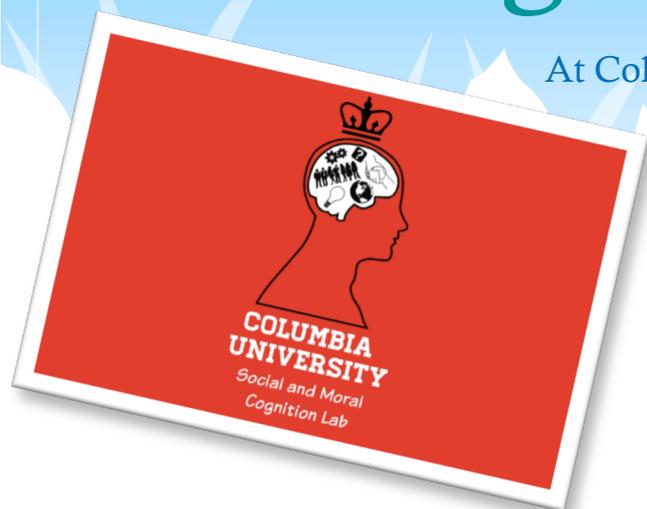


S P R I N G 2 0 1 7

The Social and Moral Cognition Lab

At Columbia University



What's happening at the SAMC Lab?

Since the lab's official opening in September 2016, we have been busy getting several projects off the ground! We've been hiring and training research assistants, collaborating with other Columbia University child development labs, and recruiting families from all around the NYC area that are interested in participating in our studies. In addition to working out of our new lab space on Columbia's campus, we have also been working with the Boston Children's Museum to offer research participation opportunities to visitors.

Want to participate with us at the Brooklyn Children's Museum?

Every Thursday from 2-6pm
Every Saturday from 1-5pm

Save the Date! Visit us at a NYC Street Fair!

Sunday, May 28th

On Broadway
between 73rd and
86th Streets

Sunday, June 4th

On Broadway
between 65th and
72nd Streets

Sunday, June 11

On Broadway
between 72nd and
86th Streets

Welcome!

We're excited to share our very first newsletter with you! In this newsletter you will find updates about the studies we've been working on and some of the other activities happening in our lab. Some of the topics we have been researching recently include:

-How children understand the legal system

-How children think about sharing

-How children perceive others' ability to change

We hope you enjoy learning more about the topics we study. Stay tuned for more exciting work coming soon!



What we've been investigating...

How do children understand the legal system?

In this project, we explored how kids explain various aspects of the legal system. For example, we asked children (and adults) to define words like “prison” and “jail,” and we asked them why someone might be in prison or jail. When answering such questions, children tended to reference people’s internal badness more than adults. For example, children often defined prison as a place where “bad people” go, whereas adults more often defined prison as a place where people go when they have broken the law. Although children referenced behaviors less than did adults, they agreed with explanations focusing on behaviors rather than on internal badness when such explanations were provided to them. We look forward to future work that builds on these findings.

How do children think about sharing?

In another set of studies, we investigated the connection between sharing and moral essentialism—the notion that a person’s morality stems from an internal, biological “essence” that doesn’t change over time. We asked children questions like whether people are born good or bad, whether people’s moral characteristics can change over time, and whether people are good or bad because of how others treat them. We also played a game with children in which they could share stickers with another child who would come to participate in the study next. The main finding showed that children reported more essentialism about moral goodness than moral badness. In other words, children were more likely to say that a good person was born good and would always stay good than they were to say that a bad person was born bad and would always stay bad. We are currently following up on this work by investigating the consequences of these perceptions.



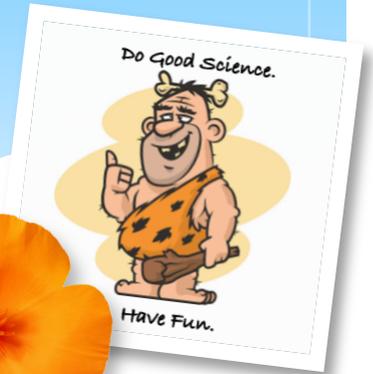
How do children perceive others' ability to change?

Here, we are interested in whether children think that people can change after they've done something wrong. In this study, children (and adults) hear stories about people who are about to return to their neighborhoods after spending some time in prison. The characters in the stories underwent different kinds of transformations while they were incarcerated—some took art classes, some took life classes that taught them the difference between right and wrong, and some took classes about religion. After hearing these stories, children answered questions about how much they thought the person changed in prison, whether what the person did while in prison helped him to become a better person, and whether the person will end up back in prison one day. This study is ongoing and we are looking forward to sharing the results in our next newsletter!

Thank you!

We would like to thank all of the families that have participated in our research so far—both in our lab on Columbia's Morningside campus and at the Brooklyn Children's Museum!

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If you'd like to have your child participate in our research:

Call us! (212) 853-1407
Email us! columbiasamclab@gmail.com
Visit our website! www.columbiasamclab.weebly.com
Check us out on Facebook! www.facebook.com/columbiasamclab