



# "She got one too!":

## Will young children socially reference an older child ?

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### BACKGROUND

- By 12 months of age, infants use adults' affective responses toward novel objects to govern their own behavior (i.e. social referencing) (Mumme & Fernald, 2003)
- Infants' understanding of peers' behavior and emotions appears to lag their competence with adults, emerging toward the end of the second year (Brownell, Ramani & Zerwas, 2006)
- When can infants use another child's affective information about a novel object to govern their play?

### HYPOTHESES

- 12-month-olds will not use an older peer's affective information about toys to alter their play
- Social referencing of an older peer will emerge over the second year of life

### PARTICIPANTS

- N= 53 (22 males; 31 females)
- 12 mos (N=19)
  - 18 mos (N=17)
  - 24 mos (N=17)

### PROCEDURE

#### Emotion presentation (20 sec video)

- 6-yr-old child; 2 neutral toys
- Trial 1: Neutral affect toward one toy



- Trial 2: Positive *or* Negative affect toward one toy



- Toys and sides counterbalanced

#### Play period (30 secs)

- After each trial

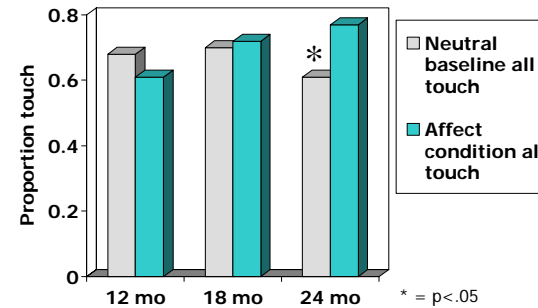


#### Measures

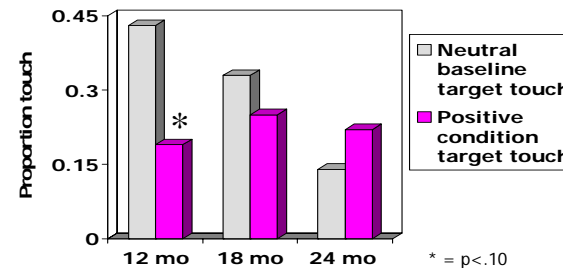
- Touch duration to both toys
- Touch duration to target toy

### RESULTS

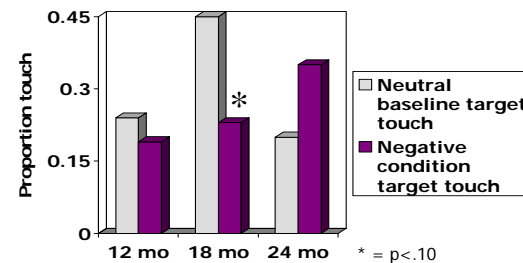
#### Did a peer's emotion alter children's play with the toys?



#### Did children play with the toy more when a peer was positive toward it?



#### Did children play with the toy less when a peer was negative toward it?



### CONCLUSIONS

- 12-month-olds did not systematically alter their play with a novel toy when they saw an older peer display affect towards it
- 18-month-olds played less with a toy when they saw an older peer display negative affect towards it
- 24-month-olds increased their play with novel toys when they saw an older peer display *any* affect – positive or negative – to one of the toys
- Infants' use of peers' emotions to govern their behavior with novel objects appears to develop differently than their ability to use adults' emotions
- *The age and authority of the emotion messenger may be just as important as the content of the message*

#### References

- Mumme, D. & Fernald, A. (2003). *Child Development*, 74, 221-237.
- Brownell, C., Ramani, G. & Zerwas, S. (2006). *Child Development*, 77, 803-821.

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