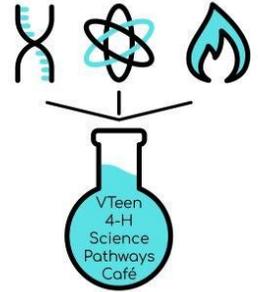




VTeen Science Explorations



Humor Perception and Creation as a Social-Cognitive Process in the First Year of Life

Wednesday, April 21, 2021, 3:30-4:45 pm

Open to all youth entering grades 7-12 in VT and across the country!

Register@ www.uvm.edu/extension/youth/announcements

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Within 6 weeks after birth, the endogenous smile comes under infants' voluntary control serving as strong social currency between infants and their social partners. Shortly after by just 4 months of age, infants laugh. The question is, why? Just what do infants perceive as “funny” and why has nature installed this response so early in development? To explore these questions we begin with naturalistic observational studies of parents' use of wildly absurd displays known as “clowning” (Reddy, 1991) and the features that allow infant to experience these vigorous and outlandish exchanges as amusing, instead of frightening, for example. We discuss infants' use of

fake laughter, teasing, and novel humorous ploys as early as 6 months of age, strongly suggesting they are privy to a rudimentary Theory of Mind. We then explore experimental studies of whether young infants actually appraise incongruous events as humorous or simply mimic or adopt parental laughter through social referencing, finding that by 5 months infants possess surprisingly sophisticated knowledge of social and behavioral norms. Based on these and other research findings, we construct a timeline of humor development including the emerging roles of social and cognitive factors and propose that humor perception and creation provide rich opportunities for social, cognitive, and emotional development in the first year of life.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Gina Mireault earned her PhD in developmental psychology from the University of Vermont. She is a psychology professor at Northern Vermont University-Johnson where she and her students have studied childhood grief, temper tantrums, and more recently infant humor development, all of which involve various aspects of social and emotional development in infancy and early childhood.

What is a Virtual Teen Science Café? It is a free, fun way for teens to explore science, engineering and technology with local scientists, engineers and technology experts. Teens will “meet a scientist”, learn about their work, and be able to participate in informal discussions.

Questions? Contact lauren.traister@uvm.edu

To request a disability-related accommodation to participate in this program, please contact the 4-H Office at 802-888-4972 or lauren.traister@uvm.edu by March 31, 2021 so we may assist you.



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