



Emergence of Bias in Childhood

Biases based on race, ethnicity, nationality, and language begin to emerge in the first years of life. Children generalize these biases to entire groups of people, even people they are meeting for the first time. I-LABS is dedicated to understanding how biases take shape in early childhood, with the particular goal of creating strategies to counteract negative impacts, like prejudices, that can develop over time.

At a Glance



Handout: Race: What Kids Know as They Grow

<https://bit.ly/3hfJdpf>



Handout: Imitation & Learning

<https://bit.ly/3l2plbp>



Clip: Children Catch Bias

<https://bit.ly/3hLazUi>



Clip: Bias and the Social Brain

<https://bit.ly/3bjW1ZC>

Dig Deeper



Video: An Experiment in “Catching” Social Bias

<https://bit.ly/3hgTbpr>



Article: How Societal Prejudices Seep into the Minds of Our Children

<https://bit.ly/2Q8W1BK>

Read Our Research



Before elementary school, children demonstrate biases based on social groups like gender, race, accent, nationality, and more. One way children acquire these biases is by observing the behaviors of trusted adults around them. Children can learn biases from watching everyday behavior as we interact with others.

Skinner, Olson & Meltzoff, 2020, J. Personality & Social Psychol.

<https://bit.ly/3hOSwfn>



Though children form biases early in childhood, adults can combat this by facilitating meaningful connections with people who are different from them. Intentional education around stereotypes and prejudice can reduce bias in children.

Skinner & Meltzoff, 2019, Soc. Issues Policy Rev.

<https://bit.ly/3aleXRj>



Preschool children who witness one adult act in a biased way toward another person will subsequently direct bias towards that same person. This occurs even when the adult's bias occurs through subtle cues like posture or tone of voice.

Skinner, Meltzoff & Olson, 2017, Psychol. Sci.

<https://bit.ly/3hjSLiT>



By early adolescence, children develop implicit biases and explicit endorsements of common stereotypes about academic skills. This is true even in a racially and ethnically diverse group of children.

Cvencek, Nasir, O'Connor, Wischnia & Meltzoff 2015, J. Res. Adolescence

<https://bit.ly/2QHAr7N>



This paper explains how brain development and culture influence human learning and development. Social interaction and participation in intersecting communities of practice shape the development of the brain and change how we see the world. Diversity of experiences prompts learning. Cultural diversity is a strength.

Lee, Meltzoff & Kuhl, 2020, Handbook of the Cultural Foundations of Learning, Ch. 2

<https://bit.ly/321eQgM>

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<https://modules.ilabs.uw.edu/outreach>