



Princeton & NYU Discoveries in Action

SEPTEMBER 2022

NEWSLETTER

Hello Panda Families!

Thank you for joining us! We are excited to publish this newsletter as a celebration of the discoveries we've made together and to build connections with you. PANDA is a virtual research lab focusing on child development. We study child development to understand how parents and teachers can help children learn. We also do research in-person in our lab at New York University. You can learn more about our research at:

<http://kidconcepts.org/>.

And of course, sign up for PANDA to get notified when studies are available!

<https://www.discoveriesinaction.org>

We are always looking for new families to join us on PANDA, so please also share this newsletter with any family or friends who might want to participate!

Best,
Princeton and NYU Discoveries in Action



Instagram: **@discoveriesinaction**



Facebook page: **Princeton & NYU discoveries in action**



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



New study on moral development

Research
Spotlight

Background

Young children have a remarkable sense of right and wrong. Indeed, our previous research has found that by 3 years old, children are willing to accept a cost to themselves to punish someone else for a wrongdoing, even when it doesn't affect them. For example, children are willing to sacrifice a ride down a fun slide to punish another child for ripping up someone else's drawing! This behavior—called costly third-party punishment—is striking, and yet we don't exactly know how it works. Why would people, including very young children, be willing to pay a cost to punish someone for an action that didn't even affect them? One reason is that they want to teach the wrongdoer a lesson, so that the behavior doesn't happen again. But, it's also possible that people punish simply because they are angry or frustrated, and this is one way to express it.

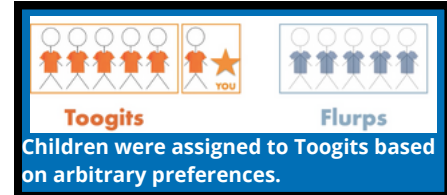
One hint to this puzzle has come from research that explores how group identity influences children's willingness to punish bad behavior. Some studies find that children are more willing to punish members of their own group who have done something wrong, but other studies find that children punish members from a different group more. These results tell us that children might have multiple different motivations for punishing—perhaps those who punished their own group more were trying to teach a lesson about how to behave within their group, whereas those who punished the other group more were driven by anger and spite. We thought that these different possible motivations were interesting, and so we wanted to better understand where they came from. This is where our study comes in!

Study

In our study, which we launched on PANDA in March of 2021, children (ages 5-8) began watching a silly animal video of a dog balancing on



a turtle shell. As you might imagine, children loved the video! We told them that if they continued to “follow the rules,” they would be able to watch another fun animal video at the end of the game. Then—to establish a group identity for the child—we assigned all children to a made-up group called the Toogits.



Next, we showed children a video of another child, whom they were told was either a member of their own group or part of a different group. In the video, the child was shown tearing up the drawing of a different child and smiling with glee at the wrongful act. We told children that the child in the video was planning to play our game tomorrow and would get to watch the fun animal videos. Then, we gave children two options: they could punish the wrongdoer by imposing a 1-minute delay to their video-watching—resulting in a 1-minute delay to themselves also—or they could let both the wrongdoer and themselves watch the videos without delay.



AUTHORS: Leshin, R.A., Yudkin, D., Van Bavel, J., Kunkel, L., & Rhodes, M.



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



Results

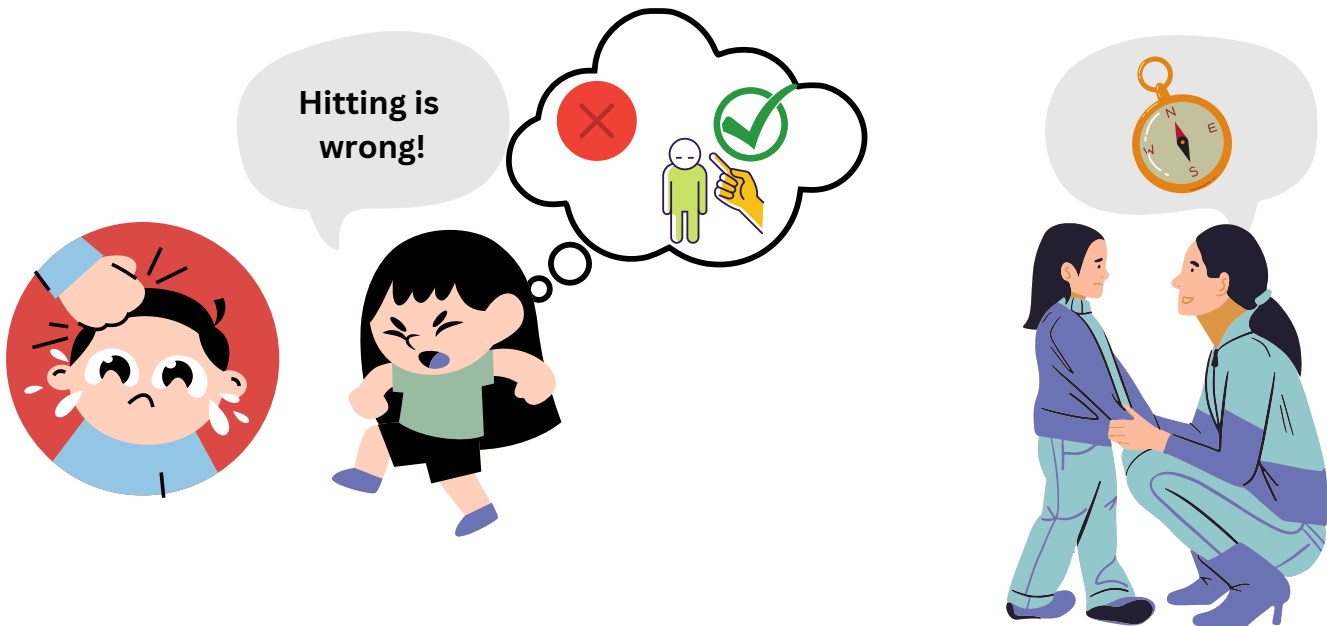
As it turns out, children had many different strategies! Some punished when they saw a member of their own group rip the paper up, and some punished when they saw a member of the other group do so—suggesting, as we’d seen before, that children may have many different motivations for punishing (e.g., teaching a lesson and expressing anger). What was really interesting to us, however, was that children’s punishment decisions related to the political ideology of their parents, as reported on the demographic questionnaire we gave to parents at the end of the study.

Specifically, children whose parents identified as more liberal were more likely to punish members of their own group, whereas children whose parents identified as more conservative were more likely to punish those from a different group. We are not totally sure why that’s the case, but we think it could have to do with how different ideologies consider social groups and value group loyalty. We hope that our future research will be able to dig more into these different possibilities.



Implications

Regardless of how ideology influenced children’s decisions, we think that our research has important implications for how children communicate their sense of right and wrong. For example, when we see children punish another child for poor behavior, we may be inclined to think that they’re tattling or being bossy—of course, this may be the case sometimes, when rule enforcement is best handled by adults. However, our research suggests that children’s punishment behavior may sometimes be geared toward teaching wrongdoers a lesson, and in doing so, sustaining norms of group cooperation. And these kinds of motivations may be related to how parents themselves think and behave! Taken together, this research provides us with a fuller understanding of children’s behaviors and gives us a fascinating window into how our moral compasses develop.





PANDA PUZZLES



Fun Psychology Experiment

Piaget is considered to be the father of developmental psychology. One of his most well known accomplishments was discovering tasks to illustrate childrens' emerging knowledge of certain fundamental concepts like conservation. Conservation is the understanding that quantities remain constant even when they change shape. This is a fun opportunity for parents to do science and learn more about child development!

1. Lay out two rows of identical objects like coins, blocks, or spoons
2. While pointing to the respective rows, ask your child "Does one row have more coins or do they have the same?"
3. Now, spread out the coins in one of the rows you have set out and ask your child the same exact question (try not to emphasize any words)

Typically children younger than 5 years old believe there are more coins in the spread out row.

Upcoming Studies

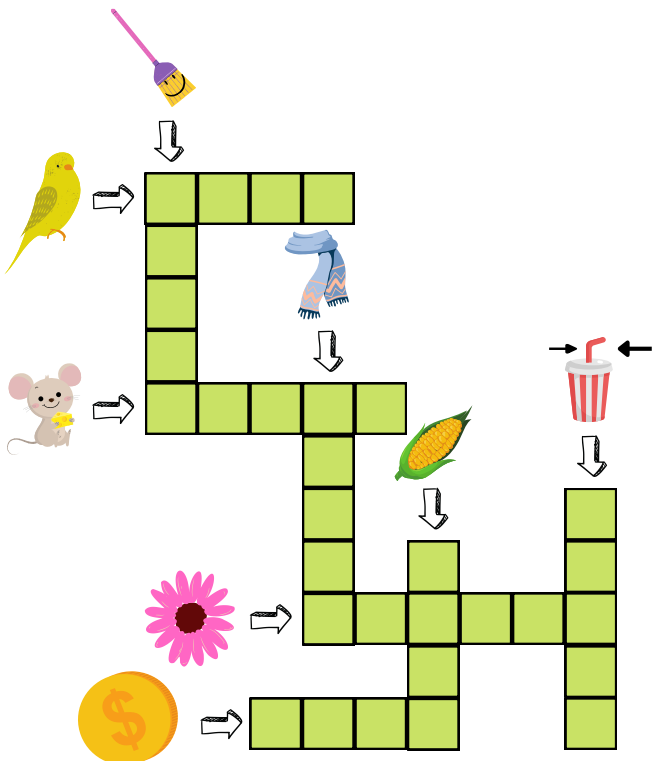
How Do Middle- and High-School Students See and Remember Things?

Inviting PANDA families with 13-16 year-olds to participate in our latest study. A short, fun online study where your child can contribute to science and get a \$10 Amazon gift card!

Children will be able to complete the study on their own with parental consent at the start of the study. You can register your kids and teens at <http://discoveriesinaction.org>



Picture Crossword



Spot the Difference Game



Q "What are the main research objectives in your lab?"

Our research explores how children learn about the world around them. Specifically, we focus on four key areas:

- How children learn about identities, including how they understand gender, ethnicity, and other ways that people categorize themselves and other people
- How children navigate social relationships, including how they form friendships and how they decide whether something is the right or wrong thing to do
- How children learn to learn; for example, how children decide what questions to ask, who to ask for different kinds of information, and how they learn from conversations with their parents and teachers
- How children learn about the natural world, including different types of animals, plants, and other aspects of ecology



Adams robot beat dances

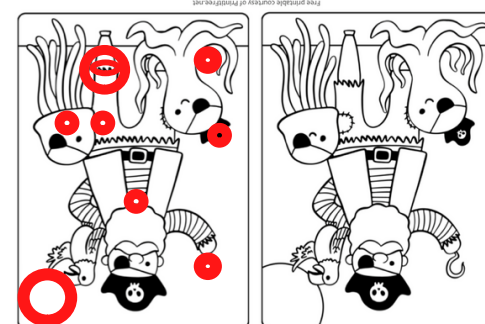
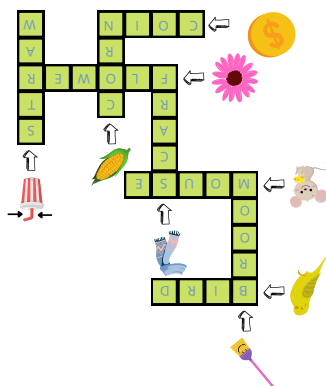
If you have a question about PANDA, some of our research findings, or about child development more generally, we'd be glad to answer in a future newsletter! Please use this form to submit your questions:

→ [PANDA Q&A Link](#) ←

Our next month's theme is **inventions!** If your child would like to submit a drawing click the link below!

→ [PANDA DRAWING Link](#) ←

 **Puzzle Answers**



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE
Can you spot the 9 differences between these two pictures?