Infant-Directed Speech Modulates Subsequent Social Preferences in 5-month-old Infants

Adena Schachner         Erin E. Hannon

Introduction

What are the early foundations of social preferences?

Attractiveness
Age
Gender
Race
Familiar Language

Do elements of behavior other than familiarity lead to preferences for individuals?

Do infants prefer individuals whose prior behavior has indicated they are appropriate social partners?

When speaking to infants, adults in all cultures modify their speech to have exaggerated/ uninhibited positive emotion (higher pitch, greater pitch variability)

Infant-directed speech (IDS) and adult-directed speech (ADS) are both familiar to infants

IDS engages infants’ attention, modulates emotions and facilitates learning

IDS demonstrates adults’ capacity for infant-appropriate social interaction and positive emotion

Discussion

5-month-olds use the infant-appropriateness of vocal behavior to guide subsequent preferences for individuals:

Not explained by familiarity: IDS and ADS are both familiar to infants

May serve as an important foundation for social reasoning: Visual preference as precursor to social preference

Underlying Representation

Attribution of dispositional states? Or a precursor:

Data also consistent with the theory of pedagogy: IDS may serve as an ostensive pedagogical cue

References


Method

familiarization video:
IDS or ADS

silent, still-photo visual preference tests

Familiarization: 60-s video of person speaking in either IDS or ADS
Test: Two 20-s visual preference tests (person from familiarization vs. novel person)

Counterbalanced: Order of IDS/ADS condition, person order, location

Results

After hearing someone speak in an infant-directed way, infants prefer to look at that person over a novel person

After hearing someone speak in an adult-directed way, infants prefer to look at a novel person over the familiar person

IDS
ADS
p = .027
p = .049

N = 20