Class Questions: April 2nd, 2014

Reyes-Jaquez & Echols (2013). Developmental Differences in the Relative Weighing of Informants’ Social Attributes

What comes to mind for me after reading the Reyes-Jaquez & Echols article is that, in comparing reliability, familiarity and similarity cues, the authors are also indirectly exploring the interaction between agentic and communal factors in social learning, although not specifically addressed. Familiarity vs reliability may be tapping into larger constructs (like warmth and competence), as may be requesting vs endorsing. Is similarity about trust (maybe for requesting) or conformity (maybe for endorsing)? In experiment 1, similarity out-weighed accuracy for requesting for all ages, but similarity only drove endorsing for 5yos - what's up with that? Particularly since that peculiarity reversed in experiment 2. Overall, none of the results seemed really conclusive, especially since seemingly somewhat contradictory.

I wonder if 3 and 5 year old children would prefer an accuracy cue over a familiarity cue, or vice versa.

It is interesting that there are age related differences in weighted importance of familiarity and similarity. How does this shed light on social group preferences of children 3-5, as well as preferences of infants? How can we tease apart preferences based on familiarity and preferences based on similarity?

The results of this study highlight an important distinction between requesting a label and endorsing a label. What do the different results in each experiment tell us about children's social vs. epistemic preferences?

What could explain the difference between older children’s requesting and endorsing behavior?

Why are 3 and 4 year olds more likely to use reliability cues to evaluate the trustworthiness of informants, while 5 year olds are not?

What are the possible theoretical explanations for why Corriveau & Harris (2009) found contrasting results from Reyes-Jacquez and Echols?

Results suggest that 5 year olds are willing to forgive inaccurate similar sources. What are possible reasons for this?

The authors concluded that children weigh informants’ attributes differently across age: Younger children put more weight on familiarity, whereas older children put more weight on similarity. The attributes were treated as categorical variables – the informants were either familiar or unfamiliar, and either similar or
dissimilar. Nonetheless, these variables are continuous in nature, and the dichotomization of them can cause problems. For instance, a character can be unfamiliar, somewhat familiar, or very familiar to children, depending how many times children have seen it before. In other words, the strength of a variable can be changed by applying different manipulations. It is therefore unfair to make any conclusion about the relative weights of these cues, as the importance of a cue is always influenced by the strength of its manipulation. We can intentionally create a strong cue (e.g., very familiar) and compare it with a weak cue (e.g., somewhat similar), so that the strong cue (familiarity) appears to be more important than the weak cue (similarity). If older children are asked to choose between a “somewhat similar” character and a “super familiar” character, we might be able to get results opposite to the findings of the current study.

Something minor:

The authors conducted a number of simple effect analyses when interactions were not significant. This is unwarranted.

In terms of the requesting behaviors in Experiment 1, the results showed that there was a main effect of condition (accurate/inaccurate), but no interaction between condition and phase (Pre-reliability/Post-reliability). This is weird! There ought to be an interaction between condition and phase, because theoretically the effect of condition should manifest itself only in the Post-reliability phase, but not in the Pre-reliability phase.

Is there any reason to be suspicious of the order that we find out what the puppet's favourite foods were in Experiment 1? Is it possible that the children actually thought the "similar" puppets were more "deferent" and the dissimilar puppets were more "deviant"? Could it be that the children thought their choices had a direct impact on the puppets' choices? Interesting that this was counterbalanced in Experiment 2 but not experiment 1 (if I understand things correctly)

I'm intrigued by this idea that older children are more forgiving of mistakes made by more similar informants. There's a part of me that wants to believe that this is motivated by empathy rather than just cold group selection. I'm imagining that similarity made the similar informant easier to identify with, which in turn made it easier for kids to be more forgiving of mistakes because they were easier to identify with. But maybe I'm just describing the exact mechanism that group selection taps into. Maybe this is just the warm fuzzy version of a regular old group selection explanation.

Could one begin to separate a desire to affiliate from trustworthiness judgments by giving children the opportunity to solicit testimony from a clearly inaccurate puppet who says, “I like you” and who is similar to the participant.
Baron et al. (2013). The Gendered Self-Concept: How Implicit Gender Stereotypes and Attitudes Shape Self-Definition

Evalutative “minimal” stereotype versus more or less easy to overcome than content-laden stereotype?

Does age create flexibility or rigidity? What kinds of flexibility? Rigidity? Interaction of deliberate versus implicit?

Asian child population – does balance increase with age and do these stereotypes really exist in the same form (and does it matter) in Singapore?

Balanced identity theory and strength of identification (both explicit and implicit?) being attenuated by the association of the self with a counter-stereotypical role. Boy + reading = less of a boy = more of an individual? Person? Etc. ?

General increase in consistency over time between two parts predicting third (perhaps stronger for identity and “key” aspects of worldview)?

Implicit for explicit cognitive consistency in Asian as well as euro-dominated cultures? Different form evaluative consistency?

If we believe that young children seem to have a preference for women over men that remains stable over some time, and these implicit associations are formed as early and end up being as stable as Baron suggests, then how do most human societies end up being male-dominant? If we start off thinking that women are good and men are bad, why do we continue to put men in positions of power? If we think they’re bad then why do we keep electing them to run our countries and businesses and develop technology and make most of our decisions? Does this implicit preference change once we reach adulthood? Or maybe what we’re seeing is that despite having an individual preference for women, we have a social preference for men? Is it possible that deep down we think women are good for ME but men are good for US? Are men good for US because they’re a little bit BAD, maybe bad enough to do a very BAD thing in order to protect us, make tough decisions, be a little mean to keep social order? If we’re going to promote gender equality, should we teach our kids that women can be a little BAD too, and if we do will our daughters have a better chance at being captains of industry?

The IAT tests measure the strength of the associations between the self, gender, and math, but we still don’t know the valences of these associations. The strength of an association is independent of the valence of the association. For instance, we can form a very strong but negative association between Person A and math (“A is very poor at math!”). On the other hand, we can form a very weak association between Person B and math because we do know nothing about Person’s B’s math ability. The results of the IAT test will be that we link
Person A, but not Person B, to math. This, of course, does not mean we think Person A is better at math than B. The same logic applies to gender stereotype. A strong association between man and math does not necessarily mean that men are perceived to be better at math. We need to further take into account the valence of the association.

There are two types of explicit attitudes: attitudes that people claim (i.e., what they say), and attitudes that people consciously have in mind (i.e., what they think). IAT tests enable us to distinguish between explicit attitudes and implicit attitudes. But is there any way that we can tease apart the two forms of explicit attitudes?

The Baron et al article was a useful overview (which I now wish we had more of) which raised some interesting questions for me: following Carol Dweck's "mindset" model, what might be gained by teaching gender as a fluid ("growth" vs "fixed") concept? That genitalia needn't be social determinants? What about teaching identity or group fluidity in general?

I'm also now curious about the preschool IAT. If that works for 4yos, why aren't more developmental studies done via computer? Given that this area is often challenged by variability in methodology, confounded conditions and efficiency demands, I'd think automation would be welcomed.

Is the IAT detecting children's experience with various cues, rather than implicit beliefs? That is, in our daily media we are constantly exposed to 'math cues' being linked with males. I wonder if the IAT is showing our memory for these kind of associations rather than tapping into an implicit belief?

Gender is a unique type of social group within our society. In what ways does our knowledge of implicit gender associations generalize to other social groups? In what ways does it not generalize?

Why do gender stereotypical associations prevail in singapore (Cvencek et al, 2013) when girls there tend to outperform boys. With time, will implicit attitudes transmitted by society mold to reflect this performance difference? How would stereotypes of boy = math persist despite lower performance?

Cvencek et al. 2013 also showed that cognitive balance increases with age. This could have two very different causes a) younger kids simply have more trouble using the IAT, and more noise is created. That leads to the statistical relationship between the measured components of balanced identity to be substantially weaker for younger kids. b) there might be a more theoretically interesting thing going on here. If this finding is not just an artifact of measurement, it might tell is something important about how identity forms. Is it possible that identity starts out as having single components that are not cognitively connected. e.g. I am female, I like math, I like the colour red etc... as kids age the start to connect
these components and start to integrate knowledge about stereotypes the individual components might start to constrain each other? Is that a good explanation for the phenomenon?

Why do stereotypes predict math achievement among girls but not boys as consistently? Does confidence predict boys? I know we see similar patterns of young boys not being as aware of other stereotypes as well. Are they generally less socially attuned to judgement of others and that's why it doesn't influence them?

Do very young children conform out of fear of violating gender roles or do they just imitate what they see? How does this relate to self-conscious emotion factor into this?