

**STILL FACE PHENOMENON AS SOCIAL COGNITION BY 7 AND 10-MONTH-OLDS****Tricia Striano and Philippe Rochat****Psychology Department, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322**

By 2-months, infants participate in dyadic exchanges in which they demonstrate rudiments of social competence (i.e., Tronick, 1989; Trevarthen, 1979). When a normal face-to-face interaction is disrupted with the introduction of a neutral still-face, young infants react by smiling less and gazing away. Toward the end of the first year, dyadic exchanges are complemented with triadic exchanges such as joint engagement and attention following (i.e., Carpenter, Nagell, & Tomasello, in press). It has been proposed that the emergence of these triadic social behaviors represents a developmental milestone in social cognition in which infants begin to understand others as intentional entities (Tomasello, 1995). The purpose of this research was to establish whether there is a connection between the behavior developing by the end of the first year in dyadic and triadic contexts.

Seven month-old (N=24) and 10-month-old infants (N=24) were tested for their reaction to a still-face episode in a dyadic context as well as their capacity for joint attention in a triadic context. Procedure for the still face episode included three parts: a one minute normal interaction (NI) in which the experimenter (E) engaged the infant with a normal tone of voice, a 1 minute neutral still-face (SF), and a final 1 minute NI. Test for joint attention capacity was based on 1) signs of joint engagement during 5 minutes of free-play with the experimenter, 2) signs of attention following toward a target object which the experimenter either turned or pointed to, 3) gazing reaction toward an experimenter blocking a small toy with which the infant was playing (blocking task), or while the experimenter pulled a toy away before the infant had a chance to grasp it (teasing task). Based on the joint attention assessment, infants were categorized as either high or low in triadic competence. We hypothesized that infants who were categorized as high in triadic competence would display qualitatively different responses to the still-face compared to infants with low triadic competence.

Results indicate that same age infants with high triadic (HT) social-cognitive competence responded differently to the still face episode than infants with low triadic (LT) social-cognitive competence. Compared to LT infants, during the still-face episode, HT infants engaged significantly more in behaviors such as vocalizing, clapping, banging on the highchair table, and touching the experimenter's face while simultaneously looking at the experimenter. These results indicate there is a link between behavior in a dyadic and triadic context. We conclude that there is no evidence for separate development of social cognition in dyadic and triadic domains.