

Below is a noteworthy article on a remarkable study that will fundamentally change the nature of bullying programs. Martial Arts for Peace is addressing this innovative discovery in its bullying programs taking into consideration that bullying tendencies are genetically inborn in us all and what this could possibly lead to in adult life if left unattended.

Are babies born bullies?

University of British Columbia study shows infants learn social stratification as early as nine months

Babies today are all about blankies, bottles and ... bullying?

A new University of British Columbia study done by the Centre for Infant Cognition suggests naptime may be the new frontier in the war on bullying.

Bullied children may bring exclusion on themselves with gene-linked behavior, study says.

The episodes of bullying that mar early grade school years for hundreds of children may be a partial result of the victim's DNA, a new study suggested Wednesday.

The behaviors that most often lead to exclusion and victimization in the classroom or schoolyard have their roots in a student's genes, the study said, arguing that children's genetic makeup has a direct impact on the quality of the interactions they enjoy with their peers.

The findings were published on the website of the journal Child Development.

Michel Boivin, lead researcher and psychology professor at Laval University, said a child's genes will often dictate the way they act, which will in turn shape their experiences both in and out of the classroom.

In experiments conducted by UBC psychology professor Kiley Hamlin, babies aged nine to 14 months were found to take pleasure in the bullying of individuals they saw as different from themselves.

The study, in a terrifying preview of the social minefield that is the high school cafeteria, offered the infants a choice between a snack of graham crackers or green beans. The children were then shown a video of two puppets. In the video, one puppet favored the same snack as the child while the other puppet made a food faux pas by choosing the snack the child had passed on.

The children, when asked which of the puppets was their favorite, selected the puppet with similar tastes.

The experiment takes a slightly sinister turn when the children are shown videos of the puppets bullying each other. Not only did the children not mind when their favorite puppet picked on the puppet who chose differently from them, they also showed favoritism to new puppets who bullied the puppet that liked different snacks from the infant.

In an interview discussing the study's findings, Hamlin said that the results do not mean that infants lack empathy or are born bullies. In fact, the same research group, in a series of similar studies last year, showed that toddlers, like adults, experience a surge of positive feelings and emotional benefits from acts of generosity. But how does one square that knowledge with a seeming enjoyment of bullying?

"What it does seem to show," Hamlin said, "is the tendency to note who is similar to me and who isn't [that] might be very basic to human socialization."

Hamlin went on to say that while infants display empathy, they appear to reserve it for certain individuals much in the same way adults do.

While the study's findings could inform future anti-bullying strategies, for now they are a mere chilling peek-a-boo into the world of baby bullies, and how infants learn to make their way in the world.

[Via the Vancouver Province]