

March 1, 2007

If my friend asked me if there was anything wrong with her two-week-old baby because it only seemed to look at the periphery of her face, I would tell her that her baby is developing in a way that is consistent with children of that age. Turkewitz and Kenny believe that infants of this age have the limited sensory abilities to protect them from overloading their developing cognitive systems. Salapatek and his colleagues found that children less than one month of age tend to "direct their attention primarily to the outside of a figure and spend little time inspecting internal features" (Bjorklund, 1993). He called this phenomenon the externality effect. Earlier work by Bronson also can account for why my friend feels that her baby is looking at her hair or chin but never actually her. Bronson found that a young infant is really only able to parts of a pattern, but not the whole thing.

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of research
to support
your
statement

I would then tell my friend that she can expect her baby to begin looking at the inside of her face around two months of age according to Shaffer. At that point, her child will mostly be looking at her face rather than the periphery of her face. Then at three to four months of age, Bronson claims that children can begin seeing things (including faces) as a whole rather than as several separate pieces. For instance, by the time my friend's child is three to four months, I would expect for her to begin looking at her mother and comprehending her whole face. Before that point, she would only just look at certain aspects of my friends face such as her chin or hair. To put it simply, my answer to my

just

friend would be that as far as I can tell your baby is perfectly normal with respect to her vision, and I would at least tell her about the externality effect if nothing else.

Very well done!

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