Season’s Greetings from the Stony Brook University Temperament Study! This newsletter is designed to keep you up-to-date on progress in our study of children’s temperament, emotions, and their relationship to parents’ personalities. We also hope to provide information/resources for our parents and families. Please let us know what you would like to see in future newsletters. As a reminder, you can find all previous newsletters online at: www.sbutemperamentstudy.org.

**Progress Report & Future Plans**

With the holiday season in full swing, we are pleased to share that we have over 450 families with pre-school age children enrolled in the study! Of these families, 87% have completed the second lab visit, 90% have completed the phone interviews about themselves and their children, and 78% have completed the family questionnaires. An additional 383 families have participated in a sub-study examining the role of genes in the development of temperament and personality. We know that participation in the study takes a good deal of time and energy, and we appreciate your continued efforts!

We hope to reach our goal of 600 families by June 2007, after which we plan to begin the Age 6/7 Assessment. The Age 6/7 Assessment will be critical to understanding the stability of temperament over time. We hope that your family will continue to participate at that time.

**Description of the Study**

**First Visit**
- Parent completes questionnaires, and Child is videotaped playing with toys & games and interacting with our research staff.

**Second Visit**
1) Parent and Child are videotaped together working on fun activities together.
2) Child takes part in an assessment of brain activity (EEG).

**Phone Interviews**
1) Parent interview about personality, moods, and emotional styles.
2) Co-Parent interview about personality, moods, and emotional styles.
3) Phone interview about Child’s emotional, social, and behavioral development.

**Questionnaires**
1) Parent questionnaires about Child and Parent mood and temperament.
2) Co-Parent questionnaires about Child and Co-Parent mood and temperament.

**Genetics/Cortisol Sub-Study**
Child provides lab samples to investigate the relationships among temperament, genetics, and physiological responses to stress (as measured by salivary cortisol).

**A Reminder to Families: Questionnaires**

Please complete and return the parent questionnaire packets in the pre-paid envelope. If you have any questions, or need a new set of questionnaires, please call the Project Coordinator at 631-632-4115. Thank you!
How does the parenting interact with temperament?

As part of an installment series, we plan to address issues regarding child development and temperament in each newsletter. Please contact us if you are interested in learning more about a particular topic.

A great deal of research has focused on the interaction of childhood temperament with various environmental factors. Questions posed by researchers include: What effects do parental styles have on childhood development? Why do some children benefit from high parental control while others thrive under more relaxed management? How can parents use their child’s temperament to determine a more effective parenting style?

One study looked at frustrating situations in 18-month-olds and found that those children who were more distressed were more likely to be angry and aggressive at 24-months-old. This relationship, however, was only found when the child’s mother did not engage in much positive parenting (e.g., support, encouragement). Similar children with very positive mothers did not show a greater tendency towards being angry and aggressive. Therefore, it appears that positive parenting can help children develop more effective ways of regulating their distress and frustration.

Another study examined the relationship between early childhood temperamental resistance to control and externalizing behavior problems (such as being defiant, fighting, and not complying with rules) in middle childhood. Children who were very resistant to control were more likely to exhibit externalizing behavior problems. However, this was only true for children whose parents did not react to their misbehavior. In contrast, children whose parents exerted a high level of control were less likely to exhibit problem behavior. The researchers also found that children who were low in resistance to control in early childhood did not benefit from the same high levels of parental control. Indeed, parental control was actually related to higher levels of externalizing behavior problems in these children. Thus, it appears that parental control and reactions to misbehavior tend to reduce behavior problems in children who are resistant to control, but may actually increase misbehavior in children who do not resist parental control.

An important lesson to draw from these studies and the research in general is that a child’s temperament and family environment are constantly interacting and working together to influence development. While it is clear that certain temperamental styles in early childhood influence outcomes later in childhood, it also appears that parents can play an important role in moderating this influence. Parents can adjust their own parenting style to best fit their child’s temperament. This can help to ensure greater harmony in the parent-child relationship and encourage positive development and adjustment later in life.
Do you have difficulty getting your preschooler to bed?

Many parents report sleep difficulties with their preschool-aged children. The most common problems include the child’s reluctance to sleep alone and resistance at bedtime. There are a number of books available to help parents cope with these difficulties. Here are a couple suggestions:

- “Sleeping Through the Night, Revised Edition: How Infants, Toddlers, and their Parents Can Get a Good Night’s Sleep” by Jodi A. Mindell.

Moving? New Phone? Questions/Concerns?

We will begin contacting families for the Age 6/7 assessment in August 2007. We are very excited to see you and your children again! There is lots of fun in the works, including more games with the staff and a parent, and an exciting visit to our new Pirate EEG laboratory!

If you move or change your phone number, or have a question for our researchers, please call us at (631) 632-4115. You can also contact us via our website, www.sbutemperamentstudy.org.

Resources for Parents and Children

Several parents have expressed interest in reading materials and other resources for parents. We would like to recommend some books that address common problems parents and children may encounter. These books are available through Amazon and most major booksellers:

- “Incredible Years: A Troubleshooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3 to 8” by Carolyn Stratton.
- “Touchpoints: Your Child’s Emotional and Behavioral Development” by T. Berry Brazelton.
- “Good Friends are Hard to Find: Help Your Child Find, Make, and Keep Friends” by Fred Frankel.
- “How to Behave so Your Children Will, Too!” by Sal Severe.
- “The Emotional Problems of Normal Children” by Stanley Tureki.

These internet resources may also be of interest:

- www.aboutourkids.org
- www.kidsmentalhealth.org
Finally, for problems that may require professional attention, please contact your pediatrician or consider the following resources:

- SUNY Stony Brook, Department of Psychiatry               632-8850
- SUNY Stony Brook Psychological Center                    632-7830
- Point of Woods Clinic, SUNY Stony Brook                   634-7874
- Child & Family Psychological Services, Commack            543-0290
- Brookhaven Youth Bureau, Medford                          451-8011
- Pederson Krag MHC, Smithtown                              265-3311
- Family and Child Guidance, Deer Park                      242-1366
- Family Service League, Huntington                         427-3700

**Staff Notes**

Our previous Project Coordinator Jaifi Lewis and EEG Laboratory Coordinator Saima Anjam have recently moved on to pursue their career aspirations. We wish them both the best of luck! Our new Project Coordinator is Keri-Ann Tochka and our new EEG Laboratory Coordinator is Jennie Park. (You can view pictures of all our staff on the website.)

We wish you a wonderful and safe holiday season! Thanks again!