

Insights From the Youngest Minds

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The New York Times:

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Seated in a cheerfully cramped monitoring room at the Harvard University Laboratory for Developmental Studies, Elizabeth S. Spelke, a professor of psychology and a pre-eminent researcher of the basic ingredient list from which all human knowledge is constructed, looked on expectantly as her students prepared a boisterous 8-month-old girl with dark curly hair for the onerous task of watching cartoons.

The video clips featured simple Keith Haring-type characters jumping, sliding and dancing from one group to another. The researchers' objective, as with half a dozen similar projects under way in the lab, was to explore what infants understand about social groups and social expectations.

Yet even before the recording began, the 15-pound research subject made plain the scope of her social brain. She tracked conversations, stared at newcomers and burned off adult corneas with the brilliance of her smile.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)