



CATEGORY ARCHIVES: DISADVANTAGE AND ECONOMIC DECISION MAKING IN CHILDREN

Week 7

Posted on **July 23, 2015** by **Gwen Zoe Petro**

Last weeks first round of data collection brought to our attention a number of issues that we needed to address.

Unfortunately, this means it is unlikely that we will be able to use most if not all of this data. Nevertheless, the insights we gained will ensure that the data we collect from now on will be usable.

First, we realized that some of the questions featured in the surveys being distributed to the children were difficult for them to understand, and the format of the surveys themselves created confusion for some subjects. So not only did we alter the survey questions, but we also decided it might be easier to recreate the survey in qualtrics. This was a good opportunity to familiarize myself with qualtrics, which I had never used until now. Fortunately, it did not prove too difficult. Allowing the children to take the surveys on a tablet rather than with pencil and paper will make it easier for us to collect our data and keep them more engaged.



Second, we realized that some of the results we were getting for the discounting task were nonsensical. We were unsure whether this reflected their misunderstanding of the task, their fatigue and inattention as the task progressed, or some unknown cause. Moving forward, we decided to shorten the duration of the task by half, add a second trial if needed, and work on explaining the task to ensure that the children understand what they are being asked.

Finally, after I encountered a child who seemed generally inattentive throughout the task, we decided too add a protocol in which we would end the task in this scenario and discard their data. These experiences have shown me

the importance of using the proper methods and altering them if there are unforeseen issues.

All of these new measures will be put in place next week when we attend two or three new camps to collect data. Hopefully things will go smoother now, and we will have some usable data.

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Week 6

Posted on **July 17, 2015** by **Gwen Zoe Petro**

I have not updated my blog in the past couple of weeks because we were still trying to coordinate participation with various summer programs and wait for returned consent forms. I did not initially realize what a drawn out process this would be, but it had been a good learning experience for recruiting participants in the future and working with childcare programs to find subjects. In the meantime, I was working on coding for another one of Dr. Evans' projects involving emotional regulation in infants—also quite interesting.

That being said, we have FINALLY begun visiting camps to collect data this week! So far, we have been to the Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Newfield Elementary School's Summer Program, and the Cornell Adult University Summer Program. I feel like I have already learned a lot in this first few days about how to improve the way we pose the questions we are asking the children participating in the study and get accurate responses from them without compromising our data. It has been critical to keep in mind that every child thinks and makes decisions differently. This can be challenging, but it also keeps me on my toes and can be very eye opening!

Hopefully we will have more subjects for next week, perhaps from another program such as 4H. If so, we can continue making good progress.

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Week 3

Posted on **June 19, 2015** by **Gwen Zoe Petro**

Although we have not yet begun to collect data, we finally found a few summer programs who have agreed to work with us. This should give us at least half of the 120 children we need to participate, which is good considering none of them have actually started yet. Hopefully he will hear from more contacts once their programs are up and running for the season. The programs we have been in contact with so far seem to cater more towards middle income families, so now we will have to try to focus on finding programs catered towards lower income families.

Ultimately, we need half of our participants to be from each income group.

Meanwhile, I have come to an important realization while recruiting participants for our study: it is difficult to request participation from anyone, even children, without some sort of incentive. Originally, we thought we would offer them a gift card to a book store. However, one program we spoke with thought that the reward should be something more tangible that they could use right away and show off to the other campers; this would make giving up some of their time seem more fair. Another program whose focus is summer math enrichment asked that we prepare some sort of a lesson on economic decision making/ discounting that the children could take away from the experience.

This seems like it could be a good thing for all of the children who participate in our study, even though it is tangential to our goal. However, the other research assistant and I are studying psychology/ human development, so we will have to work with Professor Just of the economics department to create this.

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Week 2

Posted on **June 12, 2015** by **Gwen Zoe Petro**

Our project is moving along slowly (for now) but surely! Mid-June is a strange time interval where schools are wrapping up for the year, but summer camp has not started yet. Although this means that we cannot begin working with any children right now, it is a good time to contact camps to partner with us. So far, we are talking to several camps throughout Tompkins County who may be interested in working with us. Simply iterating our intended research plan to the program directors I have been talking to has given me an opportunity to better my understanding of the project and how the early stages of the research process work. This has also given us time to review the protocol we will eventually be using to conduct our experiment and getting ourselves organized. In the meantime, I have continued to work on coding for another project of Dr. Evans'.

Next week we will continue to contact local summer programs and follow up with the ones we have been in contact with to work out some more of the details. Until summer camps begin at the end of the month, I will continue to recruit participants and code in my spare time. It seems that gathering 120 children of the right age and income level is easier said than done! Nevertheless, I am eagerly awaiting the point where we will begin working with the children and collecting data.

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Week 1

Posted on **June 5, 2015** by **Gwen Zoe Petro**

Would you prefer one dollar today or two dollars one week from today? Research has shown that people discount the value of a reward as the delay increases. Lower income adults tend to discount at a steeper rate than middle and higher income adults which may compromise their economic decision making and contribute to the cycle of poverty.

The goal of the project I am working on with Professors Gary Evans and David Just is to examine whether this discrepancy is present among 4th and 5th graders from lower versus middle income families. We plan to match children of the same socioeconomic status in a brief game of monopoly. The two participants will either begin the game with the same amount of money or one will begin with only half as much to instill a sense of relative deprivation. After the game, students will complete a task to determine their discounting rate. Finally, they will fill out a questionnaire about their thoughts on the game and their feelings towards economic and general decision making.



We hope that this project will give us insight into the effects of poverty on children and help us determine how early it effects delay discounting. If we find a significant effect, we will use this information to create an intervention program to reduce this and help lower income children learn to make better economic decisions. This is an important skill that they would be able to use throughout their lives to potentially improve their economic situations and break the cycle of poverty.

Currently, we are reaching out to summer programs throughout Tompkins County to find groups of participants for our study. Once we have found programs willing to work with us, we will begin collecting data. It is exciting that I will be able to begin working on this study from such an early starting point and get to see it progress. In the meantime, I am assisting Professor Evans code previously collected data for a study involving infants. I am getting a good sense of working fairly independently so far, which is a new and valuable experience for me. I have learned a lot already from working on both of these projects, and I am eager to continue expanding my knowledge throughout the summer.

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- **Barriers to Expansion of Long Island Broccoli Production**
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- **Developing Best Practices and Resources in Parenting Education**
- **Disadvantage and Economic Decision Making in Children**
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- **Field Crops Nutrient Management Applied Research and Extension Internship**
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- **Health and the Brain Neuroscience Outreach**
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- **Invasive Species Statewide Outreach Program Internship – Plantations**
- **Invasive Species Statewide Outreach Program Internship – Saratoga**
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- **Invasive Species Statewide Outreach Program Internship – Plantations**
- **IPM Strategies for Insect and Mites in Grapes and Hops in the Lake Erie Region**
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ARCHIVES

- **September 2015**
- **August 2015**

July 2015

- **June 2015**
- **May 2015**

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