

## The Development of Rule Governed Pro-Social Behavior in Young Children

The purpose of this study is to examine the process by which young children develop rule-governed behavior. We are specifically applying the procedures to helping behavior.

### **Participants:**

We hope to recruit 4-6 participants initially ages 3-5 years.

### **Time commitment:**

Participants will meet with experimenters as part of this protocol and the joined study for approximately 15 minutes per session. We hope to conduct sessions daily to several times per week for approximately 4-6 weeks.

### **Design:**

The experiment will be conducted in a multiple baseline across participants.

### **Measurement**

Observational data will be collected on percentage of relevant opportunities the child offered to help and misplaced help offers (if any). Children will also view short (30s) video clips and describe what they believe the children they observe “should do”.

### **Procedures:**

- *Preference Assessment:* Prior to participation in the study the children will participate in a brief preference assessment to identify preferred activities and potential reinforcers. All activities and reinforcers will be submitted for parental and staff approval before incorporation into the study.
- *Baseline:* While obsessively waiting for another activity (the linked Hierarchies Study) the participants will have the opportunity to play with a preferred toy to fill the time. While they are playing an adult researcher will be working in their area. The adult will intermittently have a mishap (spilled items, misplaced item, etc.) that the child could choose to stop playing and offer to help. Observational data will be collected on percentage of relevant opportunities the child offered to help and misplaced help offers (if any).
- *Non-specific verbal rule:* Children will be told prior to the wait period “Helping is good.” This is a control for priming.
- *Specific rule:* Children will be told prior to the wait period, “Helping is good, like when someone spills or loses something.” This is a control for priming with specification.
- *Multiple exemplar training:* Children will be directly trained across a series of helping exemplars using least-to-most prompting to help the adult in need. The goal of this phase to demonstrate generalized helping to untrained situations and the emergence of a helping rule