

## **Rachel Barr**

**Huda Abu-Suwa, M.S., Lisa Lashley, Psy.D., Charles Golden, Ph.D.**

### **Nova Southeastern University**

Dr. Rachel Barr is a developmental and clinical psychologist, and a leading expert on early learning and memory. She has published and presented on over 200 articles, encyclopedia entries, book chapters, and poster presentations on subjects related to child development and psychology and continues to do research in these fields (Rachel Barr, 2019).

Dr. Barr received her bachelor's degree in psychology and her doctorate degree (PhD) in developmental psychology from the University of Otago in New Zealand. After completing her doctorate program, Dr. Barr also completed her postgraduate diploma in clinical psychology at the University of Otago (Rachel Barr, 2019).

Within her work as a university professor, she has taught various undergraduate and graduate courses related to development and psychology, such as courses on cognitive development, infancy, cognitive neuroscience, and memory (Rachel Barr, 2019). She also conducted research on early child development and memory. Dr. Barr's early research focused on how infants use imitation for learning and memory. She examined how infants imitate the people around them, as well as the objects they see on t.v. Her earliest publications include: "The effect of event structure on imitation in infancy: Practice makes perfect?"; "Developmental changes in deferred imitation by 6- to 24-month-old infants" and "Developmental changes in imitation from television during infancy" (Rachel Barr, 2019).

At Georgetown University, Dr. Barr developed the Georgetown Early Learning Project (Rachel Barr, 2019). The program focuses on conducting research on learning and memory in young children. The program also examines parent-child interactions, the influence of

bilingualism on learning and memory, and how young children learn from the media and others around them (The Early Learning Project, 2019). Through the Early Learning Project, Dr. Barr works on four projects: Media and The Mind, Just Beginning, Memory Flexibility, and The Magnet Study. Past studies include the Preschoolers Learning Project, a study in which Georgetown University teamed up with the Smithsonian Zoo to examine how preschoolers learn from videos and touchscreens (The Early Learning Project, 2019).

The media and The Mind project focuses on children between the ages of three and eight (The Early Learning Project, 2019). The project examines how children's brains function when using different types of media, such as when using videochat or a tablet. The children's brains are examined using functional near infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS). This brain-imaging technique is noninvasive and works by shining a light on a child's head and uses the reflection to measure brain functioning (The Early Learning Project, 2019). The Just Beginning Project is an intervention aimed for children between the ages of six-months-old and 36-months-old. The intervention involves parent training and instructional sessions to increase communication and socio-emotional improvement (The Early Learning Project, 2019). The project is designed for incarcerated teen and young adult parents. The Memory Flexibility project examines the effects of bilingualism on children ages 6-months-old and two-years-old. The study explores differences in cognitive functioning between children who are bilingual and monolingual, and the influence of bilingualism on cognitive development (The Early Learning Project, 2019). The Magnet Study focuses on children between the ages of 18-months-old and 42-months-old. The study examines the learning process of infants as they use technology. A magnetic puzzle board is utilized to study differences in infant learning from using a 2-D video or touchscreen demonstration of

completing the puzzle and using a live 3-D demonstration of completing the puzzle (The Early Learning Project, 2019).

In addition to the Early Learning Project, Dr. Barr is also involved in a number of projects outside of Georgetown University. She is a reviewer for a number of developmental psychology journals, including the Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, Infant Behavior and Development, Developmental Psychobiology, Developmental Psychology, Developmental Science, Current Directions in Psychology, Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Research (Rachel Barr, 2019). Dr. Barr is involved in the ZERO TO THREE Leader's Development Initiative, a fellowship program for those who are interested in working with infants and toddlers. She is also involved with Sesame Beginnings, a series of books, videos, and other products developed based off the show Sesame Street. Sesame Beginnings is designed for infants and children, as well as their parents, to increase family interactivity, and the advisory board is made up of various child, development, and media experts. Dr. Barr has published a number of articles related to her involvement in Sesame Beginnings, such as "The Baby Elmo Program: Improving Teen Parent-Child Interactions Within Juvenile Justice Facilities" and "Developing an Effective Intervention for Incarcerated Teen Fathers: The Baby Elmo Program" (Rachel Barr, 2019).

### **Further Readings:**

Barr, R., Brito, N., Zocca, J., Reina, S., Rodriguez, J., & Shauffer, C. (2011). The baby elmo program: Improving teen father-child interactions within juvenile justice facilities. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*(9), 1555-1562.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxylocal.library.nova.edu/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.03.020>

Rachel Barr. (2019). Georgetown360. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from

<https://gufaculty360.georgetown.edu/s/contact/00336000014ReeCAAS/rachel-barr>

*The Early Learning Project* (2019). Georgetown University. Retrieved March 20, 2018.

<https://elp.georgetown.edu/>

Zack, E., Gerhardstein, P., Meltzoff, A. N., & Barr, R. (2013). 15-month-olds' transfer of

learning between touch screen and real-world displays: Language cues and cognitive

loads. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 54(1), 20-25.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxylocal.library.nova.edu/10.1111/sjop.12001>