

Siblings Teaching Siblings

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Research demonstrates that young children teach one another, showing individual differences in the amount of teaching they do and the strategies they use. There is a special teacher-learner relationship among siblings, in particular. Younger children are more likely to solicit teaching from their older siblings as opposed to older peers. Similarly, older siblings are more likely to provide explanations and feedback than are older peers. This is not surprising, given siblings' high levels of intimacy and familiarity.

We developed a measure to capture teaching between siblings when the youngest child was age 3 and their older sibling between 4-8 years old. Sibling pairs were videotaped doing a cooperative building task and teaching behaviours were subsequently coded. We also administered theory of mind (understanding others' beliefs), language and cooperation tests.

Which children make better teachers during sibling interaction? We found that both siblings teach one another, although the older does more than the younger. Children who were able to teach showed more advanced theory of mind skills, better language and were better at cooperating on a challenging task with an adult stranger (see Table 1).



Table 1: Social-cognitive correlates of teaching

Language	.29**
Theory of Mind	.39**
Cooperation	.39**

Thus we see the ability to teach in children as young as three years old and this ability is related to theory of mind and language development.

This research also involved the development of a new measure of sibling teaching based on 'thin-slice' methodology (i.e. quick, impressionistic judgments of observed behavior). This efficient, cost-effective measure was valid and reliable, supporting its use in practical and research settings.



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