



"What's Mine Is Mine and What's Yours Is...": Development of Sharing in Toddlers

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BACKGROUND

- Toddlers are renowned for their reluctance to share
- Yet under some conditions they do share
 - 1-year-olds share with parents in lab settings (Rheingold et al., 1976)
 - 2-year-olds share more than 1-year-olds, esp. when duplicate toys are available (Hay et al., 1991)
- They also begin to understand others' desires in this period
 - 18-month-olds give an adult her preferred food upon request (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997).
- Over the second year toddlers acquire the requisite social understanding for sharing, but particular circumstances may be needed to reveal their motivation to share

Research Questions

- Will toddlers choose to share when there are no costs to themselves?
- Will they make selfish choices, choosing to deprive the other?
- Are there age differences in the circumstances under which toddlers share?
- Do younger children need more explicit information about the other person's desire?

PARTICIPANTS

- 18-month olds ($N = 11$)
- 24-month olds ($N = 9$)

PROCEDURE

The "SNACK MACHINE"

- Child-sized table with two ends: donor's end and recipient's end
- 2 pairs of moving trays activated by pulling handle
- When child pulls a handle, one tray moves toward the child and the other tray toward the recipient
- Trays loaded with small crackers or raisins
 - In both child trays
 - In one recipient tray
- No cost for sharing (child gets food for either choice)



Adapted from Silk et al. (2005) (study of sharing in chimpanzees)

TRAINING (min 8 trials), in which child

- learns how trays move & how to get snack
- learns that snack is also delivered to other end
- learns that recipient gets snack
- serves as recipient also
 - Side preferences eliminated if necessary

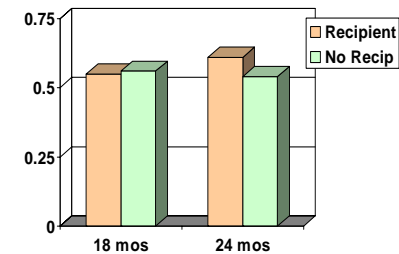
TEST TRIALS (12 trials)

- Child chooses which handle to pull
 - One handle delivers snack to self only
 - The other handle delivers snack to self *and* recipient
 - Sides counterbalanced
- First block (4 trials): Recipient is silent
- Second block (4 trials): Recipient vocalizes desire for snack ("I like goldfish; I want a goldfish")
- Third block (4 trials): No recipient

RESULTS

Did toddlers consider the recipient when choosing which handle to pull?

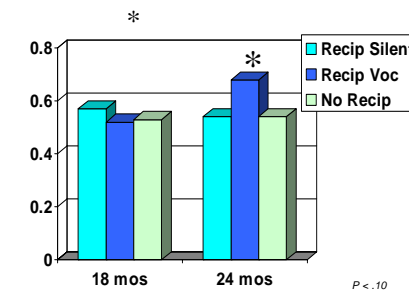
Recipient vs. No Recipient



Proportion of Trials Child Pulled "Sharing" Handle

Did recipient's behavior affect toddlers' decision to share?

Silent Recipient vs. Vocal Recipient



Proportion of Trials Child Pulled "Sharing" Handle

CONCLUSIONS

- Both younger and older children chose the handle randomly when there was no recipient
 - As expected since the child received a snack regardless of which handle was pulled
- Both younger and older children also chose randomly when the recipient was present but silent
- Older children were more likely to share when the recipient vocalized her desire for a snack than when there was no recipient; younger children continued to choose randomly even when the recipient vocalized her desire
- Thus, *24-month-olds, but not 18-month-olds, shared when the recipient made her desires explicit*
- What might account for this pattern?
 - ❖ Immature *social understanding*
18-month-olds don't understand the recipient's desire, while 24-month-olds understand only when it is made explicit
 - ❖ Immature *motivation to share*
18-month-olds are not concerned about the recipient's desire, while 24-month-olds care only when asked

References

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