



## Teaching, caring, and altruistic behaviors in toddlers



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### ABSTRACT

Peer-directed behaviors of toddlers were longitudinally recorded in a naturalistic preschool setting. An observer (O, the first author) recorded children's behaviors during play sessions with an IC recorder. One-year-old children ( $N = 13$ ) and children under the age of 12 months ( $N = 8$ ) were observed for 15 min, 6 times in a year. Their teaching, caring, and altruistic behaviors were analyzed in detail. Results indicated that peer-directed behaviors of one-year-olds increased dramatically. It is concluded that toddlers are sophisticated social beings.

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### 1. Introduction

The origins of teaching in humans have received little attention, in comparison to the heated debates on teaching in non-human animals (Thornton & McAuliffe, 2006; Thornton & Raihani, 2008). Kawakami (2014) presented observational data on teaching in toddlers and classified such teaching into five categories: explaining, declarative, commanding, playing, and altruistic. New data on teaching in toddlers will be presented in this research.

About 40 years ago, Lewis and Rosenblum (1974) edited the book titled "The effect of the infant on its caregiver." The perspective taken by this book reflects new viewpoints in developmental psychology at time on competences of infants. Since then, there has been little concern about the competence of toddlers as caregivers, rather than as care-receivers. In this research, we found evidence of caring behaviors in toddlers directed at their peers.

Contrary to educating and caring behaviors, prosocial behaviors (including altruistic behaviors), have been investigated in a number of studies. The methods adapted by almost all such studies have been experimental (cf. Brownell & Carriger, 1990; Brownell, Ramani, & Zerwas, 2006; Brownell, Svetlova, & Nichols, 2009; Dunfield, Kuhlmeier, O'Connell, & Kelley, 2011; Spinrad & Stifter, 2006; Svetlova, Nichols, & Brownell, 2010; Warneken & Tomasello, 2007). In experimental investigations, altruistic behaviors were defined prior to the studies. Toddlers show us many kinds of altruistic behaviors in ordinary situations. In this research, we will present such behaviors.

Lewis, Young, Brooks, and Michalson (1975) observed toddlers' peer-directed behaviors in semi-experimental conditions. The observational indexes were affective behaviors, such as touch, proximity, look, and smile, as well as incorporating toys such as offer toy, take toy, hit, and share. Some of these indexes are similar to ours. In our study, the results of analysis of natural observations of toddlers' educating, caring, and altruistic behaviors will be presented. These behaviors will shed light on toddlers' new competence as social beings.

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## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

One-year-olds ( $N = 13$ , 6 girls and 7 boys, at the beginning of the first session,  $M_{age} = 680.69$  days,  $SD = 82.11$ ), and children under the age of 12 months ( $N = 8$ , 4 girls and 4 boys,  $M_{age} = 275.88$  days,  $SD = 77.21$ ) were observed longitudinally. They were observed in their natural school setting.

### 2.2. Materials

The observer (O, the first author), a middle-aged male, recorded the children's behavior directed at a peer, or peers using a Sony ICD-SX1000 recorder concealed in his chest pocket.

### 2.3. Observational indexes

Through prior experience in the school (Kawakami, 2014), O determined potential categories for coding person-directed behaviors. The objective was to record toddlers' behaviors directed at a peer, or peers (P, or Ps). The observational indexes were (1) Touching (TO): a child touches P with hand, (2) Giving (GI): a child gives P something, (3) Pointing (P): a child points out something to P using a finger, (4) Quarrel (QU): a child quarrels with P, (5) Laughing (LA): a child laughs at, or with P (s), (6) Verbalization (VE): a child says something to P (s), (7) Teaching (TE): a child teaches, or scolds P, (8) Collaborating (CO): a child collaborates with P (s), and (9) Caring (CA): a child cares for P, or a child performs an altruistic behavior for P. The precise definition of altruistic behavior will be presented in the results section. Verbalization (VE) could be observed simultaneously with other indexes. Teaching (TE) contained VE, but it was not counted in the VE category.

### 2.4. Procedure

The observer attended free play sessions once a week at a preschool in Tokyo, Japan. O attended the sessions for 8–9 weeks in 3 blocks: in early summer, fall and winter. The early summer sessions will be called the first session, the fall sessions, the second session, and winter sessions, the third session. The first and second sessions were separated by 11 weeks and second and third sessions by 6 weeks. O played with the children from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., during each session and observed each target toddler in succession for 15 min ( $M = 14.99$ ,  $SD = 2.28$ ), with each child being observed twice in each block. One-year-olds were in a room with three, or four preschool teachers, and zero-year-olds were in a different room with four, or five preschool teachers. Therefore, we could not directly compare the data of the two groups.

To ensure reliability, a one-hour session was recorded by using a digital video camera. The first and the second authors independently checked the video by using the observational indexes. This indicated that the reliability of observations between the observers was 95.65%. The data were analyzed by the first author.

This research was conducted with the fully informed permission from the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, in the University of the Sacred Heart.

## 3. Results

Each child was observed for 30 min in three blocks, such that each child was observed for 1.5 h during all the sessions. The total observation time was 31.5 h ( $1.5 \times 21$  children). The total number of toddlers was small, and therefore, detailed gender differences of the children would not be reported in detail.

### 3.1. Developmental changes

Fig. 1 shows the total numbers of all observational indexes across the observations (straight line: one-year-olds, dashed line: children under age 12 months). The results for the one-year-old group show dramatic developmental changes, however, results for the zero-year-old group are not as clear. The results from the second to the third session suggest that developmental changes might be observed in under 12 months group, if the observations were to continue. The developmental changes in each observational index were classified into three groups. (1) Increased (PO, LA, VE, TE, CO, and CA). Fig. 2 shows the results of VE. (2) Decreased (QU). See Fig. 3, one-year-olds show a decreased with blocks. (3) Mixed (TO and GI). See Fig. 4 for results of TO. The most important index for toddlers was VE.

### 3.2. Teaching

In the TE (teaching) indexes, 13 behaviors were accurately classified as 'teaching'. Most common teaching behaviors were "you can sit here." Once, a 899-day old girl taught a boy how to put on a cape like Superman. The earliest age at which TE was observed in a 801-day old girl. TE was only recorded in the one-year-old group.

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