

How do we provide children  
with the skill for  
collaboration?

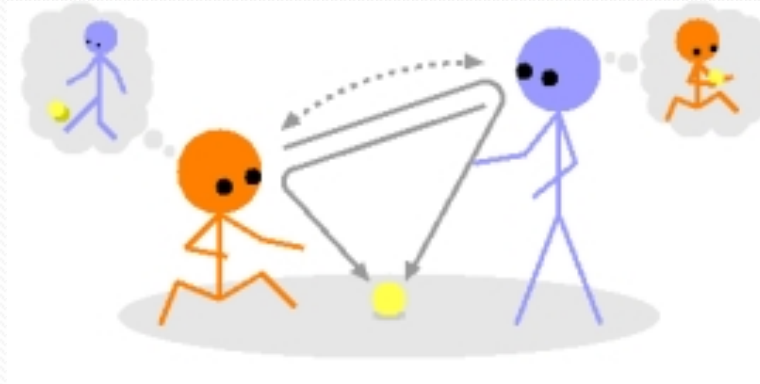
# Collaboration: building the space between minds (social understanding)



Arguably the basis of creativity and culture



# Goal-corrected partnership



Social understanding: cognitive structures necessary to represent goals of self and other

Cognitive maturation, vocabulary, language

Motivation towards others: Affectively motivated interest in Others

The way that others treat you in relationships.



Care-giving influences in the first 3  
years that make a difference



KIDS, FAMILIES  
& PLACES  

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STUDY

Individuals in Context

Longitudinal, bio-social  
study of early  
development

500 families followed  
from birth of laterborn  
child: + sib

Social and biological  
measures

Contexts: families,  
neighbourhoods,  
childcare/school

# Collaborators and Thanks

Thanks to the families who give their time so generously



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- Childcare settings

# Early childhood components that allow for collaboration

Empathy



cooperation



Child's understanding of self




Attention to the same thing as another person



Receptive language: PPVT



TOM: Knowing that others can have thoughts and feelings  
Different from one's own



These aspects of social understanding both at 18 and 36 months are explained by caregiving 18 months earlier.

Care-giving that focuses on the Mind

Assessed in mothers but the same principles apply to early childhood educators and teachers



# Caregiving that focuses on Mind

## Sensitivity

- The mothers' responsiveness to the signals of the baby.  
Attunement
- Measured by 15 mins play with baby at 2 and 18 months
- 2 mth sensitivity explains a composite of social cognition at 18 months.
- 18 month sensitivity explains receptive vocabulary and reading at age 3.
- Motivation towards others

## Reflective functioning

- The mothers' capacity to *reflect* on her experience. Think about the self and other.
- Interview Question: How has your own childhood influenced the way in which you parent your own children?
- Can talk about past and present
- Explains child language, theory of mind, reading 18 months later

## Scaffolding

- How mother explains to child to help them with a task that is above their level
- Clarity of directions, supporting challenge, reminders about goals of task, responsiveness to verbal and non-verbal cues of misunderstanding
- Explains child's language, and theory of mind 18 months later

## Mindmindedness

- How much mother talks about the child in terms of internal states versus physical attributes
- Mother asked to describe child for 5 mins. Taped and transcribed.
- Mental /total attributes
- Explains theory of mind 18 months later

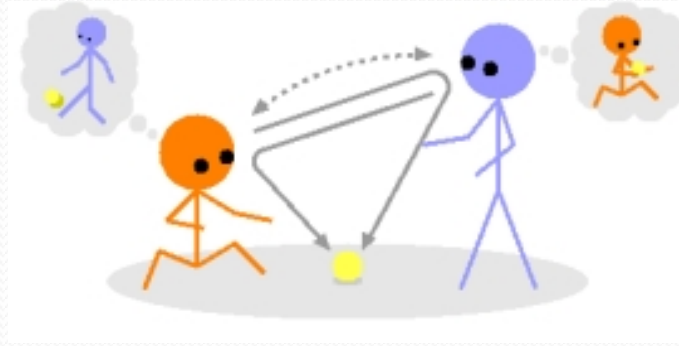
# Fairness

Research shows us that people are very sensitive to issues of fairness and who gets what.



**Explanation is critical**

# Goal-corrected partnership



Caregiver who thinks about her own mind and the mind of the other including their thoughts, feelings and intentions

Encourages the development in the child of the mental architecture and motivation for the social understanding that supports collaboration

# Teacher 'mind talk' in childcare settings

3401, 20-second snapshots involving 393 teachers in 103 classrooms

Mental-state talk 22%

Activity-relevant questions 12%,

Perspective-taking talk in 3%.

Caregiver sensitivity predicted engagement in all three types of language.

Caregiver punitive interaction also predicted caregivers' talk about others' perspectives.

# Teaching for the mind

**FROM 3 TO 3™** is an award winning evidence-based program to improve children's language and literacy from age 3 to grade 3. Read about it on the Atkinson Website: Thelander & Comay

Now in many schools in Toronto

Higher vocabulary scores, improved social reasoning essential for reading comprehension, increased attention and working memory, better reading