Children Consider Learners’ Costs and Rewards When Deciding What to Teach

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Methods & Results

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOY</th>
<th>HARDER?</th>
<th>COOLER?</th>
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<td>Play Unequal</td>
<td>More</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach Unequal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach Equal</td>
<td>Less</td>
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Manipulation Check

Teach and Play Explanations

- Children appealed to rewards when deciding with what to play.
- Children appealed to costs when deciding what to teach (even when they chose to teach the easier toy).
- When costs were matched, children appealed to rewards.

Main Findings & Conclusions

- Children spontaneously considered the learner’s expected costs and rewards to prioritize the toy with a higher utility for the learner.
  - When the boring toy was hard to learn, they overrode their preference for the cooler toy to teach the more boring toy.
  - They appropriately appealed to costs/values in their explanations.
- Future Directions:
  - What happens when the cost of learning varies but rewards are matched?
  - What happens when the cost of teaching varies across toys?
  - Do children consider long-term benefits (e.g., by prioritizing information that is broadly generalizable)?
  - How does the social context impact what & how we communicate?

Participants

76 5-7 year-olds

- Mean = 6.41 yrs, Range = 4.78 to 8.01 yrs
- Play Unequal Costs, Unequal Rewards: n = 25 (Mean(SD) = 6.250; 8.20 yrs)
- Teach Unequal Costs, Unequal Rewards: n = 25 (Mean(SD) = 6.53(1.12) yrs)
- Teach Equal Costs, Unequal Rewards: n = 26 (Mean(SD) = 6.46(1.10) yrs)

References:
- Contact: sbridgers@stanford.edu

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