

Control and Aggression in Siblings' Construction of Shared Meanings in Pretend Play

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Introduction

- **Sibling Relationship**

- Siblings play a mutually crucial role in helping each other develop socially and cognitively (Carpendale & Lewis, 2006)
- Siblings share a long co-constructed history and have an intensely affective relationship quality (Dunn, 2002)

- **Intersubjectivity in Pretend Play**

- Development of a shared understanding of the plot, roles, and props between participants based on mutual communication and agreement on roles (Howe et al., 2005)
- Necessary for successful pretend play or else the play breaks down (Farver, 1992; Göncü, 1993)

Introduction

- **Conflict in Pretend Play**
 - Mutually opposed verbal or physical exchanges between at least two partners (Howe et al., 2002)
 - Play partners' use of *control*, *physical* and *verbal aggression* can occur as a result of their disagreement and therefore disrupt play (Howe et al., 2002)
- **Negative Non-Maintenance Behaviours**
 - Actions and behaviours that contribute to the disruption of pretend play
 - Examples include controlling partner's actions and use of hitting and teasing

The Present Study

- **Purpose**

- To examine siblings' use and exertion of control and aggression during pretend play along with birth order associations

- **Research Questions**

- Are negative non-maintenance behaviours associated with birth order?
- What forms of negative non-maintenance behaviours are used more frequently during pretend play?

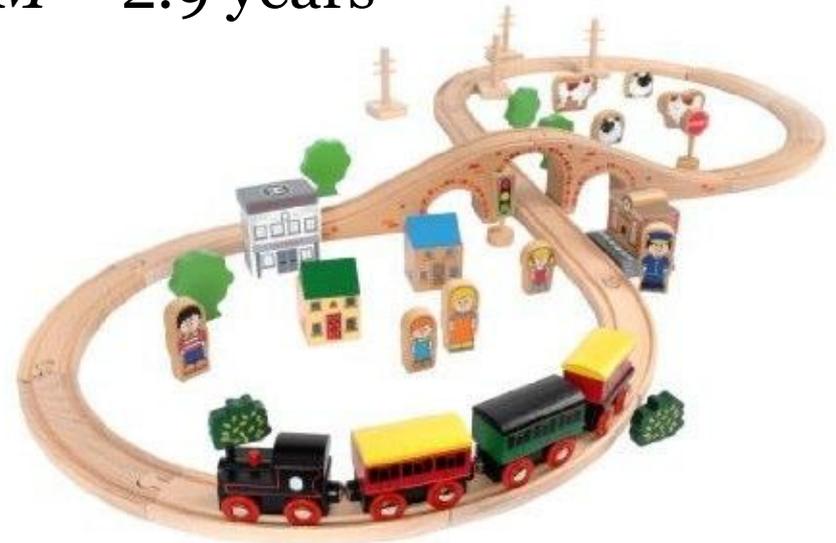
Method: Participants

- **Sibling Dyads**

- 65 Target children; $M = 4.7$ years (one child per dyad)
 - 37 First-born siblings; $M = 6.25$ years
 - 28 Second-born siblings; $M = 2.9$ years

- **Gender**

- 18 male-male dyads
- 17 male-female dyads
- 16 female-female dyads
- 14 female-male dyads



Method: Procedure

- **Materials**
 - Siblings played with either a wooden train, farm, or village play set to encourage pretend play
- **Videotaped Play Sessions at Home**
 - Sessions were transcribed and parsed into subject/verb phrases
 - Sessions lasted between 12 and 18 minutes



Coding

Controlling and Directives

Controlling sibling by ordering or directing their actions

Negative Behaviours

Interfering in the play through derogation or overt aggression

Coding: Examples

Controlling/
Giving
Directives

O: No, the animals go in the barn. They're sleeping.

O: Ah, now you wrecked my barn and it's all your fault.
(older pushes younger over)

Negative
Behaviours



Data Organization

- **Proportional Scores**

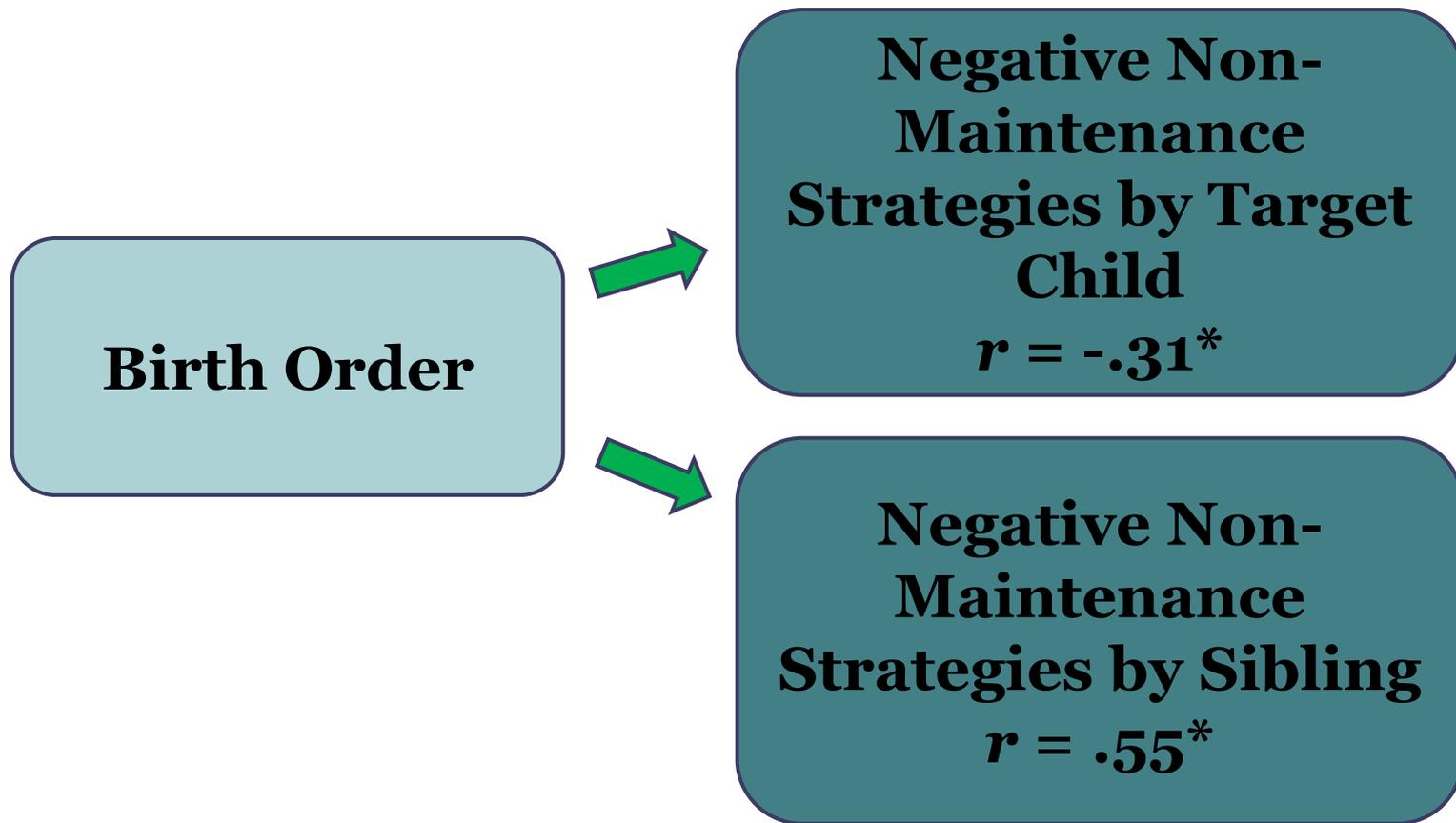
- Frequency of negative non-maintenance behaviours divided by the total number of conversational turns

- **Coding Scheme**

- *Controlling/directives* and *negative behaviour* codes were a subset of a larger coding scheme (Howe et al., 2005) that was not included in this analysis



Results: Correlations



* $p < .05$

Results: One-Way ANOVAs

Target Children's Negative Non-Maintenance Strategies X Birth Order

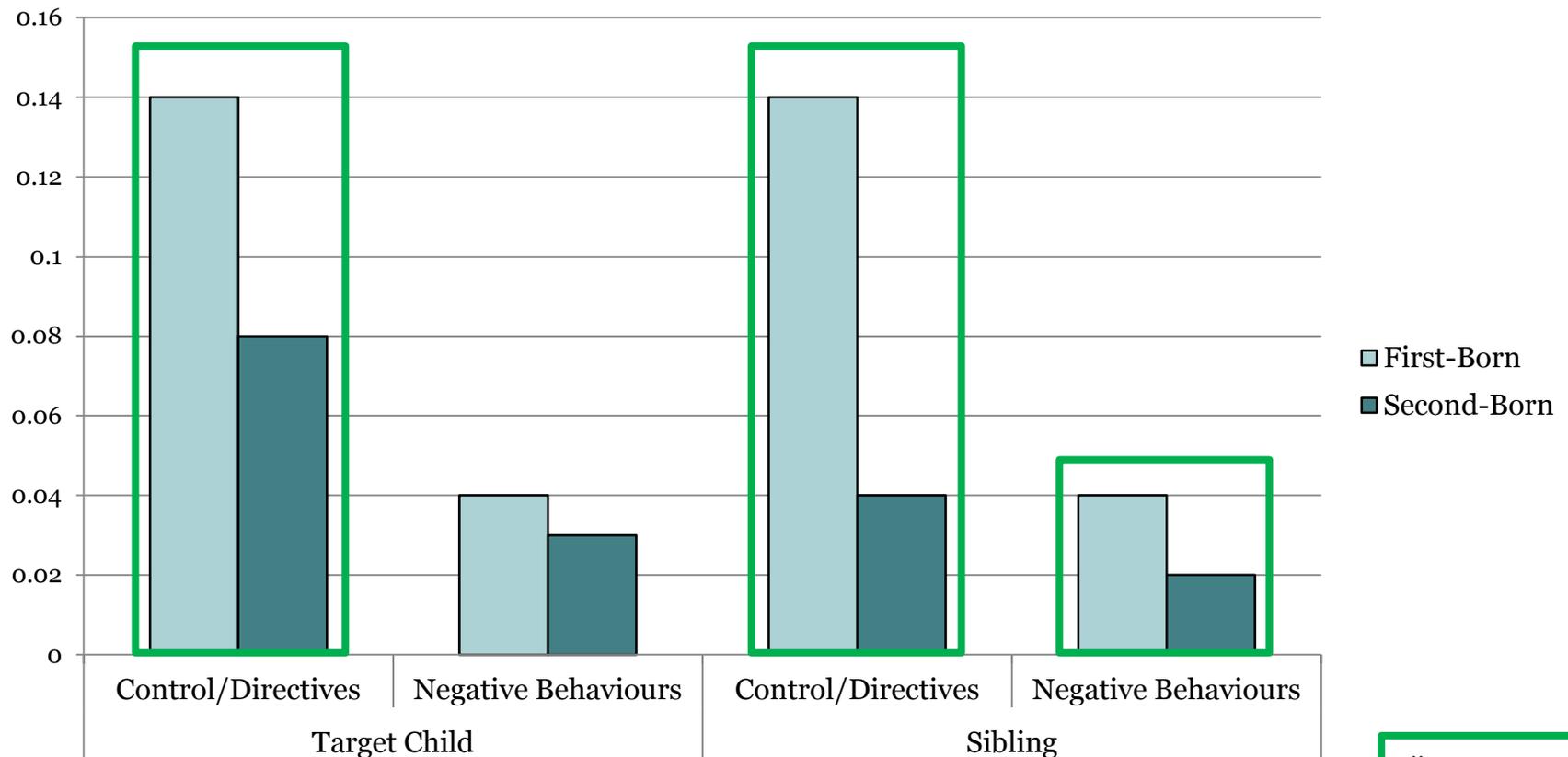
Strategy	<i>F</i> (1, 63)
Negative Behaviours	5.25*
Controlling/Giving Directives	.47

Siblings' Negative Non-Maintenance Strategies X Birth Order

Strategy	<i>F</i> (1, 63)
Negative Behaviours	29.63*
Controlling/Giving Directives	4.43*

* $p < .05$

Results: Pairwise Comparisons



* $p < .05$

Discussion

- Older siblings tend to have **more knowledge and experiences** than their younger siblings and take on a **more dominant role** (Dunn, 2002; Howe et al., 2002)
- Older siblings and first-born target children were more likely to use **control and directives** towards their younger sibling than negative behaviours
 - Perhaps negative behaviours such as hitting and pushing are against household rules, therefore older siblings resorted to using directives and control

Conclusions

- This study highlights the **role of the older sibling** not only in the context of helping to construct a shared understanding with their sibling, but also in their **ability to dominate, disrupt, and exert control** in play
- Through the use of negative behaviours and control, **sibling communication will cease** and the probability of successfully engaging in pretend play and creating shared meanings will likely decrease