

A Novel Assessment of Joint Attention and Mental State Attribution

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Outline

- Social Communication Framework
- Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- Proposed assessment task

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Social Communication

- Why do we communicate with others?
- What components are necessary for successful communication in humans?

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The “why” question

- We communicate for three reasons (Tomasello, 2008):
 1. To request
 2. To inform someone of something that might be of use to them
 3. To share emotions
- To connect, cooperate, and collaborate with others



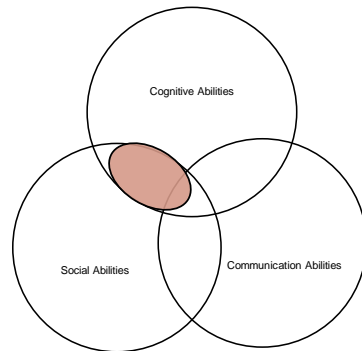
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The “what” question

- Necessary components include:
 - Social abilities
 - Social motivation: help & share
 - Cognitive abilities
 - Create common ground
 - Communication abilities
 - Competence in verbal and/or nonverbal domains

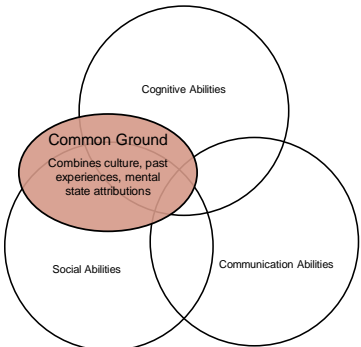


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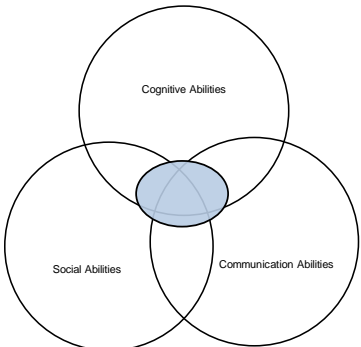
Social Communication Framework

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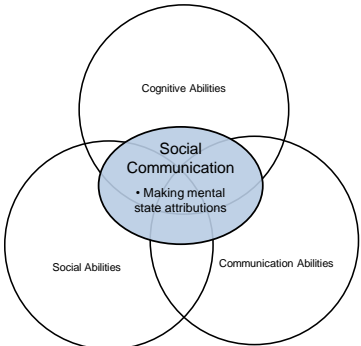
Social Communication Framework

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Social Communication Framework

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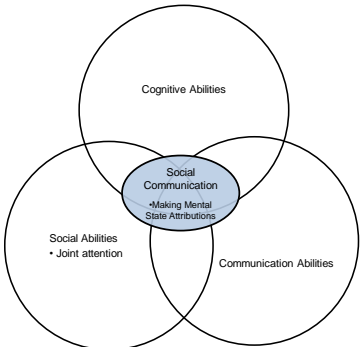
Social Communication Framework

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Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Significant differences in 3 areas:
 - Communication skills
 - Social skills
 - Repetitive/restrictive interests
- Specific deficits in:
 - Joint attention
 - Making attributions about others' mental states

(Lord & Bishop, 2010)



Social Communication Framework

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Proposed assessment task

- “Looking and Thinking” game
 - Joint attention:
 - Look back-and-forth between child & object
 - Ask “What did I look at?” & child responds
 - Mental state attribution:
 - Ask to guess, “What am I thinking about?” & child responds

(Tomasello, 2008; Winner, 2007)

Next steps...

- Process of completing a Human Subjects application
- Perform task with children who are developing social communication typically
 - Determine whether their performance demonstrates cooperation & connectedness in predicted ways
 - Hone procedures

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Future Directions

- Use this assessment to evaluate skills in children with ASD
- Use assessment to identify treatment goals
- Design treatments/evaluate existing treatments to address these skills

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Thank you LEND!

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- Tomasello, M. (2008). Origins of human communication.
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