

Young children's 'theory of mind' linked to subsequent metacognitive development in adolescence

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A new study in the journal *Mind, Brain, and Education* detects a systematic link between children's "theory of mind" as assessed in kindergarten and their metacognitive knowledge in elementary school.

Metacognition refers to the awareness of one's knowledge in different areas. The more comprehensive and accurate this metacognitive knowledge, the better one is able to reflect about his or her own actions and behaviors.

"Theory of Mind" (ToM) deals with very young children's understanding of mental life and the ability to estimate mental states. A new study in the journal *Mind, Brain, and Education* detects a systematic link between children's "theory of mind" as assessed in kindergarten and their metacognitive knowledge in elementary school.

Wolfgang Schneider, Ph.D., of the University of Wurzburg examined 174 children who were either three or four years of age at the beginning of the study in order to investigate the relationship between early ToM and subsequent metacognitive development. Children were tested at four measurement points, separated by a testing interval of approximately half a year.

Language abilities assessed at the ages of three or four years made significant contributions to the prediction of metamemory scores at the

age of five. ToM facilitated the acquisition of metacognitive knowledge. Early ToM competencies also affected the acquisition of metacognitive vocabulary, which in turn had an impact on developmental changes in metacognitive knowledge.

ToM development is characterized by a growing insight into inferential and interpretive mental processes. Declarative metacognitive knowledge is usually scarce in young elementary children but increases considerably over the school years, predicting academic performance.

Source: Wiley

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