When one sibling has autism: The relative effects of sibling support and training on sibling relationship

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Proposal Summary: Through SIBS Club, a Queens College based community service with student experiential learning, I am researching the best ways to support sibling relationships when one sibling has autism. Typical siblings of children with autism may show maladjustment and their relationship is often strained. Two approaches to intervention are support groups and sibling training (Shivers & Plavnick, 2015; Tudor & Lerner, 2015). Limited investigation of and weak evidence supports the effects of support groups (in which children discuss their feelings, learn coping strategies, and develop a peer network) on typical sibling adjustment. Extensive evidence supports the effects of sibling training on typical siblings learning to teach and their siblings with autism learning skills (e.g., Ferraioli & Harris, 2011; Miller & Cantwell, 1976). Each of these approaches may address different needs for the typically developing sibling. It is not clear from the literature the benefit to the lifelong sibling relationship. My research focuses not only on comparing the relative effects of these intervention approaches, but also examining a range of outcomes including those for the typically developing siblings, the siblings with autism, and their relationships. This research has received grant support from PSCCUNY and the Organization for Autism Research.

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