

Dissertation Abstract

Hicks, C. (2014). Children's Beliefs about the Disclosure of Performance Information in the Classroom

This dissertation examines young children's beliefs and predictions about the disclosure of performance information in the classroom. Seven experiments present new evidence about children's reasoning about the disclosure, and contribute to our understanding of children's reasoning about classroom behaviors. Using story scenarios, these experiments examined young children's beliefs about factors impacting this behavior.

Chapter 1 found that while children at all ages ($N = 248$, 3-6 years) predicted more disclosure of success than failure, there was an age-related decrease in children's predictions of disclosure for both failed and successful performance. This effect was replicated in two experiments, and children were found to predict less disclosure in a nonsupportive peer environment.

Chapter 2 investigated 3-11-year-old children's ($N = 238$) expectations of teasing, theory of mind, information-seeking and disclosure of another's performance information. No age-related changes were found for expectations of teasing or seeking information and no relationship was found between disclosure and theory of mind, but children's predictions of disclosing another's performance decreased significantly with age. Children at all ages were also found to predict high levels of information seeking about peer performance. Chapter 3 found that across all age groups ($N = 139$, 3-6 years) young children expected characters to both disclose failure to and ask for help from a high-achieving peer, while they showed no preference for the disclosure of success.

Chapter 4 investigated Chinese children's ($N = 224$) beliefs about performance disclosure and found that older Chinese students (9-11 years) were more likely than younger Chinese students (6-7 years) to reveal failure, but not success. Chinese students predicted less disclosure to a nonsupportive versus a supportive peer. In a second experiment with 3-11-year-olds, with age Chinese students' predicted less disclosure of another's performance, more information seeking for the successful character, and less help-giving from the failed character.

This research provides new evidence for age-related changes in young children's reasoning about performance disclosure and cross-cultural differences in these beliefs, and suggests that even very young children are sensitive to different factors which can impact this disclosure, such as expecting a nonsupportive response. This research points to the preschool years as a crucial developmental time for beliefs about disclosure.