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The Influence of Children's Affective Ties on the Goal Clarification Step of Social Information Processing

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THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S AFFECTIVE TIES ON THE GOAL
CLARIFICATION STEP OF SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements of the Degree
Specialist in Education

By
Amanda C. Thorn

May 2013

THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S AFFECTIVE TIES ON THE GOAL
CLARIFICATION STEP OF SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING

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I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends who have been a great support throughout this process, our new baby currently on the way, and to Dr. Elizabeth Lemerise for her endless support, encouragement, and help.

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Amanda C. Thorn

May 2013

54 pages

Directed by: Elizabeth Lemerise, Carl Myers, and Andrew Mienaltowski

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Previous studies have shown that children's social goals are influenced by emotion and that emotions can be manipulated using relationships. The present study combines these previous findings by examining the effect of children's relationships on social goals. Social goals were examined in second and fifth grade children using hypothetical ambiguous provocation situations in which the relationship between the participant and the provocateur was manipulated by inserting the name of a friend, enemy, or a neutral peer into the story. After each situation, children rated the importance of four different social goals, indicating which of the four would be the most important to accomplish. Results indicated that within each goal type, importance ratings varied depending on the nature of the relationship. Social relational goals were rated as much more important when the provocateur was a friend versus an enemy or neutral peer. Instrumental goals, however, were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer, and avoidant and revenge goals were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy. Goal hierarchy was also found to vary across relationships; social relational goals were the most important when the provocateur was a friend, yet instrumental goals became equally important when the provocateur was a neutral peer and were rated as most important when the provocateur was an enemy.

Introduction

Given data suggesting a link between childhood social adjustment and problems in adulthood (Crick & Dodge, 1994), an abundance of research has focused on how children reason about various social situations and how they react to different types of problematic situations. Comprehension of children's reasoning during social situations is essential when investigating the difficulties or problems that lead to maladjustment, and may be vital in creating intervention strategies to prevent and/or treat maladjustment. In order to fully understand the thought processes and behaviors of children within various social situations, individual differences need to be examined. Social information processing models of social competence (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000) were developed to explain the differences between individuals as they move through various cognitive and affective processes when encountering a social situation.

Model of Social Information Processing

Throughout the history of psychology, models have been developed to illustrate and help understand the social adjustment and social interactions of children. These models depict the social information-processing mechanisms of children and display the various stages that occur from the time a child is confronted with a social situation to the time at which the child acts or responds to the situation. The social information-processing models provide scholars with information on the various cognitive processes that occur during a social interaction, and lend a certain amount of structure to the complex process.

Many of the previous models have been linear in nature, suggesting that as a child interacts with a peer, he/she goes through a series of mental processes that occur one after another in a certain pattern (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In the revised model proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994, see Figure 1.1), it is suggested that rather than a series of steps with a linear relation, children respond to social situations with a variety of mental processes that “actually occur in simultaneous parallel paths” (Crick & Dodge, 1994, p. 77). Crick and Dodge’s revised model of social information-processing is highly regarded and used frequently due to its recognition of the non-linear relationship between various stages of processing during a social interaction. This model of social information-processing is cyclical in nature and contains feedback loops that represent the parallel paths and simultaneous actions of certain processes.

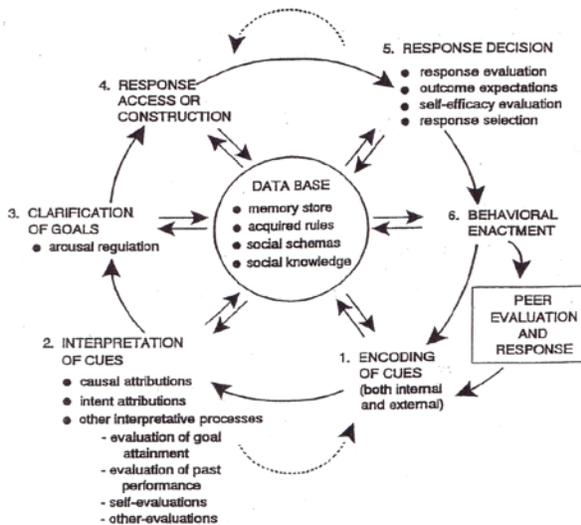


Figure 1. Social Information Processing Model as proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994).

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In this model it is proposed that children enter into a social situation with a database containing knowledge based on past encounters, social rules, and social schemas. This database is comprised of latent mental structures which include memories of past interactions, and the child's social knowledge. This knowledge serves as an example or model upon which the child can base future interactions, and every new interaction is stored in the child's database of general knowledge and experience so it will, in turn, influence future interactions. According to Crick and Dodge (1994), this database of information changes with age and experience. As the child ages, his/her experience in social situations increases, and the child acquires new and more adept ways of handling future situations. This database of information affects every aspect of social information-processing and is heavily relied upon as children pass through a series of six steps during the social situation: encoding of cues, interpretation of cues, clarification of goals, response access or construction, response decision, and behavioral enactment (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

According to Crick and Dodge (1994), steps one and two of the social information-processing model, encoding and interpreting of cues, are often interrelated and occur at a corresponding time. During these first two steps the child observes and assesses the situation in order to form a mental representation of what he/she is facing. Both external and internal cues are used to evaluate the situation; the child gets immediate social cues from the behaviors of others and the context of the situation, yet the child also uses previous schemata from his/her database to help interpret these cues. The database of past experiences helps the child to comprehend the present situation. Although these cognitive schemata are efficient, problems arise when the child relies so

heavily on previous experience that he/she neglects the social cues of the current context and may respond inappropriately (Crick & Dodge, 1994). At this stage of the process, the child not only evaluates contextual cues from the situation, they also evaluate themselves, others, and their past performance (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

While interpreting the cues, children also make attributions of causality and intent (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Children use the social cues to infer the motives behind another's behavior; this attribution of causality and intent greatly influences the child's decisions in the later steps of the social information process. For example, if a child is tripped by a peer, the child's perception of whether or not their peer meant to trip him/her would greatly affect the child's goals and response to the situation (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

According to Crick and Dodge (1994), the third step in social information-processing is clarification of goals. "A goal is a state of affairs that will give a person satisfaction or relief when attained" (Chung & Asher, 1996, p. 126). In this step the child determines what he/she wants to accomplish in the given situation; this goal could be external or internal. Each child brings certain tendencies or goal preferences to each situation (as part of the database), yet children also modify or change their goals upon interpretation and evaluation of their current social interaction (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The goal that the child chooses in this step of the process has a major impact on his/her behavior and reaction to the situation; goals provide motivation for action. For example, in a situation where a student takes another student's pencil, the actions of a child with a goal to avoid conflict will be much different than those of a child whose goal is to get the pencil back.

After the child has clarified his/her goals, the next step in the process involves accessing his/her database of memories for possible responses: response access or construction. If the child has no previous experience with this type of situation, new responses are created during this step based on the immediate social cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Studies have shown that the number of responses the child can access or construct is often important; socially rejected and aggressive children access a smaller repertoire of responses (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

In the fifth step of this model, children evaluate the responses that they have previously recalled or constructed and, after evaluation, choose the response they wish to enact. Many aspects of each response are thought to be considered during the evaluation phase. Children consider self-efficacy or how confident they are in their ability to enact each response. The appropriateness or outcome of each response is also mentally evaluated before the child finally chooses which response to enact in a given situation (Crick & Dodge, 1994). According to Crick and Dodge (1994), children often evaluate responses based on learned values or social rules, and when evaluating the outcome of the response, they consider consequences of their actions. After each response has been evaluated, the child chooses to enact the response that was the most positively evaluated (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

After choosing a response, the final step of the social information processing model is to enact or perform that response. After enacting the response, the particular social situation may be concluded, yet the social information processing does not end. The model proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994) is cyclical and proposes that after

behavioral enactment, the entire social situation is stored in the child's database for use when encoding cues (step one) in future social situations.

Goal Clarification

Although this model as a whole can tell us a great deal about the social interactions of children, each step can be examined in great detail. Because the present investigation focuses on the third step in Crick and Dodge's model of social information processing, clarification of goals, research on goal clarification is reviewed here.

Behavioral characteristics. Research indicates that goal clarification is linked strongly associated with behavior. According to Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpaa, and Peets (2005), goals of gaining power or respect are strongly related to aggression whereas goals of relationship maintenance correlate with prosocial behavior. In a study by Lochman, Wayland and White (1993) boys who had been identified by teachers as high-aggressive and low-aggressive were presented with hypothetical situations. The boys then rated each of four goals (avoidance, dominance, revenge, and affiliation) and then reported which one would be their main goal. It was found that aggressive and non-aggressive boys had very different goals; aggressive boys rated dominance and revenge much higher than did non-aggressive boys (Lochman et al., 1993).

In a similar study by Erdley and Asher (1996), fourth and fifth grade students were identified and grouped based on behavior that they reported they would primarily use in a hypothetical, ambiguous situation (aggressive, withdrawn, and problem-solving) and whether or not they consistently attributed hostile intent. Children were then interviewed about the goals that they would choose in three ambiguous social situations. Children were presented with eight different goals: getting back at the protagonist,

working out the problem peacefully, avoiding the protagonist, hurting the person's feelings, protecting the self, taking care of the problem created by the protagonist, maintaining the relationship, and maintaining an assertive reputation. Participants then rated each goal based on the extent to which they would try to accomplish it. Results indicated that children with differing behavioral responses varied in their social goals. Aggressive children, for example, rated goals such as getting back at the protagonist and making the other person feel bad much higher than did children who were considered to be withdrawn or problem-solvers (Erdley & Asher, 1996). This study provides empirical evidence that social goals are strongly related to behavioral responses; individual differences in social goals strongly correlate with differences in children's exhibited behavior (Erdley & Asher, 1996). Lochman et al. (1993) describe this relationship between goals and behaviors by stating, "Behaviors are the result of individual's expectations that the behaviors will lead to valued outcomes or goals" (p. 136).

Social adjustment. Children's social goals are also related to their social adjustment in many aspects of their lives. Various studies reported by Crick and Dodge (1994) have found a correlation between children's social goals and social adjustment. Social adjustment can be defined as, "the degree to which children get along with their peers; the degree to which they engage in adaptive, competent social behavior; and the extent to which they inhibit aversive, incompetent behavior" (Crick & Dodge, 1994, p. 82). According to Crick and Dodge (1994), formulation of goals that enhance relationships have been found to be related to positive social adjustment (i.e. peer popularity and prosocial behavior), whereas the construction of goals that may damage a relationship are linked to social maladjustment (i.e., aggressive behavior). Lochman et al.

(1993) found that dominant goal patterns were related to more aggressive behavior, substance abuse, low self-esteem, peer rejection, less prosocial behavior, and more depression. These studies demonstrate the importance of creating appropriate social goals in order to improve overall social adjustment.

Goals and strategies. Past research has also focused on the relationship between children's social goals and their strategies for resolving conflicts. "The type of goal that a child gives highest priority to is likely to produce a related behavioral strategy" (Kazura & Flanders, 2007, p. 547). A study by Chung and Asher (1996) examined this link between goals and strategies by asking children to state their goals and strategies for each of twelve hypothetical conflict situations. After each vignette, children were given five strategies from which to choose (types of strategies included prosocial, hostile, assertive, passive, and adult-seeking). Then children's goals were assessed by asking the child why he/she would behave that way and allowing him/her to choose from four types of goals: relationship goals, control goals, self-interest goals, and avoidance goals (Chung & Asher, 1996). A positive correlation was found between the selection of relationship goals and prosocial and passive strategies and also between the selection of control goals and hostile strategies. Children who selected avoidance goals were also more likely to choose a more prosocial strategy. Goals can affect strategies both directly, when children pursue a certain goal, and indirectly, affecting children's attention and interpretation of social cues. This study provided evidence of the link between children's goals and their strategies used to solve conflict; children select strategies that are consistent with their goals (Chung & Asher, 1996).

A similar study by Rose and Asher (1999) used 30 hypothetical situations and asked fourth and fifth grade children to rate one of six goals (relationship, moral, tension reduction, instrumental, control, and revenge) and six strategy options (accommodation, compromise, self-interest assertion, verbal aggression, leaving, threat of termination of friendship). Children were then asked to circle the names of their three best friends so that reciprocal friendships could be identified. Rose and Asher's findings were consistent with Chung and Asher (1996) in that children's social goals strongly correlated with strategies. Results also indicated that social goals predicted friendship adjustment, and suggested that goals of revenge may lead to the destruction of friendships (Rose & Asher, 1999).

A later study by Kazura and Flanders (2007) looked at the relationship of goals and strategies in preschool age children. Puppets were used to act out hypothetical situations and children were then asked to use their puppet to finish the ending of the story (to display their conflict strategy). Children were then asked which one of five pictures displaying conflict goals (remain friends, need help, walk away, retaliate, and not upset) best matched their goal in the situation. Results revealed that logical associations between goals and strategies appear in children as young as three (Kazura & Flanders, 2007). Findings were consistent with Chung and Asher (1996) in that friendship goals were positively correlated with prosocial strategies, avoidance goals were positively correlated with adult-seeking strategies, and retaliation goals were positively correlated with hostile strategies (Kazura & Flanders, 2007). These results indicate the importance of children's social goals for their subsequent strategies and behavior.

Influences on children's goals. Although multiple studies have looked at the effects of goals on behavior, some have also examined influences on children's goals. In a study by Salmivalli et al. (2005), children's peer-relational schemas (their views of themselves and their peers) were found to have an impact on children's social goals. Children's perceptions of themselves and others were assessed; then children were asked to rate a series of goals based on how important each goal was to them. The goals presented were a mixture of agentic and communal goals (Salmivalli et al., 2005). Results showed that social goals mediate the effects of self-perception and peer-perception on social behavior. A positive perception of one's self was correlated with agentic (power) goals, and the agentic goals were then correlated with aggressive behavior. A positive peer-perception was correlated with communal goals: goals associated with prosocial behavior (Salmivalli et al., 2005). Although self and peer perception appear to have different influences on children's social goals, when looked at together, the complexity of their influence becomes apparent. For example, a child with a positive perception of both himself/herself and peers would give high ratings to both agentic and communal goals. Salmivalli et al. (2005) concluded that both self-perception and peer-perception combine to influence children's social goals.

Erdley and Asher (1996) concluded that social goals are also related to self-efficacy; children choose a goal that they are certain they can use to successfully ameliorate the situation. For example, aggressive children are more likely to choose a more aggressive goal such as getting back at the protagonist because they feel that they would be better at performing an aggressive behavior than a prosocial action. Results from Peets, Hodges, and Salmivali (2008) indicate gender differences in self-efficacy

beliefs. Girls have lower levels of self-efficacy beliefs for aggressive behavior across relationship contexts, suggesting girls may seek to avoid conflict and preserve relationships (Peets et al., 2008).

Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) suggested that children's social goals can be influenced or changed by obstacles to conflict resolution. In a study of children ages 9-12, each participant was given hypothetical situations, asked what he/she would do in each situation, and then asked to rate each of 11 goals. Participants were asked what they would do if their chosen strategy did not work. They were asked to give a second strategy and rate the different goals once again. Troop-Gordon and Asher found that children make significant changes in their social goals after the failure of a resolution strategy. Results indicated a decrease in the ratings for relationship maintenance goals after facing a resolution obstacle, and goals such as retaliation and instrumental became a much stronger focus for rejected children after a failed strategy (Troop-Gordon & Asher, 2005). These findings suggest that children's social goals may be strongly influenced or changed based on previous obstacles or failures of previous strategies.

Gender has also been examined to discover its effects on social goals. Salmivalli et al. (2005) found that females rate communal goals (those that involve relationship maintenance) much higher than males do. Boys also select more control goals than girls, whereas girls select more avoidance goals than boys (Chung & Asher, 1996). The gender differences in goals may account for some of the behavioral differences when responding in social situations.

Emotion and Social Information Processing

Although studies have shown that perception, self-efficacy, and gender influence children's social goals, one of the strongest influences on goal selection is emotion. Crick and Dodge (1994) address the fact that emotion can influence every step of social information processing, yet the role of emotion was excluded from their 1994 model. In a more recent model of social information processing by Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) the important aspect of emotion was integrated into every step of the model proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994).

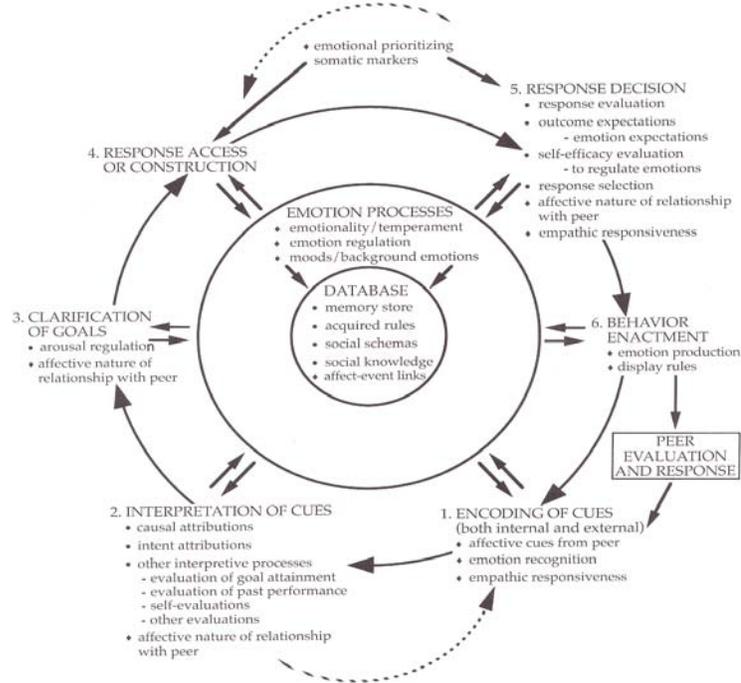


Figure 2. Social Information Processing model with the addition of emotion (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). Reprinted with the permission of E. Lemerise.

Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) proposed that emotion is a major part of the child's database with which he/she enters a social situation. Children have different emotional styles based on biological traits, different regulatory and emotion management skills, and they enter each social situation with a different mood that may be caused from previous events. It is also argued that during the first step of the Social Information Process (encoding and interpreting social cues) the emotions of others in the situation, such as the provocateur, must be interpreted along with personal emotions. For example, if a child is bumped while walking down the hallway, he/she must interpret the affective cues of the other individual in order to determine whether or not it was intentional. Intensity of emotions and current mood of the child also affect what cues are attended to in a given situation which affects how children interpret the situation (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Although Crick and Dodge (1994) acknowledge that emotions can affect goal selection which can in turn modify emotions, Lemerise and Arsenio take it one step further by stating that the emotions of other peers within the social context can influence goal selection. For example, "Children who are overwhelmed by their own and/or others' emotions may choose avoidant or hostile goals to reduce their own arousal" (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000, p. 114). Lemerise and Arsenio also touch on the idea that emotional ties in social relationships may influence the selection of particular goals; goals may differ when the situation involves a friend versus a less positive relationship.

This current model of social information processing also addresses the concept of emotion in the last steps of the social information processing model: response construction, decision, and enactment. Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) suggest that the ability to access certain responses is influenced by the child's current emotions and

his/her ability to regulate emotions. For example, children who have a hard time regulating strong emotions may be so overwhelmed that they cannot effectively generate and evaluate a variety of responses (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). Lemerise and Arsenio expand on this topic by suggesting that the emotional ties children have with other peers involved in a social encounter will affect how carefully the response options are evaluated. In the final step of social information processing, response enactment, it is suggested that the child's emotions along with the emotional cues of others involved in the situation provide feedback with which the child can alter his/her actions (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Effect of emotion on goals. As Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) address in their revised model of social information processing, emotions and the ability to regulate those emotions have a strong influence on the type of goals selected during a social situation. Emotion may affect the goals of individuals differently depending on their level of adjustment or emotion regulation skills. For example, children who struggle with emotion regulation may also struggle with choosing prosocial goals when faced with conflict (Harper, Lemerise, & Caverly, 2010). Recent research has focused on the role that emotion plays in goal selection both when expressed by the provocateur and when experienced by the participant.

According to Lemerise, Fredstrom, Kelley, Bowersox, and Waford (2006), the emotion displayed by the provocateur has an influence on goal selection. Provocateur's emotions were manipulated by presenting videotaped ambiguous provocation situations in which the provocateur appeared happy, sad, or angry. When asked to rate the importance of six different goals (dominance, revenge, avoid trouble, avoid provocateur,

problem focus, social relational), social relational goals were rated as one of the highest when the provocateur was happy or sad, but not when he/she was angry. Lemerise et al. (2006) also found that the influence of emotion differed depending on the child's social adjustment. Emotion of the provocateur strongly influenced the goal selection of rejected children and affected whether or not a deviant goal was selected. When the provocateur appeared angry or sad, rejected-aggressive children rated goals of dominance and revenge as more important than did non-aggressive children (rejected-nonaggressive children, average children, and popular-nonaggressive children). This suggests that the display of sadness or anger increases the likelihood of revenge goals for children who are rejected-aggressive (Lemerise et al., 2006).

In a more recent study by Harper et al. (2010) the effect of the participant's emotion or mood on goal selection was examined in first, second, and third graders. Emotional memories were used to induce happy, angry, or neutral moods in the participants before the presentation of ambiguous provocation vignettes. When asked if they preferred a social relational or instrumental goal to solve each provocation, those who were in an angry mood chose instrumental goals more often. When anger was induced, children were less likely to pursue relationship maintenance goals and more likely to focus on self-focused goals (Harper et al., 2010). This study also found that the induction of anger had a stronger influence on the goal selection of aggressive children than non-aggressive children suggesting that aggressive children may be more vulnerable to this emotion (Harper et al., 2010). These results indicated the important influence of discrete emotions on the goal step of social information processing.

Relationships as a way to manipulate emotion. Because much research has shown the important influence of emotion on social information processing (especially the selection of goals), it is necessary to understand the many ways that emotion can be manipulated. Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) suggested that one way to manipulate emotion is by manipulating the affective ties between the subject and the provocateur. Lemerise and Arsenio hypothesized that emotional ties to the provocateur may change emotional states and affect each aspect of the social information process.

Previous studies have examined the influence of affective ties on attributions of intent and behavioral strategies. Peets, Hodges, Kikas, and Salmivalli (2007) manipulated affective ties in fourth graders by presenting ambiguous situations in which the name of a friend, enemy, or neutral peer was used as the provocateur in hypothetical situations. Children were asked to describe the provocateur's intentions and how they would respond to the situation. It was found that children's attributions of intent and behavioral strategies varied significantly as a function of relationship. More hostile intentions were attributed in situations where the provocateur was an enemy; behavior was interpreted more positively when the provocateur was a friend (Peets et al., 2007). Hostile behavioral strategies were also reported more when the provocateur was an enemy versus a friend or neutral peer.

The results of Peets et al. (2007) were replicated by Peets, Hodges, and Salmivalli (2008) through the use of group-administered questionnaires. Sociometric nominations were used to determine liked, disliked, and neutral peers; students were then given questionnaires in which their specific target peers served as the provocateur in ambiguous, hypothetical vignettes. For each vignette and relationship type, participants

were asked to respond to questions regarding attributions, outcome expectations, and self-efficacy (Peets et al., 2008). It was again found that behaviors and evaluations vary depending upon relationship or affect toward a peer. More hostility was attributed, fewer positive outcomes were expected, and higher self-efficacy beliefs for aggression were found when the provocateur was a disliked peer (Peets et al., 2008). Findings also indicated that when expected instrumental outcomes were low, boys reported more victimization.

A study using similar procedures for shy/withdrawn and aggressive children manipulated emotion by substituting an unfamiliar peer or a mutual friend for the provocateur (Burgess, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor, & Booth-LaForce, 2006). Children were asked to report the intent of the provocateur (prosocial, external blame, internal blame, or neutral), how they would feel (okay, sad, angry, or embarrassed), and how they would cope with the situation (avoidance, adult intervention, revenge, emotion, or appeasement). It was found that when the situation involved a mutual friend, children were more likely to attribute prosocial intent and choose appeasement coping strategies and less likely to choose an avoidant strategy (Burgess et al., 2006). When a mutual friend served as the provocateur, aggressive children were less likely to choose a revenge strategy, and shy/withdrawn children were less likely to attribute internal blame (Burgess et al., 2006). These findings are consistent with an earlier study by Ray and Cohen (1997) which presented audio-recorded accidental, ambiguous, and hostile situations using friends, acquaintances, and enemies of elementary school children. In ambiguous situations, children rated the provocateur's intentions and reported their response as more positive when dealing with friends than with enemies (Ray & Cohen, 1997). These

findings suggest that children give friends the “benefit of the doubt” when dealing with ambiguous social situations (Peets et al., 2007).

This same bias toward friends has also been found in situations in which liked or disliked peers performed behaviors that had a clear positive or negative outcome for the participant. Hymel (1986) examined children’s attribution of intent in these types of situations and found that when interacting with a liked peer (friend) children were more likely to dismiss negative behaviors and give credit for positive behaviors. DeLawyer and Foster (1986) used a very similar procedure in order to examine children’s feelings and responses in social situations. Although they found that children reported more active responses towards disliked peers, the responses were just as prosocial when dealing with disliked peers as liked peers, a contrast to other findings.

These findings have been replicated in children as young as preschool age. Fabes, Eisenberg, Smith, and Murphy (1996) collected observational data on preschoolers’ responses to anger episodes with liked and disliked peers. It was observed that boys were less likely to use a physical response when the anger episode was with a liked peer, yet they were more likely to overtly express anger in their response to a well liked peer (Fabes et al., 1996). The combination of previous research supports the idea that children’s emotional ties to the provocateur influence the way that they process information in a social situation (Fabes et al., 1996).

Although much research on the influence of relationship context has examined its effect on attribution of intent and behavioral strategies, recent literature has begun to look at the link between relationship context and social goals. Salmivalli and Peets (2009) demonstrated the influence of the relationship context on pre-adolescent’s social goals.

Participants were asked to complete questionnaires regarding various same-sex classmates. Questionnaires addressed how an individual felt about themselves when around each classmate, perception of peers' positive and negative qualities, the three most liked and most disliked peers, and the importance of various communal and agentic goals (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Importance of goals was assessed using the interpersonal goals inventory for children on whom participants were asked to rate from 0 to 3 how important each outcome would be when around each of their classmates. Results showed that pre-adolescents' goals change across relationship contexts as some goals are preferred over others depending on the given relationship. Salmivalli and Peets (2009) suggest that goals may change from one relationship context to another due to varying perceptions of both the self and peers depending on with which peers they are interacting. Agentic goals were found to be more likely when children had a positive self-perception of self and a negative perception of the peer. On the other hand, communal goals were more frequent when children held positive perceptions of both self and the peer (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). These self and peer perceptions may be the underlying reason why children's goals vary depending on whether the target peer is liked or disliked.

Gaps in the Research

This study will focus on the third step of the social information processing model in which children clarify what their goal for the situation would be, or what they wish to accomplish by their response to a situation. Although there have been previous studies examining the social goals of children and the effect of relationships on attribution and response selection, a major gap in the research lies in the combination of these two areas:

the relationship between goals and affective ties. The present study analyzed how children's social goals change depending on whether the social situation involves a friend, enemy, or someone who is completely neutral.

It was hypothesized that the manipulation of the relationship between the participant and the provocateur would result in different goal ratings across relationships. Social relational goals were predicted to receive higher ratings when children were confronted with situations involving friends rather than enemies or neutral peers. In contrast, instrumental, avoidant, and revenge goals were predicted to receive lower ratings when the situation involved a friend than when an enemy was involved. It was also predicted that the hierarchy of goals would change as a function of the child's relationship with the provocateur; the order of importance of the four goals would change depending on the nature of the relationship.

Method

Participants

Participants were second ($n = 104$) and fifth ($n = 84$) grade students from 13 classes in two elementary schools in Bowling Green (a mid-sized university town in southern Kentucky). Second and fifth graders were chosen because this age group was old enough to have experience with various social situations, to understand the rating scales, and there was a large enough discrepancy between age groups to determine if a developmental effect was present. Consent was obtained at all levels: a full board review by the Human Subjects Review Board and permission by school board, principals, and individual teachers. In order to obtain parental consent, a letter describing the study was sent to the parents or guardians of each student, and parents were asked to contact the researcher with any further questions. Within the letter, parents were asked to indicate whether or not their child could participate and return the form back to the child's teacher where it could be collected by the researcher. Only 25.8% of students in the participating classes did not receive parental permission to participate. Participant assent was also obtained upon the start of each interview, and only those obtaining parental consent and assenting themselves participated. A total of 74.2% of students in participating classes did receive parental consent ($N = 207$), yet, due to time constraints, 19 students who received permission were not interviewed. A total of 188 children participated in the interview (88 boys and 100 girls), and 67% were Caucasian, 16% were African American, 13% were classified as "other," and there were 4.3% with missing racial data. Ages of children ranged from 6.80 to 12.57 years with an average

age of 8.12 years ($SD = .42$) for second graders and 11.19 years ($SD = .37$) for fifth graders.

Materials and Procedure

Individual interviews were conducted in a quiet area of the child's school (e.g., an unused classroom, quiet hallway, or empty lunchroom) during teacher appointed times. During each interview, the experimenter presented nine vignettes (see Appendix A) about ambiguous social situations. The vignettes consisted of hypothetical situations in which a provocateur causes harm to the child yet it is unclear whether it was intended (e.g., *Pretend that you and your class went on a field trip to the zoo. You stop to buy a coke. Suddenly, _____ bumps your arm and spills your coke all over your shirt. The coke is cold, and your shirt is all wet*). Each of the vignettes was read aloud to the child and corresponding illustrations were presented (see Appendix B). Along with the vignette being read aloud, a written copy was also placed in front of the participant so they could follow along.

Affective ties were manipulated by reading descriptions, provided by Peets et al. (2007), of a relationship type (i.e., friend, neutral, enemy) and then asking the child to identify a classmate who fit that description; if a child could not identify a classmate, he/she was then allowed to choose someone outside of his/her class. Each participant was presented three vignettes for each relationship type. The order of the presentation of vignettes was counterbalanced across the nine different stories, and each participant was randomly assigned one of six different versions of the interview in which the order of the nine stories and the relationship type were counterbalanced (i.e., friend, neutral, enemy *or* enemy, neutral, friend).

For each vignette, the child was asked to pretend that he/she was the victim of the situation and that the classmate who they selected was the provocateur. When reading the vignette, the experimenter substituted the name of the chosen classmate for the provocateur. After reading each story, the experimenter asked the child to rate the importance of four different social goals: to be liked, to get revenge, to get away from the provocateur, and to get their way. Each of the goal choices was read aloud to the participant and a written copy was also placed in front of the participant. Each child rated the importance of each goal on a scale of one to five; one (not at all important), two (a little important), three (important), four (pretty important), and five (most important of all). A diagram of the five point scale (a bar graph of increasing values) was displayed for the participant, clearly explained, and rating options were read to the participant in counterbalanced order until the experimenter was assured of the child's understanding of the rating system. If two or more goals received the highest ratings, the child was then asked to choose the goal that was most important. The experimenter recorded the participant's response next to each goal on an experimenter protocol sheet.

Each student was also assigned a number which represented the child's school, classroom, and name (SSID number) with which the participant's name and the names of those they provided for each relationship type were replaced in order to maintain confidentiality. For second graders, stickers were given at the end of each set of three vignettes (covering one relationship type) in order to maintain their concentration and interest in the interview. At the completion of each interview the participant was praised for his/her works, reminded to keep the interview questions a secret, and then escorted back to class by the experimenter.

Results

Analysis Strategy

It was hypothesized that the relationship between the participant and the provocateur would have a significant effect on type of goals chosen and the order of importance of each set of goals. An initial repeated measures MANOVA examined the effects of grade, gender, and relationship on goal type ratings (relationship (3) x goal type (4) x grade (2) x gender (2)). Goal type and relationship were within-subjects variables; grade and gender were between subjects. A significant within subjects, multivariate interaction was found between relationship and goal type, $F(6, 1050) = 98.70, p < .0001$. The significant multivariate interaction indicated that relationship had an effect on goal ratings and this varied by goal type. Therefore, this multivariate interaction was then followed up with univariate analyses on each goal type. Univariate analyses on each relationship category were also analyzed in order to determine goal hierarchy within a single relationship type. Due to the within subjects design, cases with any missing data were excluded, therefore the *ns* for the univariates vary slightly. Differences among groups within each univariate analysis were determined using Tukey's HSD tests. Results are presented in two sections describing each type of interaction: (a) relationship by goal type and (b) goal hierarchy. Relationship by goal type indicates the effects of the relationship with the provocateur within each goal type, whereas goal hierarchy presents the rank order of each goal within each relationship type.

The Impact of Relationship Within Goal Type

Social relational goal. Within the social relational goal (to have the provocateur like you), a significant grade effect was found, $F(1, 176) = 7.31, p < .01$. Differences in goal ratings by grade are depicted in Figure 3. On average, second graders rated the social relational goal ($M = 3.35$) as more important than did fifth graders ($M = 2.98$).

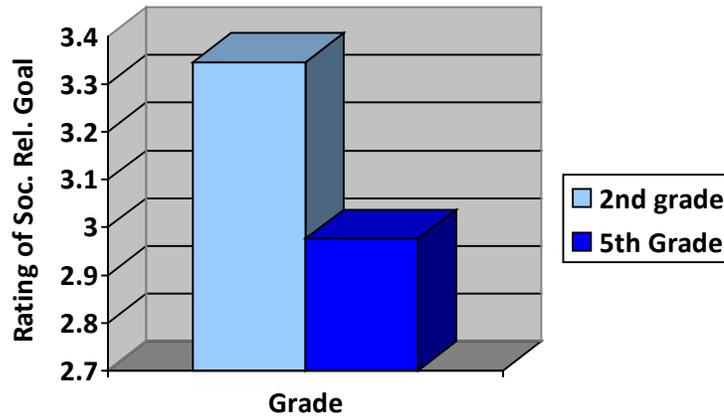


Figure 3. Grade effect within social relational goal: Displays the difference between second and fifth graders in their ratings of the social relational goal.

Relationship type clearly affected the ratings of social relational goals, $F(2, 352) = 156.28, p < .0001$. Within subjects Tukey's HSD tests were used to examine the differences between the three relationship types: friend, neutral, and enemy. Results indicated that children rated the social relational goal significantly higher when the provocateur was a friend than when confronting a neutral peer, and social relational goals were rated the lowest when the provocateur was an enemy (see Table 3.1). All differences were significant at $p < .01$.

Instrumental goals. A significant relationship effect was also found for the instrumental goal (to get the provocateur to stop the unwanted behavior), $F(2, 352) = 14.62, p < .0001$. Within subjects Tukey’s HSD tests revealed that children rated the instrumental goals lower when the provocateur was a friend than when the provocateur was a neutral peer or an enemy, ($ps < .01$) (see Table 1). The difference between instrumental goal ratings when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer was not significant.

Table 1

Relationship Effects Within Each Goal Type

Goal	Friend	Neutral	Enemy	(df)	F
Social Relational	4.00 ^a	3.06 ^b	2.42 ^c	(2, 352)	156.28*
Instrumental	3.01 ^a	3.30 ^b	3.35 ^b	(2, 352)	14.62*
Avoidant	1.87 ^a	2.29 ^b	2.84 ^c	(2, 352)	69.25*
Revenge	1.68 ^a	1.78 ^a	2.15 ^b	(2, 350)	23.22*

Note. All scores range from 1 to 5. Higher values indicate the goal is rated as more important. Within a row, values with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

* $p < .001$

Avoidance goals. The relationship of the participant with the provocateur had a significant effect on ratings of avoidance goals, $F(2, 352) = 69.25, p < .0001$. When the provocateur was an enemy, the goal of getting away was rated much higher than when the provocateur was a neutral peer or a friend (see Table 1). Avoidance goals were rated

the lowest when the provocateur was a friend. Each of these differences was significant at $p < .01$.

A significant interaction of relationship and gender was also found within the avoidant goal, $F(2, 352) = 3.05, p < .05$. Although males and females both rated avoidant goals as more important when the provocateur was an enemy and least important when a friend, a gender difference in strength of the rating was apparent. When the provocateur was an enemy, females ($M = 3.03$) provided higher importance ratings to the avoidance goal than males ($M = 2.66$), $p < .01$. This suggests that when the provocateur is an enemy, females are more likely than males to select an avoidant goal.

Revenge goals. There also was a significant relationship effect for the rating of revenge goals, $F(2, 350) = 23.22, p < .0001$. Getting revenge on the provocateur was rated as much less important when the provocateur was a friend or neutral peer than when the provocateur was an enemy (see Table 1). The difference between ratings when the provocateur was a neutral peer versus a friend was not statistically significant.

A significant grade effect was also found within the revenge goal, $F(1, 175) = 6.97, p < .01$ (see Figure 4). On average, second graders rated the revenge goal ($M = 2.03$) as more important than did fifth graders ($M = 1.71$).

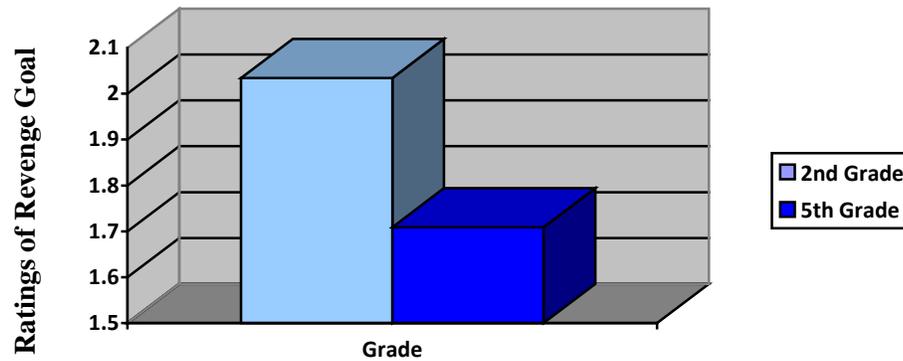


Figure 4. Grade effect within revenge goal: Displays the difference between second and fifth graders in their ratings of the revenge goal.

The Impact of Relationship on Goal Hierarchy

After each goal type was examined across relationships, each relationship was examined across goals in order to determine whether there were differences between the order of importance or goal hierarchy within each relationship type. Results are presented below, organized by relationship type.

Friend. When comparing the importance of each goal type when the provocateur was a friend, a clear order of importance was found, $F(3, 552) = 276.00, p < .0001$. Within subjects Tukey's HSD tests revealed that the most important goal in social situations in which a friend was the provocateur was a social relational goal, to have him/her like you. The social relational goal was rated more important than instrumental, avoidant, and revenge goals, $ps < .01$ (see Table 2). The second most important goal when the provocateur was a friend was an instrumental goal: to have him/her stop the unwanted behavior. Instrumental goals were rated significantly higher than goals of avoidance or revenge, $ps < .01$. The lowest rated goals, or least important in this situation

were those of avoidance and revenge; ratings for these two goals were not significantly different from one another. The results demonstrate that when placed in a social situation in which a friend was the provocateur, the most important thing to a child was to maintain that friendship by “having the other person like them” and the least important was to get away or get revenge on the provocateur.

Table 2

Goal Hierarchy

Goal	Friend	Neutral	Enemy
Social Relational	4.00^a	3.07^a	2.45 ^a
Instrumental	3.01 ^b	3.29^a	3.34^b
Avoidant	1.87 ^c	2.28 ^b	2.83 ^c
Revenge	1.70 ^c	1.80 ^c	2.16 ^d

Note. All differences were significant at $p < .01$. Goals rated as the most important for each relationship are in bold. Within a column, values that do not share a superscript are significantly different from one another.

Neutral peers. The goal hierarchy for neutral peers differed from that for friends. A significant effect of goal type was found for goal ratings when the provocateur was a neutral peer, $F(3, 543) = 84.72, p < .0001$. Within this relationship, results from Tukey’s HSD tests indicated that the most important goal was no longer only the social relational goal, but also equally important was the instrumental goal. The instrumental goal and social relational goal were not rated significantly differently, yet were both rated significantly higher than the avoidance and revenge goals, $ps < .01$ (see Table 2). Avoidance goals were rated as more important than revenge goals ($p < .01$) which were

ranked as the least important. Results suggest that in ambiguous social situations in which the provocateur is a neutral peer the most important thing for children to accomplish in the situation was to have the peer like them and to get the peer to stop the unwanted behavior, whereas avoiding the peer and getting back at him/her was less important.

Enemy. When analyzing data from situations in which the provocateur was an enemy, results showed that the hierarchy of goals significantly changed once again, $F(3, 531) = 51.58, p < .0001$. Tukey's HSD tests revealed that instrumental goals were rated significantly higher than social relational, avoidance, and revenge goals, $ps < .01$ (see Table 2). The goal rated as second in importance was the avoidance goal followed by the social relational goal and revenge goal, all significantly different at $p < .01$. According to these data, when placed in a social situation in which the provocateur is an enemy, the most important goals for children were to get the peer to stop and to avoid him/her whereas getting revenge and maintaining favor with the provocateur were the least important. Although results suggest that affective ties with the provocateur have an influence on what goals children think are important, one of the most interesting findings in the goal hierarchy data was that social relational goals went from being the most important when interacting with a friend to one of the least important goals when interacting with an enemy.

Table 3

Goal Hierarchy by Gender for Enemy Provocateurs

Goal	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Social Relational	2.51 ^a	2.39 ^a
Instrumental	3.40^b	3.29^b
Avoidant	2.63 ^a	3.03^b
Revenge	2.14 ^c	2.17 ^a

Note. Most important goals are in bold. Within a column, values that do not share a superscript are significantly different from one another.

A significant goal type by gender effect was also found within the relationship context of an enemy as the provocateur. When the provocateur was an enemy, males and females demonstrated significantly different goal hierarchies (see Table 3). In this context, males rated the instrumental goal (to get him/her to stop) as the most important, significantly higher than social relational, avoidance and revenge goals $ps < .01$. The social relational and avoidance goals were rated as the next most important for males, but were not significantly different from one another. Revenge goals were rated lowest, or least important, by males, significantly different than avoidant and instrumental goals at $ps < .01$, and from the social relational goal at $p < .05$. Females, however, rated both the instrumental and avoidance goals as the most important ($ps < .01$) when the provocateur was an enemy; the two goals were not significantly different from one another. The social relational and revenge goals were rated lower than the previous two goals ($ps < .01$), by females, but were not significantly different from one another. Findings suggest that

males and females have different goal hierarchies when interacting with an enemy, and females are more likely than males to choose avoidance goals.

Grade Effect. A significant grade effect was also found for each of the relationship conditions; in all relationship contexts, second graders provided overall higher importance ratings than fifth graders (see Figure 5). When the provocateur was a friend ($F(1,184) = 7.45, p < .01$) second graders provided overall higher goal ratings ($M = 2.76$) than fifth graders ($M = 2.54$). This effect was also found in the neutral peer condition with second graders providing higher ratings ($M = 2.72$) than fifth graders ($M = 2.50$). When the provocateur was an enemy the same effect was evidenced; second graders provided higher ratings ($M = 2.80$) than fifth graders ($M = 2.59$). Findings suggest that second graders provided higher goal ratings than fifth graders regardless of goal type or relationship.

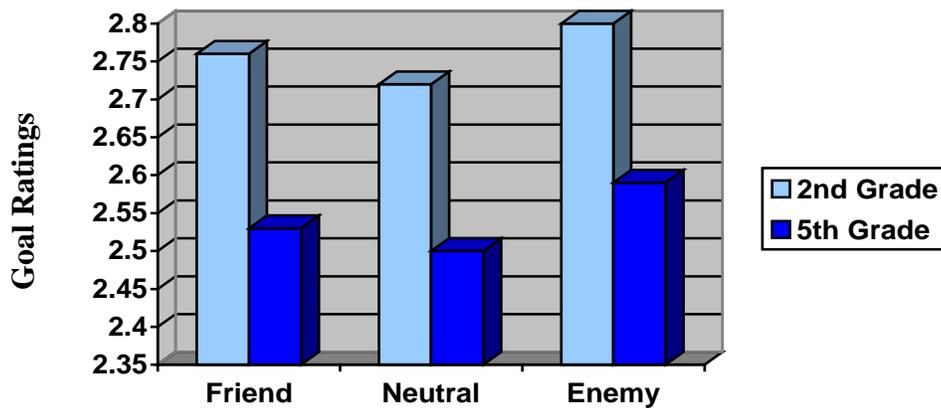


Figure 5. Grade effect within each relationship type: Displays the difference between second and fifth graders in their goal ratings within each relationship context.

Discussion

The major purpose of this study was to examine whether children's goals are influenced by their relationship with the provocateur in ambiguous social interactions. Crick and Dodge (1994) discussed the importance of goals within the social information processing model, and Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) conveyed the importance of emotion within each aspect of this model. The current study provides empirical evidence which expands upon these topics by demonstrating the effect of emotion, through the use of relationship manipulation, on the goal step of social information processing. Findings indicated that the affective ties or emotions felt towards the provocateur in ambiguous social situations greatly influence the selection of goals during social information processing.

As hypothesized, the manipulation of relationship between the participant and the provocateur resulted in different goal ratings across relationships. Social relational goals received higher ratings when children were confronted with situations involving friends than when the situations involved enemies or neutral peers. The difference in goal ratings suggests that, for children, relationship maintenance is most important in ambiguous provocation situations involving a friend, yet maintaining a relationship with a neutral peer or an enemy is less important. Within the context of social relational goals, a significant developmental effect was also found. Second grade students rated the social relational goal (having the other person like you) more much more important than did fifth grade students, suggesting a stronger need for social acceptance at a younger age. The difference in goal ratings between age groups could be due to younger children's desire to please everyone and the teachings from parents and other caregivers to "be

nice.” As age increases, however, children often learn that, in order to get what they want, they cannot merely strive for acceptance and relationship maintenance in every situation. Findings suggest that, with age and experience, children learn to choose goals that are more effective in reaching a desired outcome.

Although social relational goals were rated more important when the provocateur was a friend, instrumental goals were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer than when he/she was a friend; getting what was wanted was less important when the provocateur was friend. The lower importance ratings for instrumental goals when a friend is involved indicates that children may be more willing to sacrifice their desires in a social situation in order to maintain a positive relationship with a friend, whereas this willingness is not present when a neutral peer or an enemy is involved.

Avoidance goals were found to be the most important when the ambiguous situations involved an enemy and least important when a friend served as the provocateur. The difference suggests that getting away from the provocateur and avoiding the situation entirely is more likely to happen when the provocateur is an enemy. Within the context of avoidance goals, a significant relationship by gender effect was also found in the strength of goal ratings. When the provocateur was an enemy, females provided higher ratings for the avoidance goals than did males. The gender difference in avoidance goal ratings suggests that when placed in an ambiguous social situation involving an enemy, females are more likely to strive to avoid the situation than males. The higher importance ratings of avoidant goals by females likely leads to more

avoidant behavior by females, whereas males are less likely to avoid a situation and may choose more confrontational goals and strategies when interacting with an enemy.

The importance of revenge goals also differed across relationships; revenge was significantly less important when the provocateur was a friend or neutral peer than when an enemy was involved. The difference suggests something special about friendships in their ability to moderate aggressive goals, whereas the likelihood of aggressive goals is increased when involved with an enemy. The link between goals and strategies (Chung & Asher, 1996) combined with evidence from the present study suggests that aggressive behavior may be more likely in ambiguous situations when the provocateur is an enemy. Higher importance ratings for revenge goals when the provocateur is an enemy is consistent with previous findings which suggest that more hostility is attributed and higher self-efficacy for aggression is found when interacting with a disliked peer (Peets et al., 2008). Higher self-efficacy ratings and more hostile attributions toward disliked peers partially explain why revenge goals are rated as more important when dealing with an enemy; when the provocateur is an enemy, children believe revenge is more likely to be effective, and they attribute more hostile intentions, leading to the need for revenge.

Within the context of revenge goals, a significant developmental effect was also found. Second grade students rated the revenge goal (getting back at the other person) more much more important than did fifth grade students, suggesting a stronger need for revenge at a younger age. The developmental difference could be due to younger children's tendency toward egocentrism and lack of ability to see situations from another's perspective (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2010). Egocentrism may cause younger children to attribute hostile intent in ambiguous social situations, leading to the

need for revenge, whereas older children may be better able to see the situation from the provocateur's perspective or as an accident. This developmental effect may also be due to social learning with experience, older children have learned that revenge is not always appropriate and may lead to undesired outcomes such as punishment or termination of a relationship. These findings also suggest that, with age and experience, children learn to choose goals that are more effective in reaching a desired outcome. Overall, these findings provide empirical evidence for the previously hypothesized influence of relationship on goal selection (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

The hierarchy of goals within the context of each relationship also differed; consistent with the hypothesis, the order of importance of each goal changed as a function of the child's relationship with the provocateur. When the provocateur was a friend, the most important goal was to maintain the relationship and gain the approval of the provocateur. The second most important goal was to obtain the desired outcome (for example, get their place back in line). Avoidant and revenge goals were ranked as the least important when in an ambiguous situation involving a friend.

The goal hierarchy changed within the context of a neutral peer. The most important goal changed from social relational goals only to both the social relational and instrumental goals having equal importance. When dealing with a neutral peer, getting the desired outcome and maintaining the approval of the provocateur were the most important goals, whereas, avoidant and revenge goals were once again rated as less important when interacting with a neutral peer. The least important goal when involved in an ambiguous social situation with a neutral peer was revenge. These findings suggest that children involved with a neutral peer show an increased concern with stopping the

unwanted behavior or obtaining what they want compared to situations in which a friend is involved, yet revenge and avoidance of the peer remain unlikely goal choices.

Within the context of an enemy, however, the social relational goal (having the provocateur like them) was no longer rated as one of the most important goals. Instead it was ranked at the third most important goal preceded by both instrumental and avoidant goals. The instrumental goal of stopping the unwanted behavior or obtaining desired outcome was rated as the most important goal when dealing with an enemy. Revenge goals were again rated as the least important in this context. In a previous study by Harper et al. (2010), it was found that anger increased the focus on self-interested (instrumental) goals, such as getting a place back in line. This finding serves as a possible explanation for the reason children choose instrumental goals as being more important when dealing with a neutral peer or an enemy rather than a friend. Ambiguous provocation by a friend does not induce anger, yet provocation by an enemy or neutral peer does; when anger is induced, children are more likely to choose an instrumental goal (Harper et al., 2010).

Within the context of an enemy as the provocateur, a significant gender effect was also found; males and females presented different goal hierarchies. Males rated goals of stopping the unwanted behavior or obtaining a desired outcome (instrumental goals) as the most important goal, whereas females rated both instrumental goals and avoidance goals (getting away) as most important when involved with an enemy. For both males and females, however, goals of revenge and having the relationship maintenance with the provocateur (social relational goals) were of lesser importance. The gender difference suggests that females are more likely than males to select an avoidance goal when dealing

with an enemy: findings consistent with the examination within goal type which suggested females rated avoidant goals as more important than did males.

A significant grade effect was also found across all three relationship contexts; second graders consistently provided higher importance ratings than did fifth graders regardless of goal type or relationship. These findings demonstrate a tendency for younger children to provide higher ratings regardless of the situation which may be caused by a stronger need to please the interviewer in younger children. Young children may be reluctant to give a goal choice a lower rating for fear of displeasing the interviewer, as higher ratings are typically associated with “good.” The grade effect may also be due to a more complex understanding of the rating system by older children who can better rank their goals on the scale and understand differences and discrepancies between the importance of various goals. Older children may be better able to pinpoint exactly what their most important goal in the given situation would be, rating all others very low leading to overall lower goal ratings than younger children.

It was an interesting finding that social relational goals went from being the most important goal within the context of a friend as the provocateur to being one of the least important goals when the provocateur was an enemy. The difference in goal hierarchy across relationships suggests that children are less concerned with maintaining the relationship and receiving approval when the provocateur is an enemy. A second interesting finding was that whereas revenge goals were rated as more important when the provocateur was an enemy or a neutral peer, revenge was still ranked as one of the least important goals across each relationship type. Low importance ratings for revenge

goals suggest that revenge is not a commonly chosen goal among children of this age group.

Implications

A major contribution of the present study is the idea that goal selection is not a steady personality trait, but instead a decision that hinges upon the context of each situation. Although previous research has found that strategies and hostile attributions of intent change as a function of relationship type (Peets et al., 2007), the present study provides evidence that this change is also found in goal selection. Although many children are labeled as having aggressive personalities due to enacting revenge goals or as being withdrawn due to the enactment of avoidance goals, this study suggests that these goal choices may not be stable across all situations. Children do not simply always choose a revenge goal because of an aggressive personality trait. Instead, revenge goals are more likely to be selected when the provocateur is an enemy, but much less likely to be selected if the provocateur is a friend. It is also thought that some children try to please everyone and will always select social relational goals, yet this study indicated that social relational goals are much less likely to be selected when the provocateur is an enemy.

These findings have major implications for future research and all those involved in working with children. The comprehension of children's social interactions and their goal choices is essential to the prevention or treatment of social maladjustment. Findings suggest that a bias towards friends is established within the context of ambiguous provocation. This bias may serve as a buffer for maladjusted children who often react with aggressive or avoidance goals except within the context of friendship. The knowledge that goal selection varies across relationship contexts and is not a steady

personality trait can aid in intervention strategies. Professionals may be able to work with children to lessen their revenge and avoidance goal choices by teaching them to choose goals consistent with what they would choose if the provocateur was a friend. Reminding students to stop and think how they would react if a friend was the provocateur may help them learn to better interpret cues and attribute intent leading to less hostile goal choices and actions when dealing with other peers.

Limitations and Future Directions

An area of importance not covered by this study is whether children who vary in social adjustment respond differently to the relationship manipulation. Previous research has examined differences between socially maladjusted children and well adjusted children in their behavioral strategies and attribution of intent (Burgess et al., 2006). Socially maladjusted children have been found to choose more revenge or instrumental type strategies (Kazura & Flander, 2007; Lochman et al., 1993) which predicts that they may also choose goals of similar intent. Lemerise et al. (2006) revealed that children's social adjustment interacted with the provocateur's emotion for children's goal ratings. Unfortunately, the sample size of the present study was not large enough to examine the interaction between relationship, social adjustment, and goal type. A larger sample size would allow for a larger group of maladjusted children and an effect of social adjustment is expected.

Although previous research has found significant gender and developmental differences (Chung & Asher, 1996; Salmivalli et al., 2005), the current study provided similar findings for only some relationship or goal types. With more participants or the examination of different age groups, larger gender and developmental differences may be

present. It is expected that stronger gender differences would be found among adolescents as compared to elementary age children as adolescents are often fulfilling stronger gender stereotyped roles which may also cause strong gender differences in goal selection. Future research can focus on these areas, examining social adjustment, gender, and developmental differences within the context of relationship manipulation and social goals.

A second limitation to this study is the forced-choice response style and hypothetical nature of the interview. Four specific goal choices were presented to each participant, yet there are also many other goal possibilities. By limiting the goal choices to four specific actions, it may prevent the children from being able to respond with the primary goal which they would actually have in a given situation. The presentation of four goal choices limits children's responses and may increase cognitive reflection thus reducing the spontaneity found in real-life situations. A goal for future research should be to include open-ended questions in which children are free to respond with their first instinct or with their own unique goal for the situation. Observation of actual social interactions (Fabes et al., 1996) will be helpful in the future in order to create a more realistic picture of children's social interactions and how they are affected by relationships.

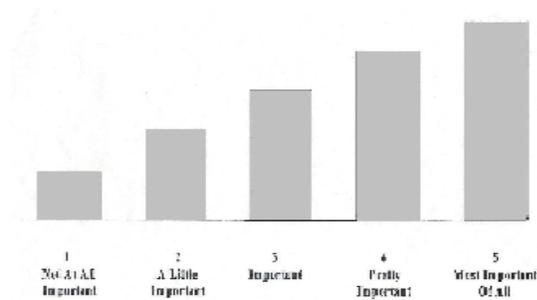
APPENDIX A

Protocol:

Friend: _____

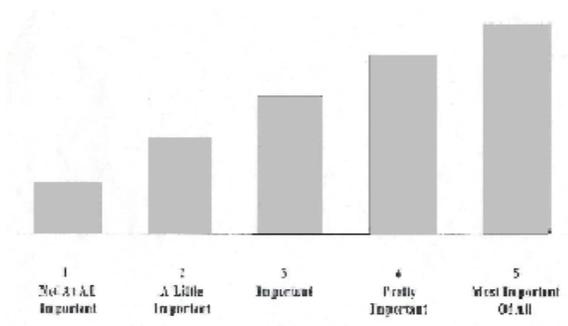
Now think about a boy (girl) from your class who is your best friend. You regard him (her) as your best friend and he (she) considers you his (her) best friend. You spend a lot of time together. You are having fun together. You have been friends for a while already.

1. Pretend that you and your class went on a field trip to the zoo. You stop to buy a coke. Suddenly, _____ bumps your arm and spills your coke all over your shirt. The coke is cold, and your shirt is all wet.



In this situation, how important would it be...

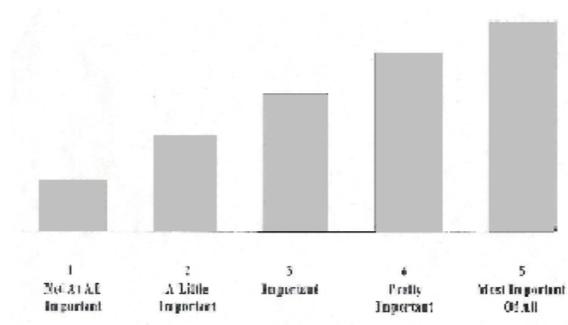
- i. To get away from _____ (3)
 - ii. To get back at _____ (4)
 - iii. To have _____ like you (1)
 - iv. To have _____ stop bumping into you (2)
2. Pretend that you are at school one day, and you are lining up with your class to go to recess. Just as you are getting in line _____ says "I want this spot!" and cuts in front of you.



In this situation, how important would it be...

- i. To have _____ like you (1)
- ii. To get your place back in line (2)
- iii. To get away from _____ (3)
- iv. To get back at _____ (4)

3. Pretend that you are walking down the hallway in school. You are carrying your books in your arm and talking. You stumble and fall and your books go flying across the floor, _____ makes fun of you.



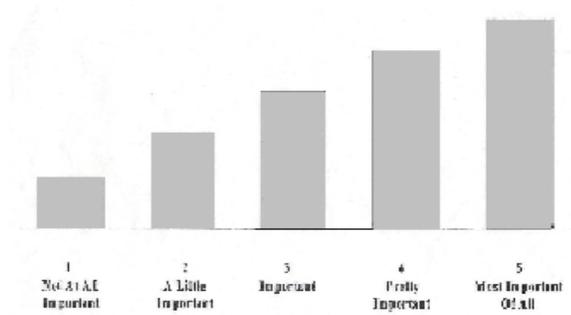
In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get _____ to stop making fun of you
- ii. To have _____ like you
- iii. To get back at _____
- iv. To get away from _____

Neutral: _____

Now think about a boy (girl) from your class whom you do not know well. It does not mean that you do not like him (her) or he (she) does not like you. You do not know each other so well to be sure if you like each other or not.

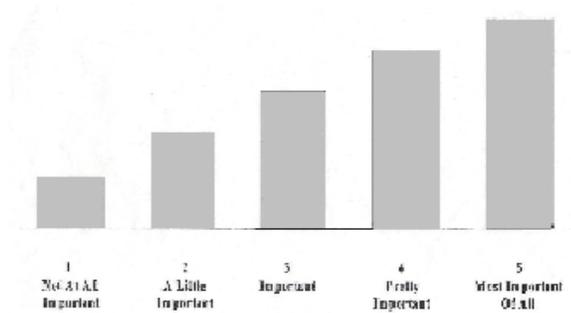
4. Pretend that you are playing a game with _____ and you realize that _____ has taken your turn.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get back at _____
- ii. To get away from _____
- iii. To get your turn back
- iv. To have _____ like you

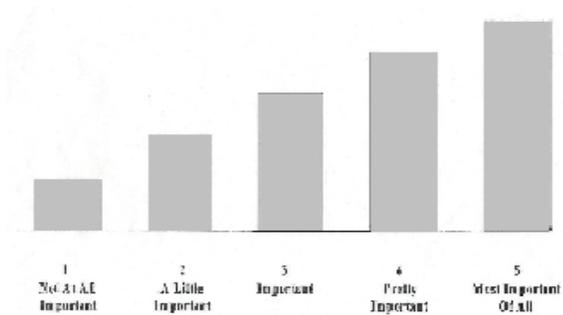
5. Pretend you are on the playground playing a game with _____. You accidentally rip your pants, and _____ starts laughing at you.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To have _____ stop laughing at you
- ii. To get back at _____
- iii. To have _____ like you
- iv. To get away from _____

6. Pretend that you are walking to school and you are wearing brand new sneakers. You really like your new sneakers and this is the first day you have worn them. Suddenly, _____ bumps you from behind. You stumble into a mud puddle and your new sneakers get muddy.



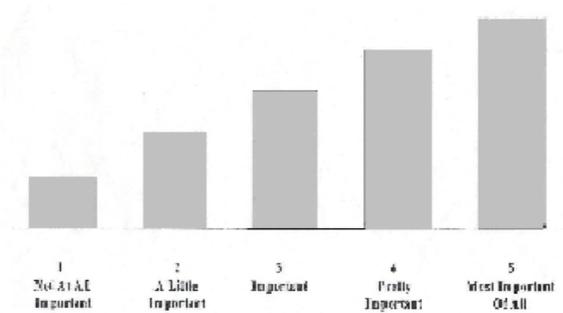
In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To have _____ like you
- ii. To get away from _____
- iii. To get _____ to stop pushing you down
- iv. To get back at _____

Enemy: _____

Now think about a boy (girl) from your class with whom you do not along well. You do not like the boy (girl) and he (she) does not like you either. You argue with each other. You have not been getting along for a while already.

7. You ask _____ to watch cartoons one Saturday morning. After about ten minutes, _____ changes the channel without asking.

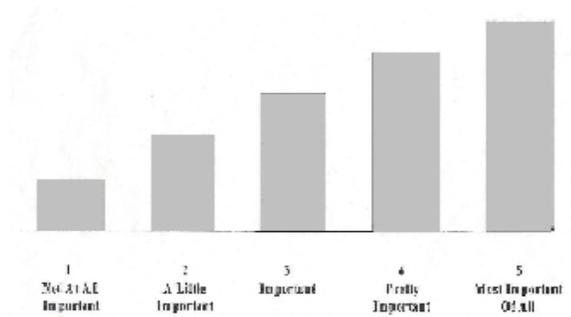


In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get back at _____
- ii. To have _____ change the channel back

- iii. To have _____ like you
- iv. To get away from _____

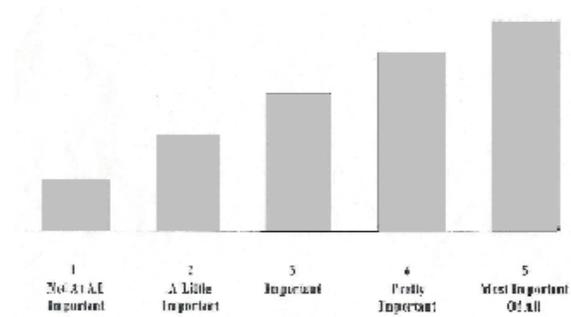
8. Pretend that you are on the playground playing catch with _____. You throw the ball to _____ and he/she catches it. You turn around, and the next thing you realize is that _____ has thrown the ball and hit you in the middle of your back. The ball hits you hard, and it hurts a lot.



In this situation, how important would it be

- i. To get away from _____
- ii. To have _____ like you
- iii. To get back at _____
- iv. To have _____ stop throwing the ball at you

9. Pretend that you and _____ are both on the playground and _____ starts calling you names and making fun of you.



In this situation, how important would it be

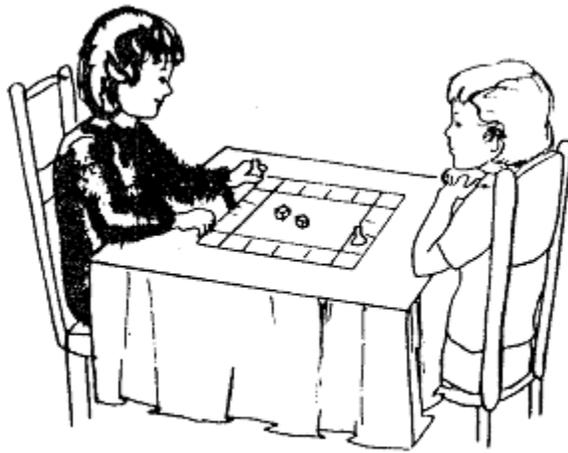
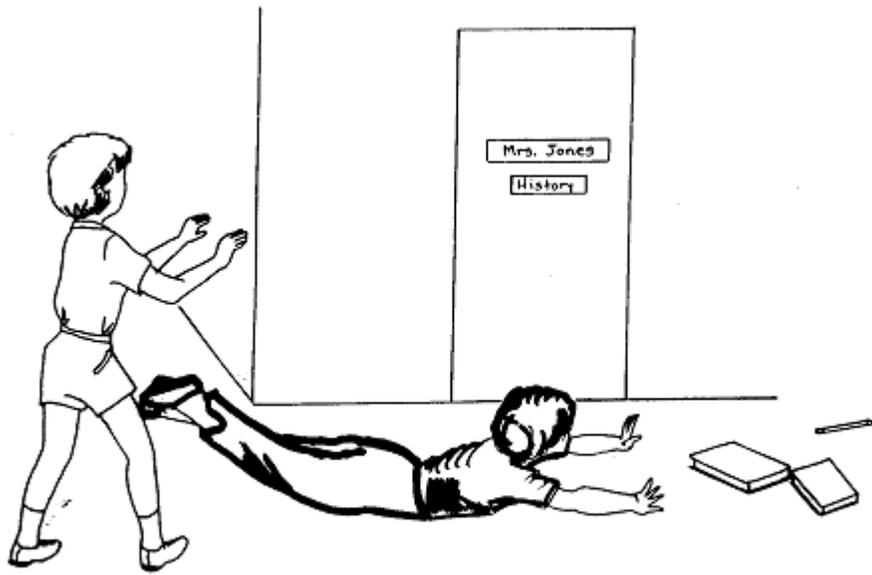
- i. To have _____ like you
- ii. To get back at _____
- iii. To get away from _____
- iv. To have _____ stop making fun of you

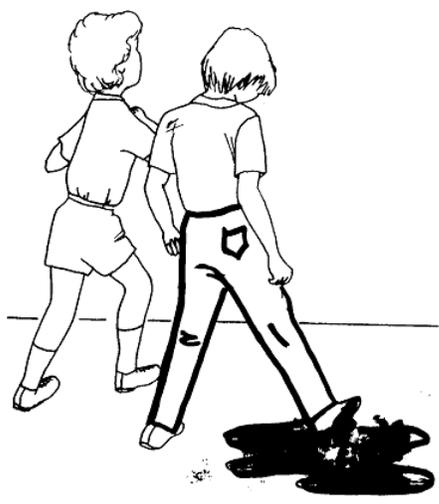
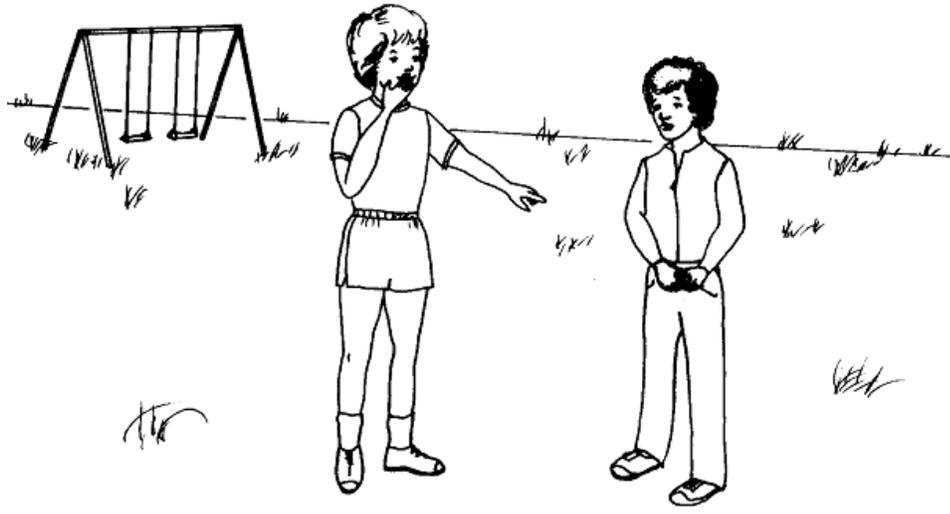
APPENDIX B

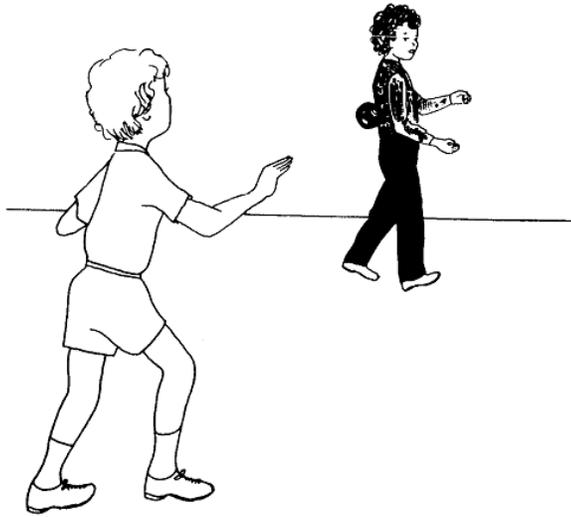
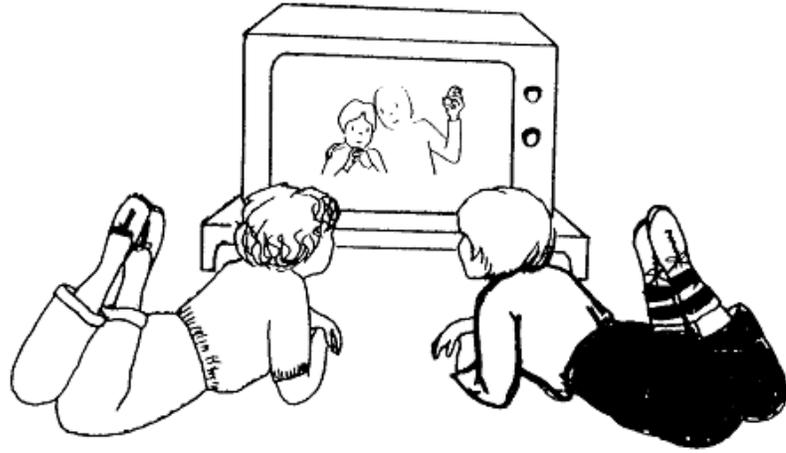
Illustrations

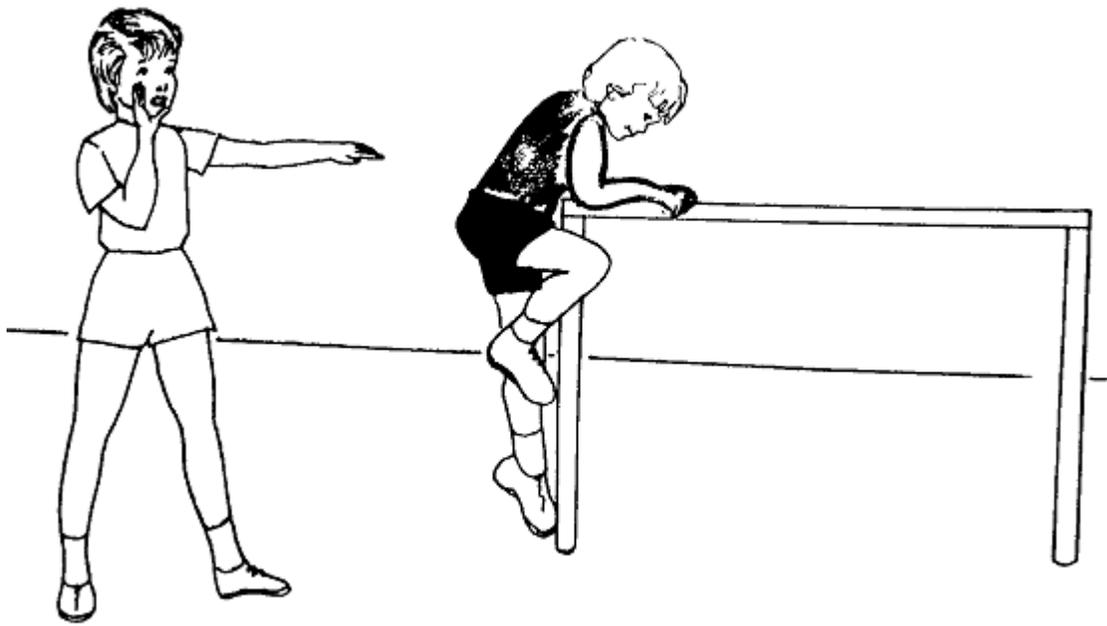
8











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