ABSTRACT

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Title: Children's Understanding of Gossip as It Relates to Reputation

Major: Psychology   Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by: Date:

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Dissertation Director   12-14-07

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Gossip can affect an individual's reputation. Negative gossip can be a threat to an individual's reputation, whereas positive gossip can enhance it. Individuals may alter their opinions about someone based on what they have heard. Therefore, it is important to determine when children might begin to understand that gossip can influence an individual's reputation among the peer group. The main goal of this study was to assess children's understanding of the impact of gossip on reputation. More specifically, this study examined children's understanding that people with different initial reputations may be impacted differently by gossip.

Seventy-three second-grade and 72 sixth-grade children participated. Each child was read a prosocial, antisocial, or low-social target character description followed by a positive, negative, and neutral event or gossip scenario. Then, the child was asked questions regarding how much the gossip spread among the peer group and the believability of the gossip. In addition, the child was asked questions regarding characteristics of the target characters and the target characters' likeability among the peer group.

Both second and sixth graders recognized that gossip can influence a child's likeability among the peer group. Positive and neutral gossip had a positive impact on likeability, whereas negative gossip had a negative impact on

likeability. Children also recognized that gossip valence had an impact on the spreading of information, especially for the antisocial character. Children responded that negative gossip would spread among the peer group more for an antisocial peer. Children think that reputation appears to be influenced not only by an individual child's behavior but also by indirect information such as gossip. This is particularly true for antisocial children. Children believe that the saliency of antisocial peers' behavior seems to maintain their status with respect to their reputation but not their likeability among the peer group. It may be that positive gossip can enhance their likeability among the peer group, but it may take something more than this indirect source to change their reputation among the peer group.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOSSIP

AS IT RELATES TO REPUTATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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DEKALB, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2007

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my Uncle George, my inspiration

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The development of reputations within the peer group is an important aspect of children's social relationships. Reputations may influence the degree to which individual children interact with one another as well as the types of social interaction children engage in with their peers. Because reputations can influence children's social experience and development, knowledge of the existence and impact of reputations is an important part of social cognitive development. Knowledge of reputations may help children to understand their social experiences. For example, a child's reputation may influence the peer group's behavior toward a child. Children who are rejected by their peers in the early elementary-school years are likely to be rejected by their peers in the later school years (e.g., Coie & Dodge, 1983; Kupersmidt, Buchele, Voegler, & Sedikides, 1996). Consequently, negative reputations can have serious and lasting effects on a child's social environment and later psychological adjustment (e.g., Cowen, Pederson, Babijian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973; Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992; Parker & Asher, 1987). Thus, by knowing about the existence and consequences of reputations, children can understand how their own behaviors may affect the way they are viewed and treated by others.

This study investigated children's understanding of the impact of gossip on reputation. More specifically, the goal of this study was to determine when children understand that gossip can affect an individual's reputation among his or her peers. For the purposes of this study, a reputation was defined as a group's shared evaluation, attitudes, and expectations about an individual or group of individuals. Reputations include expectations about an individual's personality traits, abilities, or typical behavior and also include evaluations of the person. Reputations can originate through either direct experience or indirect experience such as gossip, and they may be inaccurate or resistant to change. Gossip was defined as sharing of information about an individual who is not present. Gossip can affect an individual's reputation. Negative gossip can be a threat to an individual's reputation, whereas positive gossip can enhance it. Since gossip focuses on someone else's personal relations or behavior, it can affect an individual's reputation and social status among his or her peers.

Both social experiences and cognitive abilities may influence children's understanding of gossip and reputations. That is, in order for children to understand that gossip may affect their reputation, they must (a) have experiences with reputations in their peer group, (b) have experiences with gossip, and (c) form concepts of reputations, gossip, and the relations between reputations and gossip. Until gossip and reputations become apparent in the peer group, children will not have a basis for learning about them, and reputations will not yet be an important aspect in children's lives. In addition to these social experiences, children also need certain cognitive abilities to learn

about the relation between reputations and gossip. In particular, understanding that people can acquire beliefs from various sources of information, including both direct experience and indirect experience, or hearsay, is a prerequisite for understanding how reputations originate. Therefore, this paper reviews research on: (a) the development of reputations in children's peer groups, (b) the development of gossip in children's peer groups, (c) children's understanding of the sources of knowledge, (d) children's knowledge of the existence of reputations, and (e) children's understanding of how reputations function.

Development of Reputations in Children's Peer Groups

Since children need to have experiences with reputations in order to learn about reputational phenomena, it is important to determine when reputations first emerge in children's peer groups. Often, child development researchers have studied how children obtain a reputation and how it affects their status in social situations. Therefore, it is also important to recognize when social status groups first emerge in children's peer groups. Finally, to compare what previous research has found regarding reputations and social status with what children think about those concepts, it is important to determine the impact of reputations and social status within the peer group.

Emergence of Reputations in the Peer Group

Much of the early literature concerning children's reputations focused on developing scales to assess a child's reputation in the peer group (e.g., Harris,

1957; Hartshorne, May, & Maller, 1929; Macfarlane, Honzik, & Davis, 1937;

Tuddenham, 1951). In 1929, Hartshorne et al. developed a test called the

"Guess Who" reputation test. They created a rating procedure that consisted of

25 brief positive and negative descriptions to measure a child's psychosocial

environment. Fifth and sixth graders were asked to "guess" which children from

their class best fit the descriptions. For example, "Who are the ones everyone

likes?" vs. "Who are the ones nobody likes very much?"; "What children quarrel

a lot?" vs. "What children hate to quarrel?"; "What children are bossy?" vs.

"Which children let other children boss them?" The number of mentions a peer

received from his or her classmates determined a child's reputation score.

Hartshorne et al. reported .95 reliability among the items administered to the

children. Thus, among fifth- and sixth-grade children there appeared to be

consensus regarding classmates' reputations. However, because younger

children were not included, it is possible that reputations may emerge earlier.

Over the years, other measures derived from the Hartshorne et al. (1929)

"Guess Who" reputation test required children to match their peers with

particular behaviors or characteristics (e.g., the Class Play, the Revised Class

Play, and the Pupil Evaluation Inventory). For example, in the Revised Class

Play (RCP), third- through sixth-grade children pretended to be the directors of a

play starring their classmates. The play consisted of 15 positive (e.g., helps

other people when they need it and good sense of humor) and 15 negative (e.g.,

has trouble making friends and picks on other kids) parts related to social

competence. As directors, children had to select the classmate that would best

fit each part. The nominations were then totaled to obtain an index of each child's social reputation. The Revised Class Play measured three (one positive and two negative) aspects of peer reputation: Sociability-Leadership, Aggressive-Disruptive, and Sensitive-Isolated (Masten, Morison, & Pellegrini, 1985). Masten et al. reported between .81 and .95 reliability among the items that comprised the three factors administered to the children. Thus, among third-through sixth-grade children there appeared to be consensus regarding classmates' social reputations. Therefore, reputations may emerge as early as the third grade.

Emergence of Social Status in the Peer Group

Characteristics of an individual child contribute to the formation of that child's social status among the peer group. A child's reputation can contribute to maintenance of his or her social status among the peer group. Investigations of children's social relationships have also focused on the relation between children's reputations and their social status within the classroom (e.g., Asher, Singleton, Tinsley, & Hymel, 1979; Hymel, 1986; Kennedy, 1990; Morison & Masten, 1991; Olson & Lifgren, 1988; Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Griesler, 1990; Rogosch & Newcomb, 1989; Rubin, & Daniels-Beirness, 1983). Child development researchers have studied how children obtain a reputation and how it affects their status in social situations at school. Researchers have used various sociometric techniques to assess children's social status among the peer group. Ratings scales are often used with younger children (i.e.,

preschoolers and kindergartners) to assess likeability among peers (e.g., Asher et al., 1979; Denham & Holt, 1993; Denham, McKinley, Couchoud, & Holt, 1990; Hymel, 1983; Olson & Lifgren, 1988). For example, children are asked to rate peers on a scale from "like very much" to "like very little." The average rating each child receives from his or her peers is taken as an index of peer acceptance (Rubin & Coplan, 1992). In addition to rating scale measures, children in elementary school are often asked to nominate (usually two to five) children they like most and like least in their class. For example, children are asked to "Name three classmates you really like/dislike" or "Name three classmates with whom you like/do not like to play."

Children's raw scores are typically standardized and combined to obtain scores for their social preference and social impact. Social preference refers to the degree to which a child is liked or disliked among his or her peers; whereas, social impact is the degree to which a child is noticed by his or her peers (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982; Newcomb & Bukowski, 1983, 1984; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). For instance, a child who is aggressive tends to have high visibility or impact but low preference among the peer group. The peer group not only thinks that a child is aggressive based on his or her typical behavior, but they also tend to dislike that child because of that aggressiveness. Social preference and impact combine to form five distinct sociometric categories: popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average (Coie & Dodge, 1983; 1988; Coie et al., 1982; Newcomb & Bukowski, 1983). These categories reveal a child's social status among the peer group. Both reputation

and social status involve how a child is viewed by the peer group as a whole. However, the distinction is between the content or information in one's reputation (i.e., what kind of person one is reputed to be, what kind of behavior one is reputed to engage in) and the attitude toward or evaluation of the person. There is a consensus among the peer group regarding a particular child's social status. For instance, with peer nomination techniques, children who are classified as "popular" consistently receive many positive nominations and few negative nominations from their peers, whereas children who are classified as "rejected" consistently receive many negative nominations and few positive nominations from their peers. Children who are classified as "controversial' receive a large number of positive and negative nominations, whereas children who are classified as "neglected" receive very few positive or negative nominations. Children classified as "average" receive some positive and negative nominations, but without the extremes found for popular, rejected, and controversial children (Coie et al., 1982).

Children of varying social status (a) differ on the dimensions of social preference and social impact, (b) differ in their reputation among the peer group and (c) possess distinct characteristics and display particular types of social behavior. Popular children tend to combine academic and social competence. Their prosocial skills lead them to be well liked and highly visible by others. Peers describe popular children as being helpful, considerate, smart, cooperative, and outgoing (e.g., Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Newcomb et al., 1993). When popular children enter a group,

they adapt their behavior instead of making others adjust to them, and when conflicts in the group arise they try to understand the problem and suggest solutions (Morison & Masten, 1991). In contrast, rejected children are not well liked but are highly visible by their peers. They tend to show high rates of conflict and hostility within the peer group and use aggression to solve conflict or to obtain desired objects (Coie, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1991). In addition, rejected children engage in higher frequencies of aggressive and disruptive behaviors, report greater feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction, and exhibit more academic problems than their peers (Coie et al., 1991; Dodge, 1983; Ladd, 1983; Ollendick, Greene, Francis, & Baum, 1991; Ollendick et al., 1992; Parker & Asher, 1987). Neglected children tend to have low rates of interactions with others (i.e., low social impact), tend to engage in more solitary activities, do not initiate many interactions with peers, and may be considered shy or withdrawn by some of their peers (Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984; Coie et al., 1982; Dodge, 1983; Ollendick et al., 1992). These children have few friends but are not disliked among the peer group like children with rejected status (Asher & Dodge, 1986; Coie et al., 1982).

The status of popular and rejected children tend to be stable over time, whereas neglected children's status among peers may change over time or situations depending on their rate of interaction with others (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Newcomb & Bukowski, 1984; Newcomb et al., 1993; Ollendick et al., 1991). Controversial children are both liked and disliked by the peer group (Asher & Dodge, 1986; Coie et al., 1982; Newcomb &

Bukowski, 1983). They are socially visible, but their social preference is mixed. They tend to display behaviors similar to both popular and rejected children. Like popular children, controversial children display prosocial behavior; however, like rejected children they display aggressive behavior (Coie et al., 1982; Dodge, 1983; Newcomb et al., 1993). Sociometric techniques reveal a child's social status within the classroom. Therefore, sociometric research indicates that how children are viewed and evaluated by the peer group exists as early as 4 years of age. During the preschool years children begin to have the social experiences necessary to start learning about the existence of reputations.

The Impact of Reputations and Social Status in the Peer Group

In order for children to understand that gossip may affect their reputation, it is important for children to recognize that reputations and social status may influence peers' interpretation of a child's behavior. Sociometric studies indicate that peers hold rigid negative stereotypes characterizing some rejected children. Peers tend to underestimate the competencies of these unpopular children. For instance, Hymel, Bowker, and Woody (1993) found that regardless of the social behavior exhibited by fourth- and fifth-grade children labeled as unpopular, they were generally viewed as less socially competent and more often excluded from activities by their peers. Furthermore, peers tend to make more negative interpretations of the behaviors of rejected children. For example, Dodge (1980) gave second-, fourth-, and sixth-grade boys hypothetical stories in which peers treated others in a negative manner. When a peer with a reputation for

aggressive behavior performed the negative act, his peers were likely to assume the act was intentional. However, if a boy with a nonaggressive reputation performed the negative act, his peers were likely to assume the act was accidental. Similarly, Dodge and Frame (1982) presented kindergarten through fifth-grade boys who were labeled as either aggressive or nonaggressive by their peers and teachers with hypothetical stories in which a frustrating outcome was instigated by a peer. Dodge and Frame found that when an aggressive boy was the instigator, more hostility was attributed to his behavior than if a nonaggressive boy was the instigator. Therefore, children's interpretations of an individual's behavior vary as a function of his or her prior reputation.

Children who behave in a negative manner and therefore are rejected by their peers may be exposed to more negative social interactions and to a more hostile environment than other children (Bierman, 1989). For instance, Hymel (1986) examined attributional biases in second- and fifth-grade children's interpretations of hypothetical stories involving positive and negative behaviors displayed by children who are liked and disliked by their peers. Positive behaviors were attributed to more stable, internal causes when performed by liked peers rather than disliked peers. In contrast, negative behaviors were attributed to more stable, internal causes when performed by disliked peers rather than liked peers. Greater responsibility for negative behavior was attributed to disliked peers than liked peers. Once a child's reputation is established, peers' responses to that child are strongly influenced by his or her reputation (Hymel, 1986).

Continuous negative social interactions with peers put these children at greater risk for harmful developmental outcomes. Peer rejection in childhood can have long-term consequences including loneliness and social dissatisfaction, committing juvenile offenses, dropping out of school, and suffering from psychopathology (e.g., Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1984; Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998; Morison & Masten, 1991; for a review, see Parker & Asher, 1987). For instance, Ollendick, et al. (1992) measured children's social status in fourth grade using sociometric rating and nomination techniques. Five years later, measures of academic, behavioral, and psychological adjustment were compared for children in each status group: popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average. As compared to the other four statuses, rejected children were perceived as less likable by their peers. Peers also reported rejected children as being more aggressive than popular, average, and neglected children. Self- and teacher reports revealed more conduct problems for rejected children. In addition, rejected children reported more substance abuse, did not perform as well academically, failed more grades, were more likely to drop out of school, and committed more delinquent offenses than did popular and average children.

A child's reputation and social status among the peer group seem to be relatively stable over time (e.g., Coie & Dodge, 1983; for a review, see Jiang & Cillessen, 2005; Lemerise, Harper, & Howes, 1998; Masten et al., 1985; Morison & Masten, 1991; Newcomb & Bukowski, 1983; Ollendick et al., 1992). For example, to assess the stability of peer reputation, Masten et al. administered

the Revised Class Play to third through sixth graders and again after 6 and 17 months. The stability correlations for the three social reputation factors were .87 and .63 for Sociability-Leadership, .77 and .64 for Aggressive-Disruptive, and .80 and .66 for Sensitive-Isolated, respectively, for the three scores. Children's positive and negative behavioral reputations were relatively consistent over time. Also, Ollendick et al. (1991) used rating scale and peer nomination procedures to measure children's social status in fourth grade and again at 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months later. Children classified as popular children tended to remain popular and children classified as rejected tended to remain rejected over time. However, the neglected children's status tended to change over time. When peers expect inappropriate social behavior from a particular child, they may become selectively attentive to such behavior and unresponsive to that child's prosocial behavior. Consequently, rejected or disliked children may be exposed to a more negative social environment than other children. Once a child is rejected by his or her peers, it seems as though those peers look for behaviors that reinforce that child's negative reputation (Hymel, Wagner, & Butler, 1990). In some instances, even when rejected children have shown behavioral improvements, their social status among the peer group did not improve (La Greca & Santogrossi, 1980; Whitehall, Hersen, & Bellack, 1980). These biased views may function to sustain positive and negative reputations of popular and rejected children, ensuring that status differences are maintained.

Similarly, Morison & Masten (1991) asked third- to sixth-grade children to nominate classmates for roles in an imaginary play. Children who were

frequently nominated for roles such as "has many friends" and "everyone likes to be with" were identified as popular and children who were frequently nominated for roles such as "picks on other kids" and "teases other children too much" were identified as rejected. Children who were popular in grades three to six had high self-esteem and were doing well academically seven years later. In contrast, children who were rejected in grades three to six had low self-esteem and were not doing well academically seven years later.

At an early age (i.e., around preschool or kindergarten) a child's reputation and social status can influence his or her social experiences among the peer group. Children's understanding of the causes and consequences of social interactions within their peer group contributes to the ability to reflect upon their social experiences and also helps children to anticipate and explain the behaviors, thoughts, and emotional reactions of their peers. Therefore, children at this age could begin to understand their reputation may influence how the peer group interprets their actions.

<div align="center">Development of Gossip in Children's Peer Groups</div>

To understand how reputations originate, spread, and are maintained, children need to recognize that what others say about them can influence how they are viewed and treated by the peer group. Individuals may alter their opinions about someone based on what they have heard. Therefore, it is important to determine when children might begin to understand that gossip can influence an individual's reputation among the peer group. Children need to

have experiences with gossip in order to learn about the functions and consequences of gossip. Thus, to fully understand reputations and their influence on social experience, it is important for children to understand that people with different reputations may be impacted differently by gossip. That is, in addition to gossip influencing a person's reputation, the impact of gossip may depend upon a person's prior reputation and social status. For instance, the impact of negative gossip on a child who is well liked among the peer group may differ than if that child is disliked among his or her peers.

The word "gossip" developed out of the Old English as a contraction of the phrase "god sib," meaning god-parent or an individual who was a sponsor at a baptism (Fine & Rosnow, 1978; Rosnow, 2001; Rysman, 1977). Currently, the word "gossip" typically refers to idle talk that mainly focuses on someone else's personal relations. Most gossip that occurs tends to be harmless, but some gossip can be damaging to an individual's relationships with others. Although gossip can be positive, negative, or neutral, the term has acquired a negative connotation, implying that it is not appropriate to believe or spread such information.

The types of activities children engage in with one another change as children get older. During early childhood children spend the majority of time with peers engaging in social and pretend play; however, as children get older there is a shift in the types of activities they engage in with peers. Gossip occurs less frequently during early childhood (3 to 7 years old) but quite often in conversions during middle childhood (8 to 12 years old) and adolescence (13 to

17 years old) (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). As children enter middle childhood and adolescence they spend most of their time together participating in sport activities and hanging out talking and gossiping (Zarbatany, Hartman, & Rankin, 1990). Therefore, gossip is considered one of the most salient social processes among older children and adolescents.

Besides the frequency of gossip, the content of children's gossip also differs throughout childhood and adolescence. By the time children reach the age of three, they begin to talk about characteristics and behaviors of individuals who are not present (Fine, 1977). Initially, these comments occur without evaluative judgments; however, judgments soon follow. According to Fine (1977), children's gossip consists of four elements: (a) content-socialization, (b) evaluation, (c) interpersonal, and (d) competence. Children tend to gossip about matters that are of interest to them. For example, preadolescent boys may gossip about sexual behavior (Fine, 1977). For children, gossip can be a way to learn about how society functions (Baumeister, Zhang, & Vohs, 2004; for a review, see Foster, 2004). Gossip can function as a way of maintaining social groups. Children can use gossip to make comparisons between themselves and others. These comparisons allow children to evaluate their own attitudes and behaviors. Gossip discourages individuals from violating group norms through fear of being excluded from the group (Foster, 2004). Gossip also allows children to evaluate others, for instance, what someone wears or how an individual behaves in a particular situation compared to the norm. Gossip can be a threat to an individual. Negative gossip has the potential to damage an

individual's reputation. However, gossip can also be beneficial to an individual. Positive gossip can be used to enhance an individual's status in a group and it is mostly directed at certain members of the group, generally those of lower status. An essential element of children's gossip is their ability to gossip. Children learn how to gossip effectively among the peer group. They not only learn what to gossip about but also the manner in which to do it (Fine, 1977). For instance, when children begin to gossip in early childhood they often gossip about an individual who is present; however, as children get older they learn it is more socially acceptable to gossip about an individual who is not present (Goodwin, 1982).

As children enter middle childhood, they begin to use gossip as a tool to determine social norms for peer acceptance (Eder & Enke, 1991; Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Gottman and Mettetal examined social relationships during early childhood (3 to 7 years of age), middle childhood (8 to 12 years of age), and adolescence (13 to 17 years of age). During early childhood, gossip does not frequently occur in conversation. When gossip does occur, its main function is unity. Children at this age want to be part of the group while denying others access to the group. Gossip is extremely prevalent in the conversations of friends during middle childhood. It involves negative evaluation of people, and similar to early childhood, the function of gossip during middle childhood is unity. However, during middle childhood gossip is used to figure out normative behavior for peer acceptance, something that is not observed in early childhood (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Children during this period want to avoid

embarrassment (e.g., wearing the "wrong" clothes or sitting with the "wrong" person at lunch). Gossip centers on appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in order to be accepted by the peer group. This finding is consistent with the cultural learning view of gossip. According to the cultural learning view, gossip conveys information regarding social norms for behavior (Baumeister et al., 2004). It helps people learn about how to function effectively in various situations. Gossip allows people to learn about what is appropriate and inappropriate by hearing about the behaviors of others. During adolescence, understanding of the self in relation to others is an important social goal. Gossip that occurs during this period involves both positive and negative evaluations. Adolescents realize there are both positive and negative aspects of people, just as there are positive and negative aspects of themselves (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986).

During middle childhood (i.e., 8 – 12 years of age) gossip becomes prevalent among the peer group and is used to evaluate others. Given that children in middle childhood use gossip to determine social norms for peer acceptance, one would expect that knowledge of reputations at this age would include indirect information. Therefore, children may begin to recognize the impact of gossip on reputations beginning at age eight. Gossip is one source of information that contributes to knowledge of reputations, but a more complete understating would include understanding of other sources of information. Thus, children's understanding of knowledge sources and how they contribute to reputations is also considered.

Children's Understanding of the Sources of Knowledge

To understand reputations, children need to be aware of the cognitive processes by which they are formed. They should recognize that gossip can affect an individual's reputation among the peer group. It is important for children to understand that a reputation is a belief held by a group of individuals and this belief may be acquired through (a) direct experiences or (b) indirect experiences: gossip and inference. Children may form opinions of others by witnessing a person's behavior or participating in an interaction with the person, or they may infer events or attributes and use those as part of their opinion of a person, or they may hear things through gossip. Since reputations may be acquired through direct experiences it is important to know when children understand that direct experiences may influence beliefs. Understanding of direct sources of knowledge begins in the preschool years. By the age of three, children have some understanding of the relation between seeing and knowing (e.g., Pillow, 1989; 1993; Pratt & Bryant, 1990). By the age of four, children know that (a) people acquire beliefs through perceptual experiences, (b) different people can have different beliefs, and (c) beliefs may be false (e.g., Hogrefe, Wimmer, & Perner, 1986; Wimmer & Perner, 1983). Wimmer and Perner had four- to nine-year-olds listen to stories in which an individual had a mistaken belief. For instance, one of the stories consisted of a girl hiding her favorite book in the classroom. When everyone went for a walk, the teacher reshelved the book. Then the child was asked, "Where will the girl look for the book?" Wimmer and Perner found that even four-year-olds were able to

represent wrong beliefs and thus recognize that another person's beliefs may be different from their own. Therefore, it is possible that young children might understand that direct experience could influence one person's belief about another person.

Reputations may spread through a peer group by indirect information in the form of gossip. Children tend to treat indirect information (i.e., an utterance) as unreliable compared with direct information (i.e., sight) (e.g., Mitchell, Robinson, Nye, & Isaacs, 1997; Robinson, Mitchell, & Nye, 1995). For instance, Robinson, Mitchell, and Nye had 3 – 4-year-olds guess the content of a box from the picture on its exterior (e.g., a car). Then the experimenter looked inside the box and contradicted the children's expectations by saying there was something inside the box that did not coincide with the picture on its exterior (e.g., a teddy). Then another experimenter or doll asked about the contents of the box. Children were more likely to maintain their initial belief about the box's contents, which was inferred from the picture on the exterior of the box, rather than accept what they had been told by the experimenter. They believed what they had seen with their own eyes in preference to something contradictory that was told to them by the experimenter. Therefore, 3 – 4-year-olds do not give more weight to the utterance of a speaker who has relevant visual experience than to one who has no relevant visual experience. Given that gossip is a form of indirect information, children may treat gossip as unreliable, especially if it does not coincide with a person's prior reputation.

Since reputations involve expectations about an individual's typical

behavior, understanding that an individual's preexisting expectations influence the interpretation of another person's behavior is important for understanding how reputations function. Pillow (1991) investigated preschoolers', kindergartners', and second graders' understanding that an individual's expectations may influence the interpretation of another's behavior. Each child received four stories that consisted of three characters per story. In two of the stories, one character liked the target character and one character disliked the target character and in the other two stories both characters either liked or disliked the target character. In each story the target character performed an ambiguous action that could be interpreted as positive or negative. Pillow found that both kindergartners and second graders have some understanding that preexisting beliefs and expectations may influence how social information is interpreted. That is, prior knowledge or beliefs about individuals can affect the way a person interprets, explains, and predicts their behavior. Thus, around the age of six or seven children know about differences in the interpretation of behavior. Therefore, once a child has a reputation, peers may tend to interpret that child's behavior in a way that is consistent with his or her reputation. Pillow's study shows that six- or seven-year-olds may be able to understand that aspect of reputations. Additionally, it suggests that children at this age may understand that gossip may be based on biased interpretations and therefore may not be reliable.

Knowledge of the Existence of Reputations

As mentioned previously, reputations exist in children's peer groups around four years of age. Therefore, at this age children could begin to learn about reputations. Hill and Pillow (2006) examined children's awareness of reputations and their influence on social life; more specifically, the age at which children recognize there are shared opinions among the peer group and that those opinions can originate directly or indirectly. Kindergartners, second, and fourth graders were read hypothetical stories about a target character who displayed either positive or negative behaviors. Then children were asked about various characters' opinions of that target character (i.e., witness-recipient, companion, friend/not friend, classmate, new child). Second and fourth graders gave responses referring to gossip or hearsay most often for the companion character. For example, they often responded that the witness-recipient character told the companion character what the target character had done. This finding addresses children's understanding that reputations can form from indirect information. While kindergartners understand that reputations are based on direct experience, they may have difficulty understanding that reputations can also form through indirect information, such as gossip (Hill & Pillow, 2006). While this study found that older children understand that reputations can develop from gossip, it did not address whether children understand that gossip can influence an individual's reputation among his or her peers.

In terms of children's understanding of their own reputation, the interpersonal perception literature examines children's awareness of how others

view and evaluate them (e.g., Bellmore & Cillessen, 2003; Krantz & Burton, 1986; MacDonald & Cohen, 1995; Sandstrom & Herlan, 2007; Zakriski & Coie, 1996). Krantz and Burton (1986) examined the development of kindergarten through third-grade children's awareness of their own and others' popularity. A difference was found between children's ability to accurately assess others' perceived popularity (which was measured by the number of best friends) and one's own perceived popularity. While even the younger children were reasonably accurate in determining their peers' popularity, it was not until the third grade that children could accurately determine their own popularity. Thus, there seems to be a developmental delay in children's ability to accurately attribute popularity to themselves. This delay may affect children's social interactions with others. If young children cannot accurately assess how they are viewed by others, they may miss out on opportunities to make friends. They may not approach another peer who likes them or considers them a friend. That could lead to fewer positive interactions with others which in turn could lead to social isolation. Therefore, being able to accurately assess one's own popularity among the peer group, which occurs around the third grade, may be an important component for children's social development.

Children's Understanding of How Reputations Function

A child's reputation among the peer group can affect his or her social experiences. Reputations can influence how children are perceived and treated by others. Therefore, what children know about the functions of reputations may

depend upon how reputations function in the peer group. There are various ways in which reputations can function in the peer group. For instance, reputations may function to maintain social norms. Children do not want to engage in behaviors that are deemed socially inappropriate that may cause them to be disliked by their peers. In addition, reputations may function to maintain social status group distinctions. Children who are well liked among their peers are viewed as popular while children who are disliked by their peers are viewed as unpopular, which influences how their behavior is perceived, evaluated, and responded to by others.

Summary

By age four or five, children are evaluated by the peer group and experience reputations. At this age, children also know about direct sources of information. They understand that reputations are based on direct experience but have difficulty understanding that reputations can also form through indirect information, such as gossip. In addition, at age four, children are able to represent wrong beliefs and recognize that another person's beliefs may be different from their own. Around the age of six or seven children know about differences in the interpretation of behavior. Between the ages of 8 and 12 gossip becomes prevalent among the peer group and children use it to evaluate others.

Goals and Hypotheses

The main goal of this study was to assess children's understanding of the impact of gossip on reputation. More specifically, this study examined children's understanding that people with different initial reputations may be impacted differently by gossip. For the purposes of this study, a reputation was defined as a group's shared evaluation, attitudes, and expectations about an individual or group of individuals. Gossip was defined as sharing of information (positive, negative, or neutral) about an individual who is not present.

Three target characters (i.e. hypothetical peers) were examined: (a) prosocial, (b) antisocial, and (c) low-social. Children were read a target character description followed by a positive, negative, or neutral event or gossip scenario. Then children were asked questions regarding how much the gossip spread among the peer group and the believability of the gossip. In addition, children were asked questions regarding characteristics of the target characters and the target characters' likeability among the peer group. There were two conditions in the study: event and gossip. In the event condition, children heard stories in which an event that the target character participated in was mentioned. In the gossip condition, children heard stories in which the target character's peers gossiped about an action the target character had performed. The event condition was included as a control to see whether children superficially respond to any (positive or negative) information presented after the character description without understanding reputations and gossip.

The study examined three hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that

children would recognize that likeability among peers can be influenced by gossip valence. That is, positive and negative gossip scenarios were expected to have the greatest impact on judgments of likeability, especially for the low-social target character. Based on prior research regarding rejected children (e.g., Dodge, 1980; Hymel, 1986) positive gossip was not expected to influence likeability of the antisocial character. Similarly, negative gossip was not expected to influence likeability of the prosocial character. In addition, neutral gossip was not expected to influence likeability for the three target characters.

The second hypothesis was that children would recognize that prior reputations among the peer group can be influenced by gossip valence. It was predicted for children at each age level that type of gossip would have the greatest impact on the low-social character's reputation. Since neglected children's social status may change over time depending on their rate of interaction with others (Newcomb et al., 1993), type of gossip was expected to have the greatest impact on the low-social character's reputation. Based on prior research regarding social status (e.g., Dodge, 1980; Hymel et al., 1993), negative gossip was not expected to influence the prosocial character's reputation as much as the low-social character's reputation. Similarly, positive gossip was not expected to influence the antisocial character's reputation as much as the low-social character's reputation.

The third hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can spread among the peer group. Since gossip is more salient in conversations during middle childhood and adolescence than early childhood (e.g., Fine, 1977;

Gottman & Mettetal, 1986), it was expected that more sixth graders would respond that the gossip spread to more peers in the class than second graders.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Seventy-three second-grade children (mean age = 8 years, 2 months; range = 7 year, 7 months – 9 years; 36 boys, 37 girls) and 72 sixth-grade children (mean age = 12 years, 2 months; range = 11 years, 7 months – 13 years, 7 months; 36 boys, 36 girls) participated. The students were from one parochial and two public (elementary and junior high) schools located in three midwestern school districts. Parents gave written consent for their children and each child gave oral assent to participate.

Materials

Six stories accompanied by illustrations were used. Three of the stories involved a target character and two gossipers and three of the stories involved just the target character. Each story consisted of two parts. The first part was a description of the target character's social status (i.e., prosocial, antisocial, or low-social). The second part was either a conversation between the two gossipers, in which they discussed the target character (i.e., gossip condition) or an event in which the target character engaged in a positive, negative, or neutral act (i.e., event condition).

Descriptions of three target characters were also used. Each target character was (a) prosocial, (b) antisocial, or (c) low-social. Each description contained three types of information regarding the target character: (a) a description of the amount of friends of the target character, (b) a description of a characteristic episode that illustrates the target character's typical behavior, and (c) a description of the target character's habitual behavior. Two pieces of neutral information were also included in each description. Each target character description was accompanied by an illustration of that target character.

An example of a description of a prosocial peer was as follows: "This is Ben. Ben has a lot of friends (friendship description). Ben painted a picture of a house in art class (neutral). Yesterday during class, Ben helped another kid with his homework (characteristic episode). Last week, Ben went to the zoo (neutral). Ben often invites other kids to play (habitual behavior)." The other character descriptions followed the same format. The target character descriptions are presented in Appendix A.

Three gossip scenarios (positive, negative, and neutral) accompanied by illustrations were also used. In each scenario, two characters (the gossipers) had a conversation about one of the three target characters. One of the gossipers heard something about the target character. This first gossiper then told that information to the second gossiper. The second gossiper replied that he or she heard that same information about the target character. Both gossipers then passed the information to someone else. The gossip in each scenario was positive, negative, or neutral.

An example of the positive gossip scenario was as follows: "Chris and Dan were talking about Ben. Chris said, 'I heard something about Ben. The other day during lunch a kid dropped his dessert on the floor. Ben had one cupcake and gave the other kid his cupcake to eat.' Dan said, 'Yeah, I heard that about Ben too.' Later that day, both Chris and Dan told someone else about Ben giving away his cupcake. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school." Negative and neutral gossip scenarios followed the same format; however, negative information was used in the negative gossip scenario and neutral information in the neutral gossip scenario. Each picture depicted the two gossipers engaging in a conversation (about one of the three target characters). The gossip scenarios are presented in Appendix B.

Three event scenarios (positive, negative, and neutral) accompanied by illustrations were also used. In each scenario, the target character engaged in a positive, negative, or neutral act.

An example of the positive event scenario was as follows: "The other day during lunch a kid dropped his dessert on the floor. Ben had one cupcake and gave the other kid his cupcake to eat. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school." The event scenarios are presented in Appendix B.

A rating scale was used to assess children's responses regarding each target character. The rating scale was a bar graph that consisted of five response options. Children chose one of the five ratings for each question: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some, (d) most, and (e) all. The rating scale is presented in Appendix C.

Design

There were two conditions: (a) event and (b) gossip. Half of the children at each age level participated in each condition. Thus, there were 36 children of each age in the event condition and 37 second graders and 36 sixth graders in the gossip condition. Children in each of these two conditions were assigned to one of three target character descriptions: prosocial, antisocial, or low-social. Thus, there were six groups within each grade: (a) prosocial-event, (b) antisocial-event, (c) low-social/event, (d) prosocial-gossip, (e) antisocial-gossip, and (f) low-social/gossip. Of the 36 children in the event condition, 12 children heard descriptions regarding three prosocial target characters, 12 children heard descriptions regarding three antisocial target characters, and 12 children heard descriptions regarding three low-social target characters. Within the event condition, all children heard positive, negative, and neutral event scenarios. Of the 37 second graders in the gossip condition, 13 children heard descriptions regarding three prosocial target characters, 12 children heard descriptions regarding three antisocial target characters, and 12 children heard descriptions regarding three low-social target characters. Of the 36 sixth graders in the gossip condition, 12 children heard descriptions regarding three prosocial target characters, 12 children heard descriptions regarding three antisocial target characters, and 12 children heard descriptions regarding three low-social target characters. Within the gossip condition, all children heard positive, negative, and neutral gossip scenarios. The order of the scenarios (positive, negative, and neutral) within each condition (event and gossip) were counterbalanced across

children.

The Initial Likeability Judgment was assessed after each social status description. The Spread of Gossip Question followed by the Gossip Belief Question was asked after each event or gossip scenario to ensure the saliency of the gossip. The Final Likeability Judgment was assessed after the gossip questions, followed by the three Trait Questions. The Final Likeability Judgment was asked before the Trait Questions in order to avoid a response bias which may have occurred if it were to follow the Trait Questions. The order of the three Trait Questions was counterbalanced across children.

The variables of age, gender of child, and character were between-subjects variables while the scenario valence and time of likeability judgment variables were within-subjects variables.

Procedure

First, the experimenter introduced herself to the child and explained that she would tell the child some stories and ask the child some questions. This introduction was followed by a brief warm-up to familiarize the child with the rating scale. During the warm-up, the child was asked three judgment questions: 1) How many kids in the class like to play soccer? 2) How many kids in the class think a math test is fun? 3) How many kids in the class like to read? It was expected that children's responses to these warm-up items would vary from "few" to "most," rather than children's responses perseverating on the two extreme ratings. In particular, for the question, "How many kids in the class like

to play soccer?" children were expected to respond "most." For the question, "How many kids in the class think a math test is fun?" children were expected to respond "few." Finally, for the question, "How many kids in the class like to read?" children were expected to respond "some."

After the warm-up procedure, the experimenter read a target character description (i.e., prosocial, antisocial, or low-social). After the character description was read, the child was asked the Initial Likeability Judgment Question: "How many kids in the class like the target character?" to assess the target character's initial likeability among his or her peers. This was followed by a positive, negative, or neutral gossip or event scenario. After the scenario, the child was asked six questions concerning the target character: (a) Spread of Gossip Question: "How many kids in the class heard about (target character's name) performing what was stated in the scenario (i.e., giving away his/her cupcake; taking the soccer ball; going to Disneyland last summer)?" (b) Gossip Belief Question: "How many kids in the class believe (target character's name) performed what was stated in the scenario (i.e., gave away his/her cupcake; took the soccer ball; went to Disneyland last summer)?" (c) Final Likeability Judgment Question: "How many kids in the class like (target character's name)?" and (d) three Trait Questions: "How many kids in the class think (target character's name) is friendly?"; "How many kids in the class think (target character's name) is mean?"; "How many kids in the class think (target character's name) is shy?" For each of the seven questions, the child was given five options: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some, (d) most, and (e) all.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

To examine whether children perseverated in their judgments, a preliminary inspection was conducted on the three warm-up questions. Individual children's responses varied across the three questions, with the exception of one child. When that one child was further asked to clarify her responses, she demonstrated understanding of the rating scale. Thus, no data was excluded from the analyses.

The data was analyzed in a two-step process. For step one, the gossip and event conditions were compared. To determine whether the effect of scenario valence differed in the two conditions, repeated-measure ANOVAs were conducted for each of the six dependent measures. It was expected that scenario valence would have a stronger impact on the gossip scenarios than the event scenarios. For step two, the gossip and event conditions were examined separately. In each of the two conditions, repeated-measure ANOVAs were performed for each of the six dependent measures. These analyses provided a more detailed view of children's performance in each condition. Specifically, the purpose of these analyses was to see whether children recognize that gossip can (a) influence likeability, (b) influence a person's reputation, and (c) spread

among the peer group. In order to avoid confusion, throughout the presentation of the results, the word "children" is used when referring to the participants of the study, whereas the word "kids" is used when referring to the story characters about whom the participants made judgments.

Comparison of Conditions

For each question, a 2 x 3 (Condition x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted to assess whether scenario valence functioned differently in the gossip and event conditions. The condition variable was the between-subjects variable while scenario valence was the within-subjects variable. For each question, children were given five response options: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some, (d) most, and (e) all. For each scenario valence children received a score ranging from 0 – 4, with "none" corresponding to a score of zero, "few" corresponding to a score of 1, "some" corresponding to a score of 2, "most" corresponding to a score of 3, and "all" corresponding to a score of 4.

For the Likeability Judgment Questions, a 2 x 3 x 2 (Condition x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment) ANOVA yielded a significant Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, $F(2,286) = 96.03$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .40$. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. Follow-up t tests comparing likeability at Time 1 and likeability at Time 2 for each scenario valence revealed a significant effect of time of likeability judgment for the positive, $t(144) = -10.94$, $p < .001$; negative, $t(144) = 6.18$, $p < .001$; and neutral, $t(144) = -2.75$, $p < .05$, scenarios. For the positive and neutral scenarios,

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Condition, Scenario Valence, & Time of Likeability Judgment for Likeability Judgment Questions

	Scenario Valence					
	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Condition & Time of Likeability Judgment						
Gossip						
Time 1	1.75	1.20	1.85	1.19	1.82	1.28
Time 2	2.44	1.11	1.23	1.12	2.08	1.10
Event						
Time 1	1.86	1.30	1.85	1.25	1.94	1.25
Time 2	2.57	1.16	1.43	1.09	2.04	1.22

Note. Time 1 refers to the Initial Likeability Judgment Question and Time 2 refers to the Final Likeability Judgment Question. Means can range from 0 to 4.

children responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 2 than Time 1. In contrast, for the negative scenarios, children responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 1 than Time 2. Children judged that positive or neutral scenarios increased the target character's likeability, but the negative scenarios decreased likeability. Results are presented in Table 2.

For each Trait Question, a 2 x 3 (Condition x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted. Means and standard deviations for each Trait Question are presented in Table 3. For the Friendly Trait Question, a significant main effect of scenario valence was found, $F(2,286) = 102.56$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .42$. Children distinguished the positive scenarios from the negative and neutral scenarios and the neutral scenarios from the negative scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.24, p < .05. More specifically, children responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the positive scenarios ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.18$) than for the negative ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.14$) and neutral ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.35$) scenarios and that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the neutral scenarios ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.35$) than the negative scenarios ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.14$).

For the Mean Trait Question, a significant main effect of scenario valence was found, $F(2,286) = 141.77$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .50$. Children distinguished the negative scenarios from the neutral and positive scenarios and the neutral scenarios from the positive scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.24, p < .05. That is, children responded that more kids thought the target characters were mean for negative scenarios ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.17$) than for the neutral ($M = 1.26$, $SD =$

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Scenario Valence & Time of

Likeability Judgment for Likeability Judgment Questions

	Scenario Valence					
	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Time of Likeability Judgment						
Time 1	1.81_b	1.25	1.85_a	1.26	1.88_b	1.27
Time 2	2.50_a	1.13	1.33_b	1.11	2.06_a	1.16

Note. Time 1 refers to the Initial Likeability Judgment Question and Time 2 refers to the Final Likeability Judgment Question. Means can range from 0 to 4. For positive and negative scenario valence, means within the columns that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .001$. For the neutral scenario valence, means within the column that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Condition & Scenario Valence
for the Trait Questions

	Scenario Valence					
	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Question & Condition						
Friendly						
Gossip	2.70	1.11	1.14	1.16	2.21	1.24
Event	2.56	1.25	1.35	1.13	2.21	1.47
Mean						
Gossip	0.82	0.95	2.51	1.27	1.15	1.27
Event	0.93	1.12	2.47	1.07	1.38	1.36
Shy						
Gossip	1.44	1.21	1.11	1.14	1.36	1.11
Event	1.40	1.02	1.18	1.13	1.47	1.13

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

1.31) and positive (M = 0.88, SD = 1.03) scenarios and that more kids thought

the target characters were mean for the neutral scenarios (M = 1.26, SD = 1.31)

than for the positive scenarios (M = 0.88, SD = 1.03).

For the Shy Trait Question, a significant main effect of scenario valence

was found, $F(2,286)$ = 5.69, p < .01, partial η^2 = .04. Children distinguished the

positive and neutral scenarios from the negative scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.22,

p < .05. More specifically, children responded that more kids thought the target

characters were shy for the positive (M = 1.42, SD = 1.12) and neutral (M =

1.41, SD = 1.12) scenarios than for the negative scenarios (M = 1.14, SD =

1.13).

For each Gossip Question, a 2 x 3 (Condition x Scenario Valence)

ANOVA was conducted. Means and standard deviations for each Gossip

Question are presented in Table 4. For the Spread of Gossip Question, a

significant main effect of scenario valence was found, $F(2,286)$ = 10.11, p <

.001, partial η^2 = .07. Children distinguished the negative scenarios from the

positive and neutral scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.25, p < .05. More specifically,

children responded that more kids heard about the target characters' action for

the negative scenarios (M = 2.92, SD = 0.96) than for the positive (M = 2.53, SD

= 0.95) and neutral (M = 2.49, SD = 1.05) scenarios. For the Gossip Belief

Question, no significant results were found. This would suggest that children

responded that the information in the gossip and event scenarios would be

believed equally for all valences.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Condition & Scenario Valence for the Gossip Questions

| | Scenario Valence | | | | | |
| | Positive | | Negative | | Neutral | |
Question & Condition	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Spread of Gossip						
Gossip	2.59	0.91	2.92	0.92	2.71	0.81
Event	2.47	0.99	2.93	1.00	2.26	1.21
Gossip Belief						
Gossip	2.18	0.92	2.48	1.00	2.14	1.02
Event	2.42	1.04	2.46	1.03	2.33	1.11

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that scenario valence had an impact on children's judgments of likeability among the peer group, children's perceptions of the characteristics of the target characters, and children's assumptions about the spread of gossip among the peer group for each condition. More specifically, children responded that positive and neutral scenarios would increase likeability, whereas negative scenarios would decrease likeability among the peer group. In addition, positive and neutral scenarios would increase the number of kids that think a peer is friendly or shy, whereas negative scenarios would increase the number of kids that think a peer is mean. Children also responded that more kids would hear about a negative action about a peer than a positive or neutral action. Contrary to expectations, children's performance in the gossip and event conditions did not differ. Responses to the spread of gossip question indicate that children assumed that members of the peer group would hear about the target character's behavior in both conditions. Thus, children may have inferred the occurrence of gossip in the event condition in the absence of explicit mention of gossip.

Separate Analyses of Each Condition

For step two, separate ANOVAs were conducted in each condition for each of the six dependent measures. These analyses provided a more detailed view of children's performance in each condition.

Likeability Judgment

The first hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can influence the likeability of the target character. To test this hypothesis, responses to the Initial Likeability Judgment and the Final Likeability Judgment were examined. For the Initial Likeability Judgment and the Final Likeability Judgment (i.e., how many kids in the class like the target character?), children were given five response options: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some, (d) most, and (e) all. For each scenario valence children received a score ranging from 0 – 4, with "none" corresponding to a score of zero, "few" corresponding to a score of 1, "some" corresponding to a score of 2, "most" corresponding to a score of 3, and "all" corresponding to a score of 4. As a manipulation check, a 2 x 3 x 2 (Condition x Character x Age) ANOVA was conducted for the Initial Likeability Judgment Question. This was done to see if there were initial differences in the target characters' likeability before hearing the gossip or event scenarios. A main effect of character was found, $F(2,133) = 173.85$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .72$. Children distinguished the prosocial target character from the low-social and antisocial target characters and the low-social target character from the antisocial target character, Tukey's HSD = 0.43, $p < .05$. That is, children responded that more kids liked the prosocial ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.57$) target character than the low-social ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.76$) and antisocial ($M = 0.65$, $SD = 0.56$) target characters and more kids liked the low-social target character than the antisocial target character.

In addition, for each condition (event and gossip), a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 x 2 (Age

x Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability

Judgment) ANOVA was conducted to assess whether children understand that

gossip can influence a child's likeability among his or her peers. The variables of

age, gender of child, and character were between-subjects variables while the

scenario valence and time of likeability judgment variables were within-subjects

variables. The time of likeability judgment variable consisted of two dependent

measures: the character's likeability at Time 1 (i.e., Initial Likeability Judgment

score) and the character's likeability at Time 2 (i.e., the Final Likeability

Judgment score). A Character x Scenario Valence interaction was predicted.

The impact of positive and negative gossip scenarios was expected to be

greatest for the low-social character's likeability among the peer group. In

contrast, scenario valence was not expected to influence likeability of the

antisocial or prosocial target characters. More specifically, positive gossip was

not expected to influence likeability of the antisocial character and negative

gossip was not expected to influence likeability of the prosocial character. In

addition, neutral gossip was not expected to influence likeability of three target

characters. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 5.

<u>Gossip Condition</u>

In the gossip condition, a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 x 2 (Age x Gender of Child x

Character x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment) ANOVA yielded a

significant Character x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, $F(2,61) = 4.37$,

$p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$; a significant Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability

Table 5

Means & Standard Deviations of Responses by Character, Condition, Age, Time

of Likeability Judgment, & Scenario Valence for Likeability Judgment Questions

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Condition, Age, Time of Likeability Judgment & Scenario Valence						

Gossip

2nd grade

Time 1

	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
positive	2.76	1.01	0.67	0.65	2.08	1.16
negative	3.08	0.86	0.83	1.03	1.83	0.94
neutral	2.92	1.04	0.50	0.80	2.17	1.19

Time 2

	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
positive	3.23	0.93	1.50	0.90	2.83	1.27
negative	2.54	1.20	0.75	0.97	1.17	1.11
neutral	3.00	0.71	0.92	0.90	2.17	1.19

(continued on following page)

Table 5 (continued)

6th grade

Time 1

positive	2.92	0.29	0.67	0.65	1.33	0.65
negative	2.83	0.39	0.92	0.79	1.50	0.80
neutral	3.00	0.60	0.83	0.72	1.42	0.67

Time 2

positive	3.08	0.51	1.67	0.89	2.25	0.75
negative	1.58	0.79	0.42	0.51	0.83	0.58
neutral	3.00	0.43	1.42	0.79	1.92	0.67

Event

2nd grade

Time 1

positive	3.17	0.39	0.58	0.67	1.92	1.16
negative	3.17	0.39	0.42	0.51	2.08	1.08
neutral	3.17	0.58	0.58	0.67	2.25	1.06

Table 5 (continued)

Time 2

positive	3.58	0.51	1.33	0.78	3.00	1.35
negative	2.25	0.87	0.75	0.75	1.75	1.06
neutral	3.17	0.58	0.75	0.87	2.33	1.15

6th grade

Time 1

positive	3.33	0.49	0.50	0.52	1.67	0.65
negative	3.00	0.60	0.67	0.78	1.75	0.62
neutral	3.08	0.67	0.67	0.65	1.92	0.67

Time 2

positive	3.42	0.51	1.67	0.78	2.42	0.67
negative	2.08	1.24	0.67	0.89	1.08	0.51
neutral	2.92	0.90	1.00	0.74	2.08	0.67

Note. Time 1 refers to the Initial Likeability Judgment Question and Time 2 refers to the Final Likeability Judgment Question. Means can range from 0 to 4.

Judgment interaction, $F(2,122) = 54.95$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .47$; and a significant Age x Gender interaction, $F(1,61) = 5.19$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. For the Character x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each character revealed a significant effect of time of likeability judgment for the antisocial target character, $F(1,23) = 19.08$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .45$, but not for the prosocial, $F(1,24) = 1.14$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, or low-social, $F(1,23) = 1.17$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, target characters. Children responded that more kids liked the antisocial target character at Time 2 after hearing the gossip ($M = 1.11$, $SD = 0.60$) than at Time 1 before hearing the gossip ($M = 0.74$, $SD = 0.61$). Thus, children judged that gossip about an antisocial peer generally increased other kids' liking of that antisocial peer.

For the Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, follow-up t tests comparing likeability at Time 1 and likeability at Time 2 for each scenario valence revealed a significant effect of time of likeability judgment for the positive, $t(72) = -7.34$, $p < .001$, negative, $t(72) = 5.22$, $p < .001$; and neutral, $t(72) = -2.48$, $p < .05$, gossip scenarios. For the positive and neutral gossip scenarios, children responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 2 than Time 1. In contrast, for the negative gossip scenario, children responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 1 than Time 2. Children judged that positive or neutral gossip increased the target character's likeability, but negative gossip decreased likeability. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Gossip Responses by Scenario Valence &

Time of Likeability Judgment for Likeability Judgment Questions

	Scenario Valence					
	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Time of Likeability Judgment						
Time 1	1.75_b	1.20	1.85_a	1.19	1.82_b	1.28
Time 2	2.44_a	1.11	1.23_b	1.12	2.08_a	1.10

Note. Time 1 refers to the Initial Likeability Judgment Question and Time 2 refers to the Final Likeability Judgment Question. Means can range from 0 to 4. For positive and negative gossip, means within the columns that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .001$. For neutral gossip, means within the column that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

For the Age x Gender interaction, follow-up t tests were conducted comparing gender for each age group. These t tests did not yield a significant effect of gender for second graders, $t(35) = 0.48$, $p > .05$, or sixth graders, $t(34) = -1.28$, $p > .05$.

Event Condition

In the event condition, a 2 x 2 x 3 x 2 x 3 (Age x Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment) ANOVA yielded significant Character x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, $F(2,60) = 11.06$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .27$, and a significant Age x Gender x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, $F(2,120) = 4.14$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$. For the Character x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each character revealed a significant effect of likeability judgment for the prosocial, $F(1,23) = 6.15$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$, and antisocial, $F(1,23) = 16.94$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .42$, target characters, but not for the low-social target character, $F(1,23) = 3.38$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$. Children responded that more kids liked the prosocial target character at Time 1 ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.41$) than Time 2 ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.47$) and more kids liked the antisocial target character at Time 2 ($M = 1.03$, $SD = 0.56$) than at Time 1 ($M = 0.57$, $SD = 0.51$). Children responded that fewer kids liked the prosocial target character after hearing the event scenario, whereas more kids liked the antisocial target character after hearing the event scenario.

To examine the Age x Gender x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability

Judgment interaction, follow-up ANOVAs were conducted separately for each age group. For second graders, there was a Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, $F(2,68) = 15.59$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .31$. This interaction was followed up with t tests comparing likeability at Time 1 and likeability at Time 2 for each scenario valence. A significant effect of time of likeability judgment was found for the positive event scenario, $t(35) = -5.35$, $p < .001$, but not for the negative, $t(35) = 1.87$, $p > .05$, or neutral, $t(35) = -0.55$, $p > .05$, event scenarios. For the positive event scenario, second graders responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 2 than at Time 1. That is, second graders responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing the positive event. For sixth graders, there was a Gender x Scenario Valence x Time of Likeability Judgment interaction, $F(2,68) = 3.69$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$. This interaction was followed up with t tests for each gender comparing likeability at Time 1 and likeability at Time 2 for each scenario valence.

For sixth-grade girls, a significant effect of time of likeability judgment was found for the positive, $t(17) = -5.00$, $p < .001$, and negative, $t(17) = 2.96$, $p < .01$ event scenarios but not for the neutral event scenario, $t(17) = -1.84$, $p > .05$. For the positive event scenario, sixth-grade girls responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 2 than at Time 1. For the negative event scenario, sixth-grade girls responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time1 than at Time 2. That is, sixth-grade girls responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing the positive event but fewer kids liked the target

characters after hearing the negative event. For sixth-grade boys, a significant effect of time of likeability judgment was found for the positive event scenario, $t(17) = -4.12$, $p < .01$, but not for the negative, $t(17) = 1.32$, $p > .05$, or neutral, $t(17) = -0.29$, $p > .05$, event scenarios. For the positive event scenario, sixth-grade boys responded that more kids liked the target characters at Time 2 than at Time 1. That is, sixth-grade boys responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing the positive event. Results are presented in Table 7.

Summary

The first hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can influence the likeability of the target character. In the gossip condition, when asked about the likeability of the target characters children responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing the positive and neutral gossip and fewer kids liked the target characters after hearing the negative gossip. Positive and neutral gossip had a positive impact on likeability, whereas negative gossip had a negative impact on likeability. Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more kids liked the antisocial target character after hearing the gossip scenarios. Specifically, after hearing the positive and neutral gossip, children responded that more kids like the antisocial target character. It was predicted that gossip would have the greatest impact on the low-social target character's likeability among the peer group. However, this result indicates that gossip had an impact on the antisocial target character's likeability.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of Event Responses by Scenario Valence, Age,

Gender, & Time of Likeability Judgment for Likeability Judgment Questions

	Scenario Valence					
	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Age, Gender, & Time of Likeability Judgment						
2nd grade						
Time 1						
Boys	2.00_b	1.24	2.00	1.41	2.06	1.30
Girls	1.78_b	1.44	1.78	1.31	1.94	1.39
Time 2						
Boys	2.94_a	1.16	1.61	1.04	2.22	1.31
Girls	2.33_a	1.46	1.56	1.15	1.94	1.39
6th grade						
Time 1						
Boys	1.83_b	1.29	1.72	1.13	1.89	1.13
Girls	1.83_b	1.34	1.89_a	1.23	1.89	1.28

(continued on following page)

Table 7 (continued)

Time 2

Boys	2.33$_a$	1.03	1.44	1.20	1.94	1.06
Girls	2.67$_a$	0.91	1.11$_b$	0.96	2.06	1.16

Note. Time 1 refers to the Initial Likeability Judgment Question and Time 2 refers to the Final Likeability Judgment Question. Means can range from 0 to 4. For second graders, means within columns that do not share subscripts differ at $p <$ .05 in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison. For sixth graders, means within columns for each gender that do not share subscripts differ at $p <$ .05 in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

In the event condition, both second graders and sixth graders responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing the positive event. However, sixth-grade girls also responded that fewer kids liked the target characters after hearing the negative event. For both age groups, the type of event had an impact on the target characters' likeability. Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more kids liked the antisocial target character after hearing the event scenarios and that fewer kids liked the prosocial target character after hearing the event scenarios.

Trait Questions

The second hypothesis was that children would recognize that type of gossip can influence a person's reputation among the peer group. To test this hypothesis, responses to the three trait questions were examined. For the trait

questions children were asked to rate how many kids in the class thought the target character was friendly, mean, or shy (e.g., for the Friendly Trait Question, children were asked, "How many kids in the class think [target character's name] is friendly?"; for the Mean Trait Question, children were asked, "How many kids in the class think [target character's name] is mean?"; for the Shy Trait Question, children were asked, "How many kids in the class think [target character's name] is shy?"). For each question, children were given five response options: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some, (d) most, and (e) all. For each Trait Question children received a score ranging from $0 - 4$, with "none" corresponding to a score of zero, "few" corresponding to a score of 1, "some" corresponding to a score of 2, "most" corresponding to a score of 3, and "all" corresponding to a score of 4. For each trait question, a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted separately for each condition (event and gossip) to find out whether children understand that gossip can affect a person's reputation. The variables of age, gender of child, and character were between-subjects variables while scenario valence was the within-subjects variable. Results for each of the three trait questions are presented below.

<div align="center">Friendly Trait Question</div>

Gossip Condition

In the gossip condition, for the Friendly Trait Question, there were no effects of gender; therefore, the ANOVA was conducted without the gender of

child variable. A 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA

revealed a main effect of scenario valence, $F(2,134) = 67.32$, $p < .001$, partial η^2

= .50, and a significant Age x Character interaction, $F(2,67) = 4.89$, $p < .05$,

partial η^2 = .13. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8. For

the main effect of scenario valence, children distinguished the positive gossip

scenario from the negative and neutral gossip scenarios and the neutral gossip

scenario from the negative gossip scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.33, $p < .05$. That

is, children responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly

for the positive gossip scenario than for the negative or neutral gossip scenarios

and more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the neutral gossip

scenario than for the negative gossip scenario. Results are presented in Table 9.

The Age x Character interaction was examined further with one-way

between-subjects ANOVAs conducted separately for each age group. These

ANOVAs yielded a significant effect of character for second graders, $F(2,36) =$

19.55, $p < .001$, and sixth graders, $F(2,35) = 23.79$, $p < .001$. Second graders

distinguished the prosocial and low-social target characters from the antisocial

target character, Tukey's HSD = 2.25, $p < .05$. More specifically, second graders

responded that more kids thought the prosocial and low-social target characters

were friendly than the antisocial target character. However, sixth graders

distinguished all three target characters from each other, Tukey's HSD = 1.56, p

< .05. That is, sixth graders responded that more kids thought the prosocial

target character was friendly than thought the low-social and antisocial target

characters were friendly and more kids thought the low-social target character

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Character, Condition, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Friendly Trait Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Condition, Age & Scenario Valence						
Gossip						
2nd grade						
positive	3.23	0.83	1.42	0.79	3.67	0.49
negative	1.77	1.48	0.75	1.22	1.67	1.23
neutral	2.92	0.95	0.92	0.90	2.83	1.27
6th grade						
positive	3.33	0.65	2.00	1.13	2.50	0.80
negative	1.42	0.90	0.25	0.45	0.92	0.67
neutral	3.17	0.72	1.33	0.78	2.00	0.85

Table 8 (continued)

Event

2nd grade

positive	3.50	0.80	1.08	0.67	2.83	1.27
negative	2.25	1.29	0.92	0.79	1.42	1.08
neutral	3.75	0.45	0.67	0.98	3.00	1.21
6th grade						
positive	3.58	0.51	1.58	1.08	2.75	0.62
negative	1.92	1.24	0.42	0.51	1.17	0.72
neutral	3.17	0.72	0.50	0.52	2.17	0.72

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

was friendly than thought that the antisocial target character was friendly. Results are presented in Table 9.

Event Condition

In the event condition for the Friendly Trait Question, there were no effects of gender; therefore, the ANOVA was conducted without the gender of child variable. A 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations of Gossip Responses by Character, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Friendly Trait Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
Age & Scenario Valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2nd grade						
positive	$3.23_{a,a}$	0.83	$1.42_{a,b}$	0.79	$3.67_{a,a}$	0.49
negative	$1.77_{b,a}$	1.48	$0.75_{b,b}$	1.22	$1.67_{b,a}$	1.23
neutral	$2.92_{c,a}$	0.95	$0.92_{c,b}$	0.90	$2.83_{c,a}$	1.27
6th grade						
positive	$3.33_{a,a}$	0.65	$2.00_{a,c}$	1.13	$2.50_{a,b}$	0.80
negative	$1.42_{b,a}$	0.90	$0.25_{b,c}$	0.45	$0.92_{b,b}$	0.67
neutral	$3.17_{c,a}$	0.72	$1.33_{c,c}$	0.78	$2.00_{c,b}$	0.85

Note. Means within columns that do not share first subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison. Means within rows for each age group that do not share second subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

revealed a significant Age x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(2,132) = 4.02$, $p <$ .05, partial $\eta^2 = .06$, and a significant Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,132) = 6.91$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$. For means and standard deviations refer to Table 8. For the Age x Scenario Valence interaction, repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each age group yielded a significant effect of scenario valence for second graders, $F(2,70) = 12.64$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .27$, and sixth graders, $F(2,70) = 37.68$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .52$. Second graders distinguished the positive and neutral event scenarios from the negative event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.52, $p < .05$. That is, second graders responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the positive and neutral event scenarios than for the negative event scenario. Sixth graders distinguished the positive event scenario from the neutral and negative event scenarios and the neutral event scenario from the negative event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.41, $p < .05$. That is, sixth graders responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the positive event scenario than for the neutral and negative event scenarios and that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the neutral event scenario than for the negative event scenario. Results are presented in Table 10.

For the Character x Scenario Valence interaction, repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each character yielded a significant effect of scenario valence for the prosocial, $F(2,46) = 23.28$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .50$; antisocial, $F(2,46) = 6.53$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .22$; and low-social, $F(2,46) = 30.84$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .57$, target characters. For the prosocial target

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations of Event Responses by Character, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Friendly Trait Question

| | Character | | | | | |
| | Prosocial | | Antisocial | | Low-social | |
Age & Scenario Valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2nd grade						
positive	$3.50_{a,a}$	0.80	$1.08_{a,a}$	0.67	$2.83_{a,a}$	1.27
negative	$2.25_{b,b}$	1.29	$0.92_{b,b}$	0.79	$1.42_{b,b}$	1.08
neutral	$3.75_{a,a}$	0.45	$.067_{a,b}$	0.98	$3.00_{a,a}$	1.21
6th grade						
positive	$3.58_{a,a}$	0.51	$1.58_{a,a}$	1.08	$2.75_{a,a}$	0.62
negative	$1.92_{c,b}$	1.24	$0.42_{c,b}$	0.51	$1.17_{c,b}$	0.72
neutral	$3.17_{b,a}$	0.72	$0.50_{b,b}$	0.52	$2.17_{b,a}$	0.72

Note. Means within columns for each age group that do not share first subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison. Means within columns that do not share second subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

character, children distinguished the positive and neutral event scenarios from the negative event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.58, p < .05. Specifically, children responded that more kids thought the prosocial target character was friendly for the positive and neutral event scenarios than for the negative event scenario. For the antisocial target character, children distinguished the positive event scenario from the negative and neutral event scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.55, p < .05. That is, children responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was friendly for the positive event scenario than the negative or neutral event scenarios. For the low-social target character, children distinguished the positive and neutral event scenarios from the negative event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.50, p < .05. In particular, children responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was friendly for the positive and neutral event scenarios than for the negative event scenario. For results refer to Table 10.

Summary

The second hypothesis was that children would recognize that type of gossip can influence reputations among the peer group. In the gossip condition, when asked about the characteristics of the target characters, children responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the positive gossip scenario than for the negative or neutral gossip scenarios and more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the neutral gossip scenario than for the negative gossip scenario. This indicates that the type of

gossip influenced children's judgments of how many kids thought the target characters were friendly. Regarding the specific target characters, there were age differences among the participants. Second graders responded that more kids thought the prosocial and low-social target characters were friendly compared to the antisocial target character; whereas sixth graders responded that more kids thought the prosocial target character was friendly than thought that the low-social or antisocial target characters were friendly and more kids thought the low-social target character was friendly than the antisocial target character. The impact of the type of character differed by age, with sixth graders differentiating the target characters more than second graders.

In the event condition, there also were age differences among participants. Second graders responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the positive and neutral event scenarios than for the negative event scenario; whereas sixth graders responded that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the positive event scenario than for the neutral and negative event scenarios and that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the neutral event scenario than for the negative event scenario. Event valence had an impact on children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were friendly. Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more kids thought the prosocial and low-social target characters were friendly for the positive and neutral event scenarios than for the negative event scenario. In addition, children responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was

friendly for the positive event scenario than the negative or neutral event

scenarios. This indicates that prior reputation and event valence influenced

children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were

friendly.

<div align="center">Mean Trait Question</div>

Gossip Condition

In the gossip condition for the mean trait question, a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x

Gender x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted. A significant

Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,122) = 6.04$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 =$

.17, and a significant Gender x Character interaction, $F(2,61) = 3.20$, $p < .05$,

partial $\eta^2 = .10$ were found. Means and standard deviations are presented in

Table 11. For the Character x Scenario Valence interaction, repeated-measure

ANOVAs conducted separately for each character yielded a significant effect of

scenario valence for the prosocial, $F(2,48) = 14.40$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .38$;

antisocial, $F(2,46) = 32.63$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .59$; and low-social, $F(2,46) =$

54.99, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .71$, target characters. For the prosocial target

character, children distinguished the negative gossip scenario from the positive

and neutral gossip scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.56, $p < .05$. Children responded

that more kids thought the prosocial target character was mean for the negative

gossip scenario than for the positive and neutral gossip scenarios. For the

antisocial target character, children distinguished the negative gossip scenario

from the positive and neutral gossip scenarios and the neutral gossip scenario

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Character, Condition, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Mean Trait Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Condition, Age & Scenario Valence						
Gossip						
2nd grade						
positive	0.31	0.63	1.92	1.16	0.17	0.39
negative	1.23	1.09	3.42	0.52	2.58	1.44
neutral	0.69	1.11	2.67	1.15	0.33	0.78
6th grade						
positive	0.42	0.51	1.50	0.80	0.67	0.49
negative	1.83	1.19	3.42	0.67	2.67	0.89
neutral	0.50	0.52	2.25	0.87	0.50	0.67

(continued on following page)

Table 11 (continued)

Event

2nd grade

positive	0.25	0.45	2.08	1.08	0.75	1.06
negative	1.83	1.27	3.25	0.62	2.25	1.14
neutral	0.75	0.87	2.83	1.11	0.75	1.22

6th grade

positive	0.17	0.39	2.00	0.95	0.33	0.49
negative	2.25	1.29	2.92	0.69	2.33	0.78
neutral	0.42	0.51	2.92	0.69	0.58	0.51

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

from the positive gossip scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.52, $p < .05$. Children responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for the negative gossip scenario than for the positive and neutral gossip scenarios and more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for the neutral gossip scenario than for the positive gossip scenario. For the low-social target character, children distinguished the negative gossip scenario from the positive and neutral gossip scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.59, $p < .05$. Children responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was mean for the negative

gossip scenario than for the positive and neutral gossip scenarios. Results are presented in Table 12.

For the Gender x Character interaction, one-way between-subjects ANOVAs conducted separately for each gender yielded a significant effect of character for girls, $F(2,34) = 21.65$, $p < .001$, and boys, $F(2,33) = 54.18$, $p < .001$. Girls distinguished the antisocial target character from the prosocial and low-social target characters, Tukey's HSD = 2.03, $p < .05$. Girls responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean than thought the prosocial or neglected target characters were mean. Boys distinguished the antisocial target character from the low-social and prosocial target characters and the low-social target character from the prosocial target character, Tukey's HSD = 1.35, $p < .05$. Boys responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean than thought the low-social and prosocial target characters were mean and more kids thought the low-social target character was mean than thought the prosocial target character was mean. Results are presented in Table 12.

Event Condition

In the event condition, for the Mean Trait Question, there were no effects of gender; therefore, the ANOVA was conducted without the gender of child variable. A 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA revealed a significant Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,132) = 5.66$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$. For means and standard deviations, refer to Table 11.

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations of Gossip Responses by Character, Gender, &

Scenario Valence for the Mean Trait Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Gender & Scenario Valence						
Boys						
positive	$0.25_{b,c}$	0.45	$1.83_{c,a}$	0.83	$0.50_{b,b}$	0.52
negative	$1.33_{a,c}$	0.98	$3.33_{a,a}$	0.65	$3.08_{a,b}$	0.51
neutral	$0.33_{b,c}$	0.49	$2.42_{b,a}$	0.90	$0.58_{b,b}$	0.90
Girls						
positive	$0.46_{b,b}$	0.66	$1.58_{c,a}$	1.16	$0.33_{b,b}$	0.49
negative	$1.69_{a,b}$	1.32	$3.50_{a,a}$	0.52	$2.17_{a,b}$	1.47
neutral	$0.85_{b,b}$	1.07	$2.50_{b,a}$	1.17	$0.25_{b,b}$	0.45

Note. Means within columns that do not share first subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in

the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison. Also, means within rows

for each gender that do not share second subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the

Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

Repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each character revealed a significant effect of scenario valence for the prosocial, $F(2,46) = 30.19$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .57$; antisocial, $F(2,46) = 10.46$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .31$; and low-social, $F(2,46) = 47.29$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .67$, target characters. For the prosocial target character, children distinguished the negative event scenario from the positive and neutral event scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.61, $p < .05$. Children responded that more kids thought the prosocial target character was mean for the negative event scenario than for the positive and neutral event scenarios. For the antisocial target character, children distinguished the negative and neutral event scenarios from the positive event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.59, $p < .05$. Children responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for the negative and neutral event scenarios than for the positive event scenario. For the low-social target character, children distinguished the negative event scenario from the positive and neutral event scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.49, $p < .05$. Children responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was mean for the negative event scenario than for the positive and neutral event scenarios. Results are presented in Table 13.

Summary

In both the gossip and event conditions, children's responses were similar for the prosocial and low-social target characters, but not for the antisocial target character. In both conditions, children responded that more kids thought the

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations of Event Responses by Character & Scenario Valence for the Mean Trait Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Scenario Valence						
Positive	0.21_b	0.41	2.04_b	1.00	0.54_b	0.83
Negative	2.04_a	1.27	3.08_a	0.65	2.29_a	0.95
Neutral	0.58_b	0.72	2.88_a	0.90	0.67_b	0.92

Note. Means within columns that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

prosocial and low-social target characters were mean for the negative gossip scenario than for the positive and neutral gossip scenarios. However, in the gossip condition, children responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for the negative gossip scenario than for the positive and neutral gossip scenarios and more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for the neutral gossip scenario than for the positive gossip scenario, whereas in the event condition, children responded that more kids thought the

antisocial target character was mean for the negative and neutral event scenarios than for the positive event scenario. These results indicate that type of character and scenario valence had an impact on children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were mean. In both conditions, the type of scenario had a similar impact for the prosocial and low-social target characters. However, for the antisocial target character, children in the gossip condition differentiated the type of scenario more than children in the event condition.

In the gossip condition, there were also gender differences among the participants. Girls responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean than the prosocial and low-social target characters. Similarly, boys responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean than the low-social and prosocial target characters. However, boys also responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was mean than the prosocial target character. For both boys and girls, type of character influenced children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were mean.

<div align="center">Shy Trait Question</div>

Gossip Condition

In the gossip condition for the Shy Trait Question, a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted. A main effect

of scenario valence, $F(2,122) = 3.54$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$, and a main effect of character, $F(2,61) = 21.36$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .41$, were found. In addition, an Age x Gender interaction, $F(1,61) = 6.69$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, was found. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 14. For the main effect of scenario valence, children distinguished the positive gossip scenario from the negative gossip scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.31, $p < .05$. More specifically, children responded that more kids thought the target characters were shy for the positive gossip scenario ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.21$) than for the negative gossip scenario ($M = 1.11$, $SD = 1.14$). For the main effect of character, children distinguished the low-social target character from the antisocial and prosocial target characters and the antisocial target character from the prosocial target character, Tukey's HSD = 1.56, $p < .05$. More specifically, children responded that more kids thought the low-social target character ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.84$) was shy than the antisocial ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 0.86$) and prosocial ($M = 0.65$, $SD = 0.52$) target characters and more kids thought the antisocial target character was shy than the prosocial target character. The Age x Gender interaction was examined further with t tests conducted separately for each age group. These t tests yielded a significant effect of gender for sixth graders, $t(34) = -2.16$, $p < .05$, but not for second graders, $t(35) = 1.04$ $p > .05$. Sixth-grade girls ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 0.79$) responded that more kids thought the target characters were shy for gossip scenarios than sixth-grade boys ($M = 1.06$, $SD = 0.80$).

Table 14

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Character, Condition, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Shy Trait Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Condition, Age & Scenario Valence						
Gossip						
2nd Grade						
positive	0.85	0.90	1.08	1.08	2.25	1.36
negative	0.46	0.66	0.92	1.31	2.00	1.13
neutral	0.92	0.76	0.92	0.90	2.08	1.38
6th Grade						
positive	0.50	0.67	1.67	1.07	2.33	0.98
negative	0.42	0.67	1.50	1.09	1.42	1.08
neutral	0.75	0.62	1.33	0.98	2.17	1.11

(continued on following page)

Table 14 (continued)

Event

2nd Grade

positive	0.75	0.87	1.25	1.29	1.92	0.90
negative	0.92	1.08	1.33	1.37	1.00	1.04
neutral	0.50	0.80	2.17	1.40	1.50	0.67

6th Grade

positive	1.00	0.60	1.33	0.89	2.17	0.83
negative	0.75	0.45	1.00	0.95	2.08	1.31
neutral	1.08	0.67	1.25	1.06	2.33	0.98

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

Event Condition

In the event condition for the Shy Trait Question, a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted. A significant Gender x Character interaction, $F(2,60) = 4.07$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$, and a significant Age x Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,120) = 3.20$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, were found. For means and standard deviations refer to Table 14. The Gender x Character interaction was examined further with one-way between-subjects ANOVAs conducted separately for each gender. These

ANOVAs yielded a significant effect of character for boys, $F(2,33) = 11.56$, $p <$ .001, but not for girls, $F(2,33) = 1.55$, $p > .05$. Boys distinguished the low-social target character from the antisocial and prosocial target characters, Tukey's HSD = 2.41, $p < .05$. Boys responded that more kids thought the low-social target character ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.88$) was shy than the antisocial ($M = 1.11$, $SD = 0.98$) or prosocial ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.41$) target characters.

For the Scenario Valence x Age x Character interaction, repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each age group yielded a Character x Scenario Valence interaction for second graders, $F(4,66) = 3.96$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$, and main effect of character for sixth graders, $F(2,33) = 10.29$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .38$. For the Character x Scenario Valence interaction for second graders, repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each character yielded a significant effect of scenario valence for the antisocial target character, $F(2,22) = 4.11$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .27$, but not for the prosocial, $F(2,22) = 1.21$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, or low-social, $F(2,22) = 3.16$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .22$, target characters. For the antisocial character, second graders distinguished the neutral event scenario from the positive event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.89, $p < .05$. Second graders responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was shy for the neutral event scenario ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.40$) than for the positive event scenario ($M = 1.25$, $SD = 1.29$). For the main effect of character for sixth graders, they distinguished the low-social target character from the antisocial and prosocial target characters, Tukey's HSD = 0.36, $p < .05$. Sixth graders responded that more kids thought the low-social

target character (M = 2.19, SD = 0.78) was shy than the antisocial (M = 1.19, SD = 0.90) or prosocial (M = 0.94, SD = 0.31) target characters.

<u>Summary</u>

In the gossip condition, children responded that more kids thought the target characters were shy for the positive gossip scenario than for the negative gossip scenario. Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was shy than the antisocial or prosocial target characters and more kids thought the antisocial target character was shy than the prosocial target character. In addition, there were age and gender differences among the participants. Sixth-grade girls responded that more kids thought the target characters were shy for gossip scenarios than sixth-grade boys.

In the event condition, there were age differences among the participants. Second graders responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was shy for the neutral event scenario than for the positive event scenario. However, sixth graders responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was shy than the antisocial or prosocial target characters. In addition, there were gender differences among the participants. Boys responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was shy than the antisocial or prosocial target characters than girls. These results indicate that prior reputation and scenario valence influenced children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were shy.

Spread of Gossip Question

The third hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can

spread among the peer group, especially for sixth graders. To test this

hypothesis, responses to the Spread of Gossip Question were examined. For

the Spread of Gossip Question children were asked to rate how many kids in the

class heard about the target character's behavior (e.g., how many kids in the

class heard about [target character's name] giving away his/her cupcake; taking

the soccer ball; going to Disneyland last summer?). For the Spread of Gossip

Question, children were given five response options: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some,

(d) most, and (e) all. For each scenario valence children received a score

ranging from 0 – 4, with "none" corresponding to a score of zero, "few"

corresponding to a score of 1, "some" corresponding to a score of 2, "most"

corresponding to a score of 3, and "all" corresponding to a score of 4. For each

condition (event and gossip), a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender of Child x Character

x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted to assess the spread of the gossip.

The variables of age, gender of child, and character were the between-subjects

variables, while the scenario valence variable was the within-subjects variable.

Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 15.

Gossip Condition

In the gossip condition, there were no effects of gender; therefore, the

Table15

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Character, Condition, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Spread of Gossip Question

| | Character | | | | | |
| | Prosocial | | Antisocial | | Low-social | |
Condition, Age & Scenario Valence	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Gossip						
2nd grade						
positive	2.77	1.09	2.25	0.87	2.50	1.17
negative	2.46	1.27	3.08	0.79	3.25	0.87
neutral	2.85	0.90	2.50	0.90	2.75	1.14
6th grade						
positive	3.08	0.79	2.25	0.75	2.67	0.49
negative	2.75	0.87	3.08	0.79	2.92	0.79
neutral	2.75	0.75	2.42	0.67	3.00	0.00

Table 15 (continued)

Event

2nd grade

positive	2.58	1.08	2.33	1.37	3.17	0.83
negative	2.50	1.09	3.58	0.90	3.33	0.65
neutral	2.50	1.38	2.08	1.44	2.83	1.03

6th grade

positive	2.67	0.78	1.92	0.67	2.17	0.72
negative	2.17	1.11	3.42	0.51	2.58	0.79
neutral	2.58	1.16	1.33	0.78	2.25	0.97

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

ANOVA was conducted without the gender of child variable. A 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA yielded a significant Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,134) = 3.41$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$. Repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for each character yielded a significant effect of scenario valence for the antisocial target character, $F(2,46) = 7.34$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .24$, but not for the prosocial, $F(2,48) = 0.94$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, or low- social, $F(2,46) = 2.20$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$, target characters. For the antisocial target character, children distinguished the

negative gossip scenario from the positive and neutral gossip scenarios, Tukey's

HSD = 0.55, $p < .05$. That is, children responded that more kids heard about the

antisocial target character's action for the negative gossip scenario (i.e., took

away the soccer ball) (M = 3.08, SD = 0.76) than for the positive (i.e., gave away

his/her cupcake) (M = 2.25, SD = 0.79) or neutral (i.e., went to Disneyland last

summer) (M = 2.46, SD = 0.78) gossip scenarios. This finding suggests that

children have some insight into the interaction of gossip and reputation. Not only

does gossip influence reputation, but a person's reputation influences how

others gossip about that person.

Event Condition

      There were no effects of gender; therefore, the ANOVA was conducted

without the gender of child variable. A 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Character x Scenario

Valence) ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of age, $F(1,66)$ = 7.00, $p <$

.05, partial η^2 = .10, and a significant Character x Scenario Valence interaction,

$F(4,132)$ = 9.15, $p < .001$, partial η^2 = .22. For the main effect of age, second

graders (M = 2.77, SD = 1.14) responded that more kids heard about the target

characters' action in the event scenarios than sixth graders (M = 2.34, SD =

0.95). For the Character x Scenario Valence interaction, repeated-measure

ANOVAs conducted separately for each character yielded a significant effect of

scenario valence for the antisocial target character, $F(2,46)$ = 32.56, $p < .001$,

partial η^2 = .59, but not for the prosocial, $F(2,46)$ = 0.55, $p > .05$, partial η^2 = .02,

or low-social, $F(2,46)$ = 1.66, $p > .05$, partial η^2 = .07, target characters.

Regarding the antisocial target character, children distinguished the negative event scenario from the positive and neutral event scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 0.57, $p < .05$. More specifically, children responded that more kids heard about the antisocial target character's action for the negative event scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball) ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.72$) than the positive (i.e., gave away his/her cupcake) ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.08$) or neutral (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 1.20$) event scenarios. This finding suggests that children inferred gossip in the event condition.

Summary

The third hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can spread among the peer group, especially for sixth graders. There were no age differences found for the gossip condition. However, in the event condition, there were age differences among the participants. Second graders responded that more kids heard about the target characters' actions in the event scenarios than sixth graders. When asked about spread of information regarding the specific target characters, children in both conditions (gossip and event) responded that more kids heard about the antisocial target character's action for the negative scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball) than for the positive (i.e., gave away his/her cupcake) or neutral (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) scenarios. More specifically, children responded that the negative gossip and event information would spread among the peer group more for an antisocial peer. Scenario valence had an impact on the spreading of information regarding the

rejected character.

Gossip Belief Question

To evaluate the believability of the gossip, responses to the Gossip Belief Question were examined. For the Gossip Belief Question children were asked to rate how many kids in the class believed the target character's behavior (e.g., how many kids in the class believe [target character's name] gave away his/her cupcake; took the soccer ball; went to Disneyland last summer?). For the Gossip Belief Question children were given five response options: (a) none, (b) few, (c) some, (d) most, and (e) all. For each scenario valence children received a score ranging from 0 – 4, with "none" corresponding to a score of zero, "few" corresponding to a score of 1, "some" corresponding to a score of 2, "most" corresponding to a score of 3, and "all" corresponding to a score of 4. For each condition (event and gossip), a 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA was conducted to assess the believability of the gossip. The variables of age, gender of child, and character were the between-subjects variables while the scenario valence variable was the within-subjects variable. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 16.

Gossip Condition

A 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence) ANOVA yielded a significant Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,122) = 2.65$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. Repeated-measure

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses by Character, Condition, Age, &

Scenario Valence for the Gossip Belief Question

	Character					
	Prosocial		Antisocial		Low-social	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Condition, Age & Scenario Valence						
Gossip						
2nd grade						
positive	2.46	0.97	1.83	1.03	2.67	0.78
negative	2.08	1.32	2.67	0.98	2.58	1.00
neutral	2.38	1.19	1.75	1.14	2.17	1.34
6th grade						
positive	2.42	0.67	1.42	0.90	2.25	0.62
negative	2.00	1.04	2.75	0.75	2.83	0.58
neutral	2.42	0.67	1.67	0.78	2.42	0.67

Table 16 (continued)

Event

2nd grade

positive	2.92	0.90	2.33	1.07	2.67	1.07
negative	2.58	0.90	2.92	1.08	2.83	1.03
neutral	2.58	1.08	2.00	0.95	3.25	0.87
6th grade						
positive	2.50	1.00	1.75	1.06	2.33	0.98
negative	1.67	1.07	2.50	1.09	2.25	0.62
neutral	2.58	1.08	1.33	0.89	2.25	0.97

Note. Means can range from 0 to 4.

ANOVAs conducted separately for each gender yielded a significant Character x

Scenario Valence interaction for girls, $F(4,68) = 5.92$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .26$,

and a significant main effect of scenario valence, $F(2,66) = 3.79$, $p < .05$, partial

$\eta^2 = .10$, and a significant main effect of character, $F(2,33) = 4.16$, $p < .05$,

partial $\eta^2 = .20$, for boys. For girls, the Character x Scenario Valence interaction

was examined further with repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for

each character. These ANOVAs yielded a significant effect of scenario valence

for the prosocial, $F(2,24) = 3.64$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .23$, and antisocial, $F(2,22)$

= 5.50, p < .05, partial η^2 = .33, target characters, but not for the low-social

target character, $F(2,22)$ = 2.26, p > .05, partial η^2 = .17. For the prosocial target

character, girls distinguished the neutral gossip scenario from the negative

gossip scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.86, p < .05. Specifically, girls responded that

more kids believed the prosocial target character's action for the neutral gossip

scenario (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) (M = 2.69, SD = 0.95) than the

negative gossip scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball) (M = 1.77, SD = 1.24).

For the antisocial target character, girls distinguished the negative gossip

scenario from the positive and neutral gossip scenarios, Tukey's HSD = 1.09, p

< .05. That is, girls responded that more kids believed the antisocial target

character's action for the negative gossip scenario (i.e., took away the soccer

ball) (M = 3.08, SD = 0.79) than the positive (i.e., gave away his or her cupcake)

(M = 1.92, SD = 1.16) or neutral (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) (M =

1.75, SD = 1.06) gossip scenarios.

For boys, there was a main effect of scenario valence. Boys distinguished

the negative gossip scenario from the positive gossip scenario, Tukey's HSD =

0.43, p < .05. More specifically, boys responded that more kids believed the

negative gossip (i.e., took the soccer ball) (M = 2.47, SD = 0.94) than the

positive gossip (i.e., gave away his cupcake) (M = 2.03, SD = 0.88) for the target

characters. In addition, there was a main effect of character. Boys distinguished

the low-social target character from the antisocial target character, Tukey's HSD

= 1.83, p < .05. That is, boys responded that more kids believed the gossip

regarding the low-social target character (M = 2.44, SD = 0.41) than the

antisocial target character (M = 1.78, SD = 0.48).

<u>Event Condition</u>

A 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 (Age x Gender of Child x Character x Scenario Valence)

ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of age, $F(1,60)$ = 11.16, $p < .01$, partial

η^2 = .16; a significant main effect of gender, $F(1,60)$ = 4.39, $p < .05$, partial η^2 =

.07; and a significant Character x Scenario Valence interaction, $F(4,120)$ = 5.89,

$p < .001$, partial η^2 = .16. Regarding the main effect of age, second graders (M =

2.68, SD = 0.81) responded that more kids believed the event scenarios than

sixth graders (M = 2.13, SD = 0.60). For the main effect of gender, girls (M =

2.57, SD = 0.86) responded that more kids believed the event scenarios than

boys (M = 2.23, SD = 0.60). The Character x Scenario Valence interaction was

further examined with repeated-measure ANOVAs conducted separately for

each character. These ANOVAs yielded a significant effect of scenario valence

for the prosocial, $F(2,46)$ = 3.89, $p < .05$, partial η^2 = .15, and antisocial, $F(2,46)$

= 6.88, $p < .01$, partial η^2 = .23, target characters but not for the low-social target

character, $F(2,46)$ = 0.68, $p > .05$, partial η^2 = .03. For the prosocial target

character, children distinguished the positive event scenario from the negative

event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.54, $p < .05$. That is, children responded that

more kids believed the prosocial target character's action for the positive event

scenario (i.e., gave away his/her cupcake) (M = 2.71, SD = 0.95) than the

negative event scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball) (M = 2.13, SD = 1.08).

For the antisocial target character, children distinguished the negative event

scenario from the neutral event scenario, Tukey's HSD = 0.69, $p < .05$. That is, children responded that more kids believed the antisocial target character's action for the negative event scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball) ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.08$) than the neutral event scenario (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.96$).

Summary

In the gossip condition, when asked about the believability of the gossip, there were gender differences among the participants. Girls responded that more kids believed the prosocial target character's action for the neutral gossip scenario (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) than the negative gossip scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball). Also, girls responded that more kids believed the antisocial target character's action for the negative gossip scenario (i.e., took away the soccer ball) than the positive (i.e., gave away his or her cupcake) or neutral (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) gossip scenarios.

Boys responded that more kids believed the negative gossip (i.e., took the soccer ball) than the positive gossip (i.e., gave away his cupcake) for the target characters. Also, boys responded that more kids believed the gossip regarding the prosocial and low-social target characters than the antisocial target character. For both girls and boys, type of character and gossip valence had an impact on the believability of the gossip.

In the event condition, children responded that more kids believed the prosocial target character's action for the positive event than the negative event.

Children also responded that more kids believed the antisocial target character's action for the negative event than the neutral event. Type of character and event valence influenced the believability of the event. In addition, there were age and gender differences among the participants. Second graders responded that more kids believed the events than sixth graders. Girls responded that more kids believed the events than boys.

In both the gossip and event conditions there were gender differences among the participants regarding believability of the scenarios. However, children in the gossip condition distinguished the type of character, unlike children in the event condition. Additionally, in the event condition, there were age differences among the participants in contrast to the gossip condition.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The main goal of this study was to assess second and sixth graders' understanding of the impact of gossip on reputation. More specifically, this study examined children's understanding that people with different initial reputations may be impacted differently by gossip.

Three hypotheses were investigated. The first hypothesis was that children of both ages would recognize that likeability among peers can be influenced by gossip. The second hypothesis was that children would recognize that prior reputations among the peer group can be influenced by gossip valence. The third hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can spread among the peer group, especially for sixth graders. In addition, two conditions, gossip and event, were compared. The comparison of the gossip and event conditions is discussed below, and then the relevant results for each of the three hypotheses are summarized and discussed.

By comparing the gossip and event conditions, it was possible to examine whether children's judgments about the influence of gossip on reputations were unique to stories in which gossip was explicitly mentioned. It was expected that children would judge that scenario valence would have a strong effect on

reputation in the gossip condition but that in the event condition, scenario valence would have a weaker effect on children's judgments. However, comparison of the two conditions indicated that scenario valence had a similar impact on likeability among the peer group, characteristics of the target characters, and the spread of gossip among the peer group for the two conditions. More specifically, children judged that positive and neutral scenarios would increase likeability, whereas negative scenarios would decrease likeability among the peer group. In addition, children judged that positive and neutral scenarios would increase the number of kids that think a peer is friendly or shy, whereas negative scenarios would increase the number of kids that think a peer is mean. Finally, children judged that more kids would hear about a negative action about a peer than a positive or neutral action. Overall, positive and neutral scenario valence tended to have positive impact, whereas negative scenario valence tended to have a negative impact among the peer group for both conditions. Although the absence of differences between the two conditions in these comparisons was not anticipated, children's performance on the spread of gossip question suggests an explanation for these results. Children expected gossip to spread equally in both conditions, which suggests that even when gossip is not explicitly mentioned, children assume that the peer group will discuss salient events.

To examine the three main hypotheses, children's performance on the likeability questions, trait questions, and gossip questions in each of the two conditions is discussed below.

Gossip Condition

The first hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can influence a child's likeability among the peer group. When asked about the likeability of the target characters (i.e., the Initial Likeability Judgment and Final Likeability Judgment Questions), children responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing positive or neutral gossip than before hearing positive or neutral gossip. The opposite was true for negative gossip. That is, children responded that more kids liked the target characters before hearing negative gossip compared to after hearing negative gossip. This result indicates that children perceive that type of gossip had an impact on the target characters' likeability among the peer group. Positive and neutral gossip generally were perceived as having a positive impact on likeability, whereas negative gossip had a negative impact on likeability.

Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that in general, more kids liked the antisocial target character after hearing the gossip scenarios than before hearing the gossip scenarios. This result indicates that gossip had an impact on the antisocial target character's likeability among the peer group. More specifically, after hearing positive or neutral gossip, children responded that more kids liked the antisocial target character. Thus, children's judgments about the likeability of a hypothetical rejected peer do not coincide with prior research concerning children's actual attitudes about rejected children

(e.g., Dodge, 1980; Hymel, 1986; Hymel, Wagner, et al., 1990; La Greca &
Santogrossi, 1980). Research on peer rejection indicates that peers do not
change their negative attitudes about rejected children following positive
experiences. For example, La Greca and Santogrossi found that in some
instances, even when rejected children have shown behavioral improvements,
their social status among the peer group did not improve. However, in the
present study children made judgments that the mere spreading of positive or
neutral information regarding a hypothetical antisocial peer would seem to
improve that child's likeability among the peer group. Therefore, there appears
to be a discrepancy between children's intuitions about how the peer group
responds to antisocial children and how peer groups have been shown to
actually respond.

Children's judgments regarding likeability may be consistent with
research on impression formation in children. According to research on
impression formation, this inconsistency may be due to the existence of
incongruent information (e.g., when children are told one thing about a peer and
then discover subsequent information that refutes the prior expectancy) (e.g.,
Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; McAninch, Manolis, Milich, & Harris, 1993). Fiske and
Neuberg suggest that impression formation involves category-based and
attribute-based processing. Individuals first attempt to fit a target into a category,
but if the target does not easily fit into a particular category, is of particular
interest or relevance to the perceiver, or there is incongruent information, the
target's individual attributes are taken into consideration. Individual attribute-

based processing occurs when the information is clearly incongruent with the label. Therefore, in the present study, since the gossip was clearly inconsistent with the antisocial character, children may have judged that peers would incorporate the incongruent information into their impressions and process the gossip information according to the antisocial character's individual characteristics and not his or her reputation. This suggests that children's judgments about how peers respond to individuals may in fact be consistent with how peers actually do respond when the information available is more complex. Children made judgments that peers will be influenced by reputation some of the time but may not think it will have an impact all of the time.

<u>Event Condition</u>

In the event condition, both second and sixth graders responded that more kids liked the target characters after hearing the positive event than before hearing the positive event. For both age groups, the type of event had an impact on the target characters' likeability.

Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that fewer kids liked the prosocial target character after hearing the event, whereas more kids liked the antisocial target character after hearing the event. In particular, before hearing the negative and neutral events, children responded that more kids liked the prosocial target character. In contrast, after hearing all three event scenarios, children responded that more kids liked the antisocial target character. This was especially true for the positive event scenario.

Children's likeability judgments in the event condition indicate that children realize that an individual's behavior influences how much others like that individual. This finding is important because in actual peer groups, once a child is disliked by his or her peers, it seems as though those peers look for behaviors that reinforce that child's negative reputation (Hymel, 1986). When peers expect inappropriate social behavior from a particular child, they may become selectively attentive to such behavior and unresponsive to that child's prosocial behavior (Hymel, 1986). Thus, children's judgments appear to contrast with what really happens in the peer group. Children seem to expect behavior to be a direct influence on likeability, but in fact that may not be the case because children tend to overlook behavior that differs from their preconceptions. Children's theory that behavior alone determines reputation may be maintained because they mostly notice the behaviors that are consistent with the reputation, thus maintaining the illusion that behavior and reputation correspond more than they actually do in some cases.

Trait Questions

The second hypothesis was that children would recognize that the content of an individual's reputations within the peer group can be influenced by gossip. Children's ratings of perceived friendliness, meanness, and shyness are relevant to this prediction.

<u>Friendly Trait Question</u>

<u>Gossip Condition</u>

When asked about the characteristics of the target characters (i.e., the

Trait Questions) children responded that more kids thought the target characters

were friendly for positive gossip than for negative or neutral gossip and more

kids thought the target characters were friendly for neutral gossip than for the

negative gossip. This indicates that the type of gossip influenced children's

responses to how many kids thought the target characters were friendly.

There were age differences in participants' judgments about specific

target characters. That is, type of character had an impact on children's

perceived friendliness judgments. Second graders responded that more kids in

the class thought the prosocial and low-social target characters were friendly

than thought the antisocial target character was friendly. However, sixth graders

responded that more kids thought the prosocial target character was friendly

than the low-social or antisocial target characters and more kids thought the low-

social target character was friendly than the antisocial target character. These

judgments support the finding that popular children are often described as

helpful, considerate, smart, cooperative, and outgoing by their peers (e.g., Coie

et al., 1990; Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; Newcomb et al., 1993). In contrast to

second graders, sixth graders judged that more kids thought the prosocial

character was friendly than the low-social character. This is consistent with the

finding that older children and adolescents (10 -16 year olds) sometimes

characterize neglected children as lacking prosocial behavior than younger

children (Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1996).

Both second and sixth graders understand that a person's prior reputation

influences others' opinions. However, as children get older, some behaviors may

become less acceptable among the peer group. For example, older children and

adolescents tend to characterize withdrawn behavior (e.g., shyness, solitary

behavior) as negative more often than younger children (Fordham & Stevenson-

Hinde, 1999; Ladd & Burgess, 1999; Rubin, 1982; Rubin & Mills, 1988; Younger

& Piccinin, 1989; Younger, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1985). This behavior is

also more often associated with peer rejection among peers for older children

and adolescents (Bukowski, 1990; Richmond, Beaty, & Dyba, 1985; Younger &

Boyko, 1987). Therefore, based on the low-social character description (e.g.,

stands back and watches while others are playing, often plays by him/herself),

sixth graders may have responded that the peer group would not consider the

low-social character as friendly as the prosocial character.

Event Condition

In the event condition second graders and sixth graders gave different

patterns of responses. Although both age groups based their friendliness

judgments on the valence of the event, sixth graders made more distinctions

than did second graders. Second graders judged that more kids thought the

target characters were friendly for the positive and neutral events than for the

negative event. In contrast, sixth graders responded that more kids thought the

target characters were friendly for the positive event than for the neutral and negative events and that more kids thought the target characters were friendly for the neutral event than for the negative event. Event valence had an impact on children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were friendly. Second graders responded that the positive and neutral events would have a similar impact regarding friendliness among the peer group, whereas sixth graders did not. The increase in the number of social experiences and the change in children's social networks as they get older may explain the difference between the second and sixth graders' responses regarding the positive and neutral events.

Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more kids thought the prosocial and low-social target characters were friendly for the positive and neutral event scenarios than for the negative event scenario. In addition, children responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was friendly for the positive event scenario than the negative or neutral event scenarios. This indicates that the interaction of event valence and prior reputation influence children's ratings of peers' perceptions of a person's characteristics. Regarding the antisocial target character, when told about something positive that he or she did, children responded that more kids would think that person is friendly. Children understand that a person's behavior influences others' opinions.

Mean Trait Question

Gossip Condition

Children responded that more kids thought the prosocial and low-social target characters were mean for negative gossip than for positive or neutral gossip. Children also responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for negative gossip than for positive or neutral gossip and more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for neutral gossip than for positive gossip. These results indicate that the interaction of type of character and gossip valence had an impact on children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were mean. Both second- and sixth-grade children understand that a person's prior reputation influences others' opinions.

There were also gender differences among the participants. Girls responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean than the prosocial and low-social target characters. Similarly, boys responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean than the low-social and prosocial target characters. However, boys also responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was mean than the prosocial target character. This finding may be related to evidence that suggests that shyness in boys is more likely to be discouraged by others and associated with negative interactions with others and negative outcomes in later life, whereas shyness in girls is more accepted by others and associated with positive interactions with

others (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1988; Coplan, Gavinski-Molina, Lagace-Seguin, & Wichmann, 2001; Rubin, Chen, & Hymel, 1993; Simpson & Stevenson-Hinde, 1985). For both boys and girls, type of character influenced children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were mean. However, since shy behavior may be less acceptable for boys and associated with negative interactions, they may have responded that more kids thought the hypothetical low-social peer was mean.

Event Condition

Regarding the specific target characters, children's responses were similar to that of the gossip condition. Children responded that more kids thought the prosocial and low-social target characters were mean for the negative event than for the positive or neutral events. Children also responded that more kids thought the antisocial target character was mean for the negative and neutral events than for the positive event. These results indicate that the interaction of type of character and event valence had an impact on children's responses to how many kids thought the target characters were mean. Therefore, second and sixth graders understand that a person's prior reputation influences others' opinions.

<u>Shy Trait Question</u>

<u>Gossip Condition</u>

Regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more

kids thought the low-social target character was shy than the antisocial and

prosocial target characters. This finding is consistent with prior research that

neglected children are sometimes seen as shy by their peers (Coie et al., 1982;

Ollendick et al., 1992). In addition, the interaction of age and gender revealed

that sixth-grade girls responded that more kids thought the target characters

were shy for the gossip scenarios than sixth-grade boys.

<u>Event Condition</u>

Second graders responded that more kids thought the antisocial target

character was shy for the neutral event than for the positive event. However,

sixth graders responded that more kids thought the low-social target character

was shy than the antisocial or prosocial target characters. The difference in

second and sixth graders' responses could be because shy behavior may be

less salient to younger children. Younger children have a more difficult time

categorizing this type of behavior than other more salient behaviors such as

aggression (Younger, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1985, 1986). Consistent with

this notion is the finding that younger children (i.e., first graders) have more

difficulty than older children (fifth and seventh graders) in accurately recalling

descriptions of hypothetical peers who exhibit socially withdrawn compared to

aggressive behavior (Bukowski, 1990; Younger & Boyko, 1987; Younger & Piccinin, 1989). At an early age, children may be more cognitively aware of aggressive behavior because it is highly visible. Children can often witness aggression in the peer group and may be a target of aggressive behavior by their peers. Typically, there is no target of withdrawn behavior as there usually is with aggressive behavior. Withdrawn behavior becomes more salient among older children and is viewed as more negative and dysfunctional or maladaptive in the peer group (Coie & Pennington, 1976; Fordham & Stevenson-Hinde, 1999; Hymel, Rubin, Rowden, & LeMare, 1990; Ladd & Burgess, 1999; Rubin, 1982; Rubin & Mills, 1988; Younger & Piccinin, 1989; Younger et al., 1985). Therefore, cognitive awareness of withdrawn behavior may develop at a later age or children's conceptions of social withdrawal may change as they get older. Second graders may have responded that more kids thought the antisocial character was shy because the description of the antisocial character included aggressive-type behaviors (e.g., started a fight, teases others). The antisocial character description may have been more salient for these young children, and therefore they had an easier time remembering that type of information.

Gender differences among the participants did exist with boys responding that more kids thought the low-social target character was shy than the antisocial or prosocial target characters. This is interesting because in the gossip condition for the Mean Trait Question, boys responded that more kids thought the low-social target character was mean than thought the prosocial character was mean. Further investigation is needed to understand these findings.

Summary

Overall, type of gossip influenced children's judgments of characteristics of the three target characters. Children made judgments that more peers think the prosocial and low-social target characters are friendly than the antisocial target character, whereas, more peers think the antisocial target character is mean than the prosocial and low-social target characters. In addition, children made judgments that more peers think the low-social target character is shy than the prosocial target character. Children also made judgments that more peers think the target characters are friendly after hearing positive gossip than negative or neutral gossip, whereas more peers think the target characters are mean after hearing negative gossip than positive or neutral gossip. These findings support the hypothesis that children recognize that prior reputations among the peer group can be influenced by the type of gossip.

Taken together, the findings from the three trait questions may be related to research on children's understanding of personality traits. Understanding individuals' personality traits helps others to explain their specific behaviors and predict future behavior. Understanding traits in a psychologically meaningful way consists of understanding that there is a psychological component to traits that causes behavior (Heyman & Gelman, 1998). Trait inferences (i.e., inferring individuals' behaviors from their personality traits) allow an individual to expect others to behave in a manner that is consistent with their personality (e.g., Chaplin, John, & Goldberg, 1988; Newman, 1991). Children as young as four have trait concepts and use trait labels to make inferences about others

(Heyman & Gelman, 2000). In addition, there is evidence that these young children can use past behaviors to predict future behaviors for familiar and unfamiliar individuals (Cain, Heyman, & Walker, 1997). The trait understanding literature typically asks children to make trait attributions about an individual. However, the present study asked children to imagine someone else's or a group's trait attribution rather than making their own attribution. This suggests that children are able to use trait concepts and make inferences about others' trait attributions.

Gossip Questions

The third hypothesis was that children would recognize that gossip can spread among the peer group, especially sixth graders. Children's responses to the Spread of Gossip and Gossip Belief Questions are relevant to this prediction.

Spread of Gossip Question

Gossip Condition

Since gossip is more salient in conversations during middle childhood than early childhood (e.g., Fine, 1977; Gottman & Mettetal, 1986), it was expected that sixth graders would respond that the gossip spread to more peers in the class than second graders. The findings did not support this hypothesis. There were no age differences in children's responses regarding the spread of gossip. However, children's responses did differentiate the specific target

characters.

When asked about spread of information (i.e., the Spread of Gossip Question) regarding the specific target characters, children responded that more kids heard about the antisocial target character's action for negative gossip (i.e., took away the soccer ball) than for positive (i.e., gave away his/her cupcake) or neutral (i.e., went to Disneyland last summer) gossip. Gossip valence had an impact on the spreading of information regarding the antisocial character. More specifically, children responded that negative gossip about an antisocial peer would spread among the peer group more than positive or neutral gossip.

Event Condition

In the event condition, children's responses regarding the specific target characters were similar to that of the gossip condition. Children responded that more kids heard about the antisocial target character's action for the negative event than the positive or neutral events. Second- and sixth-grade children recognize that when an antisocial peer engages in a negative act, it is more likely to spread among the peer group than an act that is inconsistent with that child's reputation.

Unlike in the gossip condition, there were age differences among the participants in the event condition. Second graders responded that more kids heard about the target characters' actions in the event scenarios than sixth graders. This finding was surprising given that there were no age differences found in the gossip condition. According to Fine (1977), children gossip about

matters that are of interest to them. Second graders could have thought that the information in the event scenarios would be of more interest to the peer group than sixth graders and therefore responded that more kids heard about the target characters' actions. Another possible explanation for this age difference could be the differences in the school settings. In all of the schools where this study took place, the second graders were either in the same classroom with the same peers all day or for the majority of the day. However, the sixth graders were more likely to exchange classrooms more often throughout the day. The sixth graders were less likely to be with the same peers for each subject, let alone all day long. Therefore, it may be that the second graders responded that more kids in the class heard about the target characters' actions in the event scenarios because their class contained the same peers for the majority of the day. These are only two possible explanations; further research is needed to better understand this age difference.

In both the gossip and event condition children responded that more kids heard about negative information or a negative action regarding the antisocial character. The similarity in children's responses for the gossip and event conditions suggest that children assumed gossip occurred for both conditions. The finding from the comparison of the two conditions in step one of the analyses supports this notion. For both conditions, children responded that negative information about a peer would spread among the peer group more than positive or neutral information. As stated earlier, the saliency of the antisocial character description might have also contributed to this finding. Since

gossip tends to have a negative connotation, it may be that children think negative information and actions would spread to more people than positive or neutral information and actions, especially for an antisocial peer. This seems to coincide with what is witnessed in society regarding gossip. It seems as though people want to know the negative information about others, especially individuals they do not particularly like. Various television programs that focus on celebrity entertainment are more likely to gossip about the negative events in a celebrity's life rather than a positive event. For example, people seem to be more interested in hearing about Britney Spears and her troubles with the police, the courts, and her ex-husband than her charity work.

Gossip Belief Question

Gossip Condition

When asked about the believability of the gossip (i.e., the Gossip Belief Question) there were gender differences among the participants. For both girls and boys, type of character and gossip valence had an impact on the believability of the gossip. According to boys, more kids believed the negative gossip than positive gossip for all three hypothetical peers. Also, boys judged that more kids believed the gossip about the prosocial and low-social characters than the antisocial character. Girls' judgments were more differentiated than boys' judgments. Girls responded that more kids believed neutral gossip than negative gossip about the prosocial character. They also responded that more

kids believed negative gossip about the antisocial character than positive or neutral gossip. According to girls, children are more likely to believe gossip that is consistent with an antisocial child's negative reputation. This finding seems to support the notion that antisocial children have negative reputations sustained about them by peers (e.g., Dodge, 1980; Rogosch & Newcomb, 1989). Dodge has suggested it is a cyclical process for these rejected children. The aggressive behaviors displayed by these children elicit certain responses from peers which leads to more aggression and, in turn, strengthens their negative reputation.

Event Condition

Children responded that more kids believed that the prosocial target character's action occurred for the positive event than the negative event. Children also responded that more kids believed the antisocial target character's action for the negative event than the neutral event. That is, the interaction of type of character and event valence influenced the believability of the event. According to both age groups, more children believed a positive event about a prosocial child than a negative event and more children believed a negative event about an antisocial child than a neutral event. It seems as though children judge that more kids in a peer group are likely to believe something about a person if it is consistent with that person's reputation.

Conclusions

Overall, second- and sixth-grade children seem to understand that gossip

can impact a person's reputation. Moreover, they recognize that people with different initial reputations may be impacted differently by the valence of gossip. Children recognized that gossip can influence a child's likeability among the peer group. Positive and neutral gossip had a positive impact on likeability, whereas negative gossip had a negative impact on likeability. An interesting finding regarding likeability was found for the antisocial target character. Children made judgments that more kids would like the antisocial character after hearing the gossip scenarios. More specifically, after hearing positive and neutral gossip, children responded that more kids would like the antisocial character. Children also recognized that gossip valence had an impact on the spreading of information, especially for the antisocial character. Children responded that negative gossip would spread among the peer group more for an antisocial peer. Children think that reputation appears to be influenced not only by an individual child's behavior but also by indirect information such as gossip. This is particularly true for antisocial children. Children believe that the saliency of antisocial peers' behavior seems to maintain their reputation but not their likeability among the peer group. It may be that positive gossip can enhance their likeability among the peer group, but it may take something more than this indirect source to change their reputation among the peer group.

Regarding the event condition, children's responses were unexpected, especially for the gossip questions. For the Spread of Gossip Question, children responded that more kids heard about the antisocial target character's action for the negative event than the positive or neutral events. For the Gossip Belief

Question, children responded that more kids believed the positive event than the

negative event for the prosocial character and more kids believed the negative

event than the neutral event for the antisocial character. It seems as though

children in the event condition were not superficially responding to the

information in the event scenarios. Even though gossip was not explicitly stated

in the event scenarios, it may be that children inferred that gossip had occurred.

The overall findings from this study are important because they suggest

that children understand that peers with different reputations may have different

social experiences within the peer group. Over time, these different social

experiences can lead to various developmental outcomes. This is especially true

for children who are rejected by their peers, since these children are at risk for

interpersonal and psychological adjustment problems as they get older.

Future Directions

This study investigated the impact of gossip on reputation. While children

were asked to assess the peer group's impressions of hypothetical children, this

study did not assess children's own impressions. In future research, it would be

interesting to compare children's own impressions to their impressions of the

peer group regarding the impact of gossip on reputations. Also, the gossip

scenarios did not included information about the gossipers. Eder and Enke

(1991) looked at the opportunities and constraints of gossip in adolescents. They

found that social status and participation in gossip were related. Adolescents

with high or medium social status were more likely to initiate gossip than

adolescents of lower social status. Also, challenges to gossip were made only by peers with a status level that was equal to of higher than the person they challenged (Eder & Enke, 1991). Even though Eder and Enke looked at social status and gossip, the same may be true for reputations and gossip. Additional studies are needed to examine the effects of the reputation of the gossiper on the spread and believability of gossip.

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APPENDIX A

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Boy

Prosocial

This is Ben.
Ben has a lot of friends.
Ben painted a picture of a house in art class.
Yesterday during class, Ben helped another kid with his homework.
Last week, Ben went to the zoo.
Ben often invites other kids to play.

This is Nick.
Nick has a lot of friends.
Nick painted a picture of a dog in art class.
Yesterday during class, Nick helped another kid with his homework.
Last week, Nick went to the park.
Nick often invites other kids to play.

This is Andy.
Andy has a lot of friends.
Andy painted a picture of a tree in art class.
Yesterday during class, Andy helped another kid with his homework.
Last week, Andy went to the movies.
Andy often invites other kids to play.

Antisocial

This is Ben.
Ben does not have many friends.
Ben painted a picture of a house in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Ben started a fight with another kid over nothing.
Last week, Ben went to the zoo.
Ben often teases other kids.

This is Nick.
Nick does not have many friends.
Nick painted a picture of a dog in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Nick started a fight with another kid over nothing.
Last week, Nick went to the park.
Nick often teases other kids.

This is Andy.
Andy does not have many friends.
Andy painted a picture of a tree in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Andy started a fight with another kid over nothing.
Last week, Andy went to the movies.
Andy often teases other kids.

Low-social

This is Ben.
Ben has some friends.
Ben painted a picture of a house in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Ben stood back and watched other kids who were playing.
Last week, Ben went to the zoo.
Ben often plays by himself.

This is Nick.
Nick has some friends.
Nick painted a picture of a dog in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Nick stood back and watched other kids who were playing.
Last week, Nick went to the park.
Nick often plays by himself.

This is Andy.
Andy has some friends.
Andy painted a picture of a tree in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Andy stood back and watched other kids who were playing.
Last week, Andy went to the movies.
Andy often plays by himself.

Girl

Prosocial

This is Megan.
Megan has a lot of friends.
Megan painted a picture of a house in art class.
Yesterday during class, Megan helped another kid with her homework.
Last week, Megan went to the zoo.
Megan often invites other kids to play.

This is Ashley.
Ashley has a lot of friends.
Ashley painted a picture of a dog in art class.
Yesterday during class, Ashley helped another kid with her homework.
Last week, Ashley went to the park.
Ashley often invites other kids to play.

This is Lisa.
Lisa has a lot of friends.
Lisa painted a picture of a tree in art class.
Yesterday during class, Lisa helped another kid with her homework.
Last week, Lisa went to the movies.
Lisa often invites other kids to play.

Antisocial

This is Megan.
Megan does not have many friends.
Megan painted a picture of a house in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Megan started a fight with another kid over nothing.
Last week, Megan went to the zoo.
Megan often teases other kids.

This is Ashley.
Ashley does not have many friends.
Ashley painted a picture of a dog in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Ashley started a fight with another kid over nothing.
Last week, Ashley went to the park.
Ashley often teases other kids.

This is Lisa.
Lisa does not have many friends.
Lisa painted a picture of a tree in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Lisa started a fight with another kid over nothing.
Last week, Lisa went to the movies.
Lisa often teases other kids.

Low-social

This is Megan.
Megan has some friends.
Megan painted a picture of a house in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Megan stood back and watched other kids who were playing.
Last week, Megan went to the zoo.
Megan often plays by herself.

This is Ashley.
Ashley has some friends.
Ashley painted a picture of a dog in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Ashley stood back and watched other kids who were playing.
Last week, Ashley went to the park.
Ashley often plays by herself.

This is Lisa.
Lisa has some friends.
Lisa painted a picture of a tree in art class.
Yesterday during recess, Lisa stood back and watched other kids who were playing.
Last week, Lisa went to the movies.
Lisa often plays by herself.

APPENDIX B

SCENARIOS

Gossip

Boy

Positive

Chris and Dan were talking about Ben. Chris said, "I heard something about Ben. The other day during lunch a kid dropped his dessert on the floor. Ben had one cupcake and gave the other kid his cupcake to eat". Dan said, "Yeah, I heard that about Ben too". Later that day, both Chris and Dan told someone else about Ben giving away his cupcake. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Negative

Mike and Tim were talking about Nick. Mike said, "I heard something about Nick. The other day during recess a kid was playing with a soccer ball he got for his birthday. Nick went over and took away the soccer ball and would not give it back". Tim said, "Yeah, I heard that about Nick too". Later that day, both Mike and Tim told someone else about Nick taking away the soccer ball. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Neutral

Joe and Sam were talking about Andy. Joe said, "I heard something about Andy. Last summer, Andy went to Disneyland on vacation". Sam said, "Yeah, I heard that about Andy too". Later that day, both Joe and Sam told someone else about Andy going to Disneyland. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Girl

Positive

Courtney and Emily were talking about Megan. Courtney said, "I heard something about Megan. The other day during lunch a kid dropped her dessert on the floor. Megan had one cupcake and gave the other kid her cupcake to eat". Emily said, "Yeah, I heard that about Megan too". Later that day, both Courtney and Emily told someone else about Megan giving away her cupcake. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Negative

Sarah and Kristen were talking about Ashley. Sarah said, "I heard something about Ashley. The other day during recess a kid was playing with a soccer ball she got for her birthday. Ashley went over and took away the soccer ball and would not give it back". Kristen said, "Yeah, I heard that about Ashley too". Later that day, both Sarah and Kristen told someone else about Ashley taking away the soccer ball. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Neutral

Jenny and Nicole were talking about Lisa. Jenny said, "I heard something about Lisa. Last summer, Lisa went to Disneyland on vacation". Nicole said, "Yeah, I heard that about Lisa too". Later that day, both Jenny and Nicole told someone else about Lisa going to Disneyland. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Event

Boy

Positive

The other day during lunch a kid dropped his dessert on the floor. Ben had one cupcake and gave the other kid his cupcake to eat. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Negative

The other day during recess a kid was playing with a soccer ball he got for his birthday. Nick went over and took away the soccer ball and would not give it back. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Neutral

Last summer, Andy went to Disneyland on vacation. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Girl

Positive

The other day during lunch a kid dropped her dessert on the floor. Megan had one cupcake and gave the other kid her cupcake to eat. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.
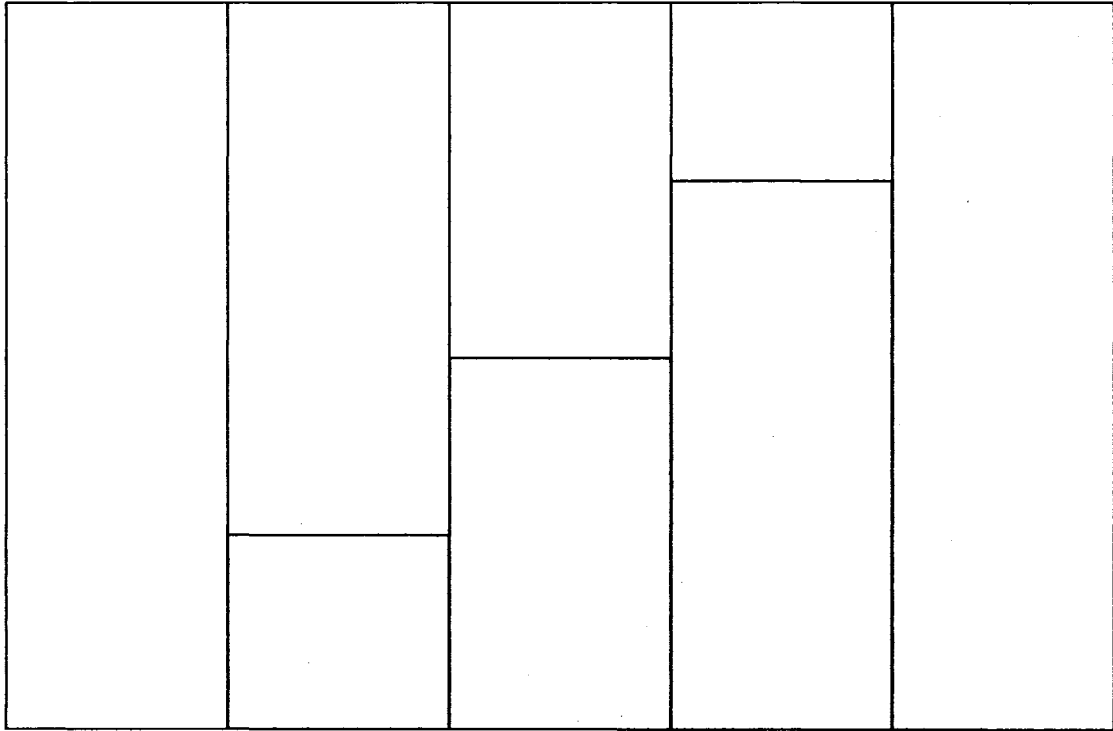
Negative

The other day during recess a kid was playing with a soccer ball she got for her birthday. Ashley went over and took away the soccer ball and would not give it back. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

Neutral

Last summer, Lisa went to Disneyland on vacation. Now it's the next week, and all of the kids are at school.

APPENDIX C

RATING SCALE

None   Few   Some   Most   All