

Age-related Differences Regarding Spontaneous Reasoning About Social Exclusion



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INTRODUCTION

- Previous research has demonstrated age-related differences in children’s use of social and moral reasoning in contexts of intergroup social exclusion.¹
- The Social Reasoning Developmental (SRD) model recognizes three domains children use to evaluate intergroup contexts: moral, group, and psychological concerns.²
- Children cite avoiding discrimination as a reason for why a child from a minoritized group may exclude a member of a majority group.³
- Children’s social cognition has often been examined using individual interviews, but little research has exposed children to the wide range of spontaneous reasoning their peers use during classroom discussion.

QUESTION: How does children’s reasoning about social exclusion perpetrated by a member of an ethnically minoritized group vary with age?

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

- $N = 6$ classrooms, equally divided among 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade
- Racially and ethnically diverse, ages 8- to 11-years-old

PROCEDURE

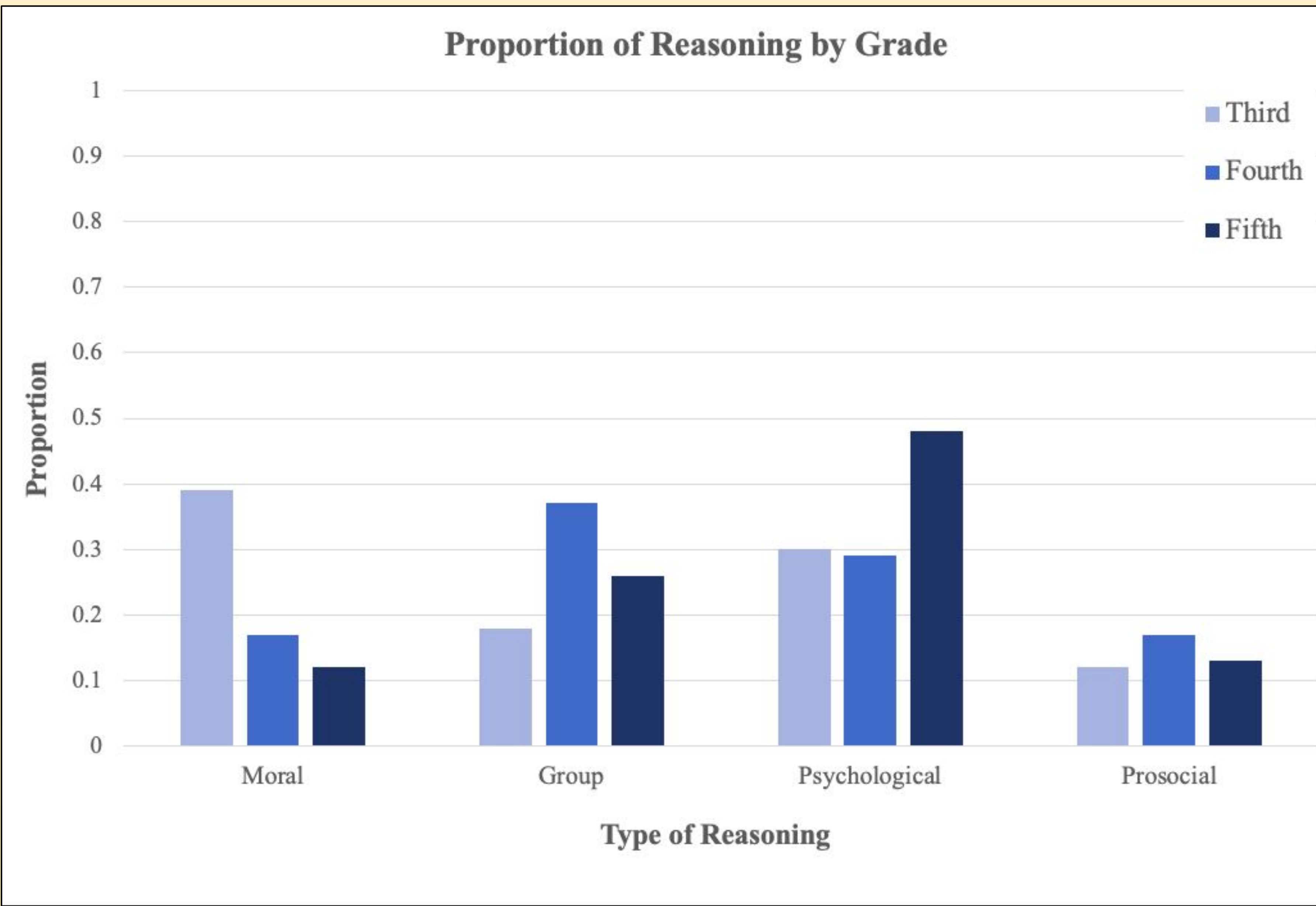
- Students independently viewed an online tool featuring a scenario about intergroup exclusion.
- Students contributed to a large group discussion with their class facilitated by their teacher and audio recorded.

SCENARIO

- A Korean boy is having a birthday party and wants to invite his White friend. Another friend who is Korean suggests that the White friend may not like the Korean food they will have at the party, so maybe he shouldn’t be invited.
- Children saw both a version in which the White friend was not invited to the party and one where he was invited and ended up enjoying the food.



RESULTS



Conceptual Category	Definition	Example
Moral Reasoning	References to fairness, equality, equity, anti-stereotypes, benefits of diversity, or wrongfulness of discrimination.	“It would be ok if they're like kind of mean to you and everything, but it's– it's mostly not okay to leave people behind.” (4 th)
Group-Based Reasoning	References to group dynamics, endorsement of stereotypes, awareness of stereotypes and discrimination, or referencing the costs of challenging exclusion.	“There are certain celebrations that maybe some of your friends don’t celebrate or know about. So maybe you might want to do... [them] along with your family.” (4 th)
Psychological Reasoning	References to personal choice, pragmatism, or perspective taking.	“No, because it's not [Andrew’s] party and he can't decide who... he can invite and can’t invite. It’s Tommy’s decision.” (5 th)
Prosocial Reasoning	References to what is nice or not nice, includes negative emotional reactions to discrimination.	“I would probably most likely not let them come to my party because I don't like people being mean to other people, so I'm not gonna let them join...” (4 th)

METHODS

CODING

- Audio recorded discussions were transcribed into teacher and student speaking turns.
- Each student speaking turn was assigned 1-2 codes for reasoning based on the best match to the coding category definition.

DISCUSSION

- With age, children tended to use more group- and psychological-based reasoning, and less moral reasoning.
- 3rd graders demonstrated greater concern for fairness and equality, while 5th graders appealed more to the importance of personal autonomy and showed awareness of stereotypes.
- These results suggest that as children age, they may become more aware of others’ perspectives, allowing them to consider the broader cultural contexts motivating minoritized group children’s exclusion of majority group members.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Findings suggest that school-based interventions aiming to foster cross-group friendships may function differently for children across elementary school grades.
- Future research should explore how children’s classroom discussions about exclusion may promote inclusive attitudes and change classroom norms.

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