

Bridging the Gap between Social Reasoning and Action: Impacts of Collaborative Discussions

Manisha Nagpal, Tzu Jung Lin, Ziye Wen

The Ohio State University

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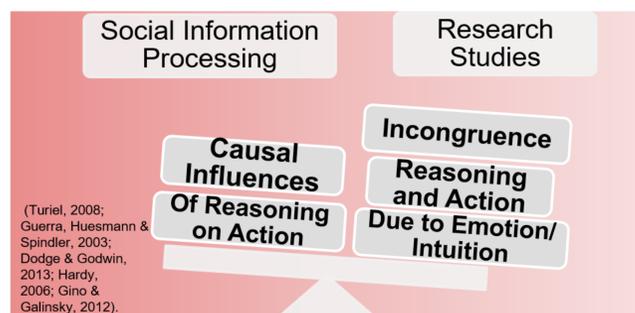


ABSTRACT

This study examined whether participating in dialogic discussions could enhance students' social reasoning and their social-moral action. A total of 250 fifth-grade students in a Midwestern city in the U.S. were assigned to the Collaborative Small Group condition-CSR, a Read Aloud condition-RA or a Regular Instruction-RI condition. Students' social reasoning and social behavior were assessed before and after the intervention. CSR students experienced greater improvement in social reasoning compared to RA and RI students. At the same time, CSR students demonstrated greater improvement in social actions toward others, whereas RA and RI students did not show an improvement. The findings underscore the value of collaborative small group discussion in synchronizing students' social reasoning and action.

BACKGROUND

- In the field of social cognition, there is a growing debate on whether individuals act in accordance with their *social reasoning*, defined as the ways by which individuals perceive, construe, and evaluate complex issues that occur in the social world (Mulvey, 2016). Although the social information processing theory suggests causal influences of reasoning on one's actions, studies often report incongruency between the two.



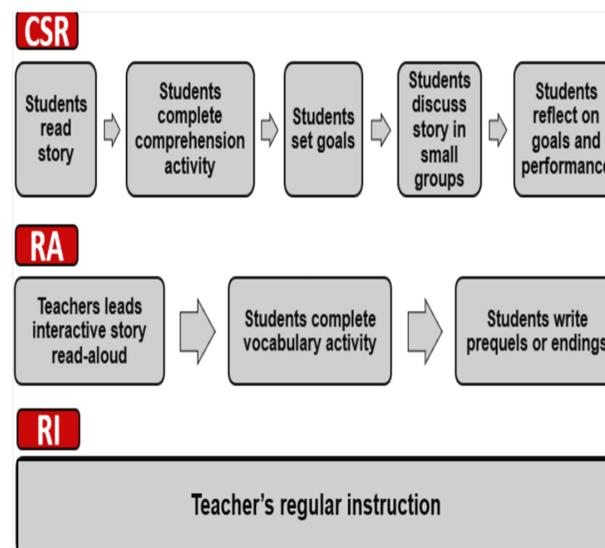
- Despite diverse intervention programs that promote students' reasoning and social action (see Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), few of these have taken a dialogic approach to bridge the gap between the two.

PURPOSE OF CURRENT STUDY

The goal of the current study was to examine the impact of Collaborative Social Reasoning (CSR)—a collaborative small group discussion approach based on social constructivist theories (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001; Alexander, 2006)—on students' social reasoning and behavior.

PARTICIPANTS, STUDY DESIGN, PROCEDURE

- The sample included 250 fifth grade students (121 females) from 12 classrooms in two schools in the Midwestern US.
- The study adopted a pre-post control quasi-experimental design with the following three conditions. The intervention lasted for six weeks.



EXAMPLE OF A CSR DISCUSSION



MEASURES

Social Reasoning

- Students completed an essay task after reading a short social-moral story. Social reasoning was operationalized as the extent to which students considered others' perspectives and justify their understandings with reasons, evidence, values/beliefs, or affect. Example:

Example:

"Should Cody Tell on Dante?"

In your essay, tell us whether you think Cody should tell on Dante, and why.

Remember:

Please provide reasonable arguments for your opinions and refer to the story text when necessary. Try to consider multiple sides of the issue and provide reasons to support your arguments. Do your best and write as much as you can. You can go back and re-read the story if you like.

Social Action

- Assessed by peer nominations of overt and relational aggression, self-conscious/anxious withdrawal and social disinterest.

Example:

Please circle the names of boys AND girls

who best fit this description. Please DO NOT circle your name.

2-8) These students hit, shove, or push other classmates.

[Boys]

[Girls]

DATA ANALYSIS

- Hierarchical linear models and generalized linear models with generalized estimating equations (GEE) were used to compare the groups on social reasoning and social action.

RESULTS

Dimension (Social Reasoning)	CSR vs Read Aloud (RA)	CSR vs Regular Instruction (RI)
No. of Perspectives	> .83**	> 1.11***
No. of Perspectives Justified	> .32**	> .66**

Dimension (Social Action)	CSR vs Read Aloud (RA)	CSR vs Regular Instruction (RI)
Overt Aggression	< -.70**	< -.74***
Relational Aggression	< -.53***	< -.03
Self-conscious Withdrawal	< -.40*	< -.28
Social Disinterest	< -.26*	< -.19

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

- Collaborative small group discussion not only promotes students' social reasoning but helped them translate that richer understanding into real life situations where they handle complex social relations.



- Unlike RA students, CSR students had extensive opportunities to openly voice their thoughts related to complex issues of social exclusion. This helped in orienting students toward key social cues embedded in dynamic social interactions with others.

- Need more longitudinal studies to understand the underlying mechanisms of change. Future research may also consider implicit psychometric tools to measure one's reasoning about complex social issues.