TITLE: Children's responses to irrelevant and inaccurate sources of information

AUTHORS: Kamarea Brown, Melissa Hrabic, Bethany MacDonald, and Rebecca A. Williamson

FACULTY SPONSOR: Rebecca Williamson, PhD

Introduction: To learn new words, scientific facts, moral norms, and cultural and religious beliefs, children depend on information from others. It is better to get information from good sources, and past research indicates that even preschoolers are beginning to differentiate good from bad sources of information (Koenig & Harris 2005). For example, when presented with an actor that gives a correct label for a common object and one that gives an incorrect label, children are more likely to accept new information from the actor that gave the correct label.

Purpose: Past studies have looked at sources that give correct information versus sources that give incorrect information. We are interested in more subtle degrees of inaccuracy. Will the children distinguish a source that gives incomplete information from one that gives incorrect information?

Method: The children were presented with two puppets that were supposed to name a common object. One puppet gave accurate information, but that information was not a label. The other puppet provided a label, but the label was incorrect. The children were then given a chance to indicate which puppet to get information from in the future.

Results: We are currently transcribing children's verbalizations during this experience. Once transcribed, the number and content of children's utterances in response each actor will be scored as either positive/agreeing (e.g., "Yes. You drink with it.") negative/disagreeing (e.g., "That's not a shoe.") or unrelated (e.g. "My mom's name is Jane."). We hypothesize that children will correct the puppet that gave incorrect information and that they will be more likely to choose to get information from the puppet that gave correct information, even if it was not a label.

Conclusion: This research will provide information about how children's spontaneous vocalizations relate to their source monitoring. Further, it will help identify whether children are sensitive to different degrees of inaccuracy.

Key Words:

Source reliability
Social Learning
Preschoolers
Developmental psychology