

Culture, causal attributions, and development: A comparison of Chinese and U.S. 4-and 6-year-olds

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Abstract: This is a cross-cultural replication of Seiver, Gopnik & Goodman (2013) and compares the development of social causal attributions in Chinese and U.S. children. In this study, Chinese (n=110) 4-and 6-year-olds were directly compared to the U.S. children in Seiver, Gopnik & Goodman (2013). Children were shown covariation evidence that varied across conditions to imply that a person, situation, or neither was the cause of a person's actions. Following observation, children were asked to explain why the person engaged in the actions. Findings indicate that U.S. children significantly increased the amount of person attributions they made with age, while Chinese 4-and 6-year-olds answered comparably. Children from both cultures were sensitive to covariation manipulations when they suggested a person was the cause of an action. Only U.S. children were sensitive to evidence when it favored the situation.