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TITLE OF THESIS: RELATIONS BETWEEN POSITIVE AFFECT AND SHARING BEHAVIOUR IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

TIME/DATE: 9:30 am, Tuesday, June 19, 2018

PLACE: Room 3107, The Mona Campbell Building, 1459 LeMarchant Street

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Dr. Stuart Hammond, School of Psychology, University of Ottawa (External Examiner)

Dr. Sophie Jacques, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dalhousie University (Reader)

Dr. Hélène Deacon, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dalhousie University (Reader)

Dr. Chris Moore, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dalhousie University (Supervisor)

DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE: Dr. Benjamin Rusak, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dalhousie University

CHAIR: Dr. Brian Bow, PhD Defence Panel, Faculty of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

Research with adults suggests there may be complex bidirectional relations between positive affect and sharing behaviour, in which self-oriented positive affect increases prosocial behaviour, and other-oriented positive empathy decreases prosocial behaviour. Additionally, research with adults suggests engaging in sharing increases positive affect. However, such relations in children remain unclear. This dissertation investigated how other-oriented positive empathy and self-oriented positive affect impact sharing, and how sharing impacts affect in 5- and 6-year-olds. Study 1 examined how positive empathy impacts children's sharing. We found no differences in sharing between children who watched videos of another child in neutral versus positive situations, although these manipulations successfully impacted children's ratings of the other child's affect. Study 2 investigated how children's own positive affect impacted their sharing. We found no differences in sharing between children who received their most or least favourite toys, although these manipulations successfully impacted children's perceived and expressed affective reactions. Study 3 examined if sharing impacted children's self-reported and facial displays of affect, after negative affect was first induced with a sad video about another child. We compared three groups of children who (1) made active choices about sharing stickers with another child (i.e., active sharing), (2) watched the experimenter allocate stickers between themselves and another child (i.e., passive sharing), and (3) simply received stickers themselves (i.e., passive receiving). We found a positive increase in children's self-reported affect from before to after the sharing task across conditions. However, there was no difference in self-reported affect after the sharing task between the three conditions. Facial affect coding revealed that children in the active sharing condition displayed more positive facial affect than those in the passive sharing condition, and those in the passive sharing condition showed more positive affect than those in the passive receiving condition. Further trial-by-trial analysis revealed no differences in children's facial expressions based on whether each trial resulted in a prosocial outcome, so differences in facial expressions across the three conditions may be due to active choice as opposed to active sharing per se. This dissertation offers insights into potential interrelations between positive affect and sharing in early childhood.