

Chaplin, Lan Nguyen and Michael I. Norton (2015), "Why We Think We Can't Dance: Theory of Mind and Performance in Children", *Child Development*, 82 (2), 651-658

Abstract

Theory of mind (ToM) allows children to achieve success in the social world by understanding others' minds. A study with 3- to 12-year-olds, however, demonstrates that gains in ToM are linked to decreases in children's desire to engage in performative behaviors associated with health and well-being, such as singing and dancing. One hundred and fifty-nine middle-class children from diverse backgrounds in a Northeastern U.S. metropolitan area completed the study in 2011. The development of ToM is associated with decreases in self-esteem, which in turn predicts decreases in children's willingness to perform. This shift away from performance begins at age 4 (when ToM begins to develop), years before children enter puberty.

Keywords: Theory of mind, children, behavior, perform, self-esteem