Title

Stereotypes Decrease Childrens Tendency to Acknowledge Constraints on Choice

Permalink

Journal

Authors

Amemiya, Jamie
Mortenson, Elizabeth
Ahn, Sohee
et al.

Publication Date

Copyright Information

Peer reviewed

Stereotypes Decrease Childrens Tendency to Acknowledge Constraints on Choice

Jamie Amemiya
University of California San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Elizabeth Mortenson
Stanford University, Stanford, California, United States

Sohee Ahn
University of California San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Caren Walker
University of California San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Gail Heyman
UC San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Abstract

Prior research has documented childrens recognition that a choice made when constrained to a single option is a poor indicator of anothers preference. The present study (N = 246; 5 to 10 years) examined childrens tendency to make this inference in stereotypical contexts (e.g., a girl playing with a doll). Because stereotypes provide powerful explanatory frameworks (e.g., girls inherently like dolls), children may discount constraints and infer that constrained and unconstrained stereotypical choices are both evidence of a preference. The majority of children discounted constraints in this way. However, while younger children (5 to 6 years) tended to discount constraints similarly across both stereotypical and gender-neutral choices, older children (9 to 10 years) were more likely to discount constraints when reasoning about stereotypical choices. We also report evidence that, overall, childrens acknowledgment of environmental constraints may not be as robust as previously documented.