

Understanding Children's Ingroup Biases: Does Group Membership Affect Children's Acceptance of Counterintuitive Information?

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Abstract

In the current study, we aim to build on past research on group membership and epistemic trust and how both interact. Specifically, we used behavioral measures to explore how group membership and plausibility of the speaker's claims may affect children's learning decisions and social preferences.

Introduction

- Previous developmental work has shown that children have a robust preference for their own group members¹.
- Children are able to track the reliability of others and selectively learn from individuals who appear to be more knowledgeable².

Research Questions

- (1) Do children selectively trust ingroup members for information?
- (2) If so, will children's trust in the ingroup member's testimony still hold when faced with counterintuitive claims?

Method

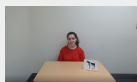
Four- to five-year-old U.S children were recruited ($n = 47$, 15 Female, $MAge = 4.947$, range = 4.589 - 5.481). All participants were randomly assigned to a color group using the minimal group membership paradigm and assigned into one of two between-subject conditions:

- (1) An **ingroup condition** where the ingroup member provided counterintuitive information; and
- (2) An **outgroup condition** where an outgroup member provided countervailing claims.

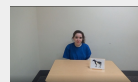
Method (cont.)

Baseline. Using the minimal group paradigm, participants were assigned to a randomly predetermined color group with a corresponding colored t-shirt and wristbands to wear.

1. Counterclaim phase. 4 hybrid animal and 4 novel objects were shown to each participant. First, they were asked to give baseline classification responses (e.g., "horse"). Afterwards, participants were shown a video of either an ingroup or an outgroup member providing a counterclaim (e.g., "cow"). Then children were asked to give a classification response after the counterclaim.



"Cow" or "Horse"



2. Selective Trust phase. Another 4 hybrid and 4 novel object photos were shown and children were asked which group member they would ask information from (e.g., would they ask either their ingroup or the outgroup member for the label). After each response, participants were shown a video of both an ingroup and the outgroup giving a label for the photo. Then participants were asked to give a classification response after hearing both claims.

"Zazz"



"Crut"

3. Preference and Resource Allocation. After each counterclaim trial mentioned above, participants were asked on a scale from 1-7 on how much they liked each agent, how much they would want to play with them, and asked to distribute 15 stickers between the ingroup and outgroup member

Preliminary Results

- **Deference of Hybrid vs Novel labels.** We found a significant main effect of Object Type in children's deference scores $F(1, 34)=4.371, p=.044$. On average, children were more likely to change their initial response and endorse the label provided for the novel objects ($M=2.8649$) compared to the hybrid objects ($M=2.379$), regardless of which informant provided the counter-intuitive claim. In other words, children were not more likely to defer to their ingroup member.



- **Selective Trust of Hybrid vs Novel objects.** We found a significant interaction between object type and condition, $F(2, 33)=4.460, p=.019$. Follow-up simple tests of the effect of Condition shows that for the novel objects, children are more likely to selectively trust their ingroup member in the ingroup condition compared to the outgroup condition, $p=0.001$; but there was no condition differences when it comes to the hybrid objects.



- Future Direction

- Explore at what ages does epistemic trust or ingroup bias influence more on who to trust for information

References

1. Elashi, F. B., & Mills, C. M. (2014). Do children trust based on group membership or prior accuracy? The role of novel group membership in children's trust decisions. *Journal of experimental child psychology*.
2. Koenig, M & Harris (2005). Preschoolers mistrust ignorant and inaccurate speakers. *Child development*.