



Compulsory Equality: Young Children Think Resources Must be Divided Equally

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Introduction

- Communities develop norms for sharing limited resources and punish individuals who take more than the norm, but do not punish those who take less.
- Young children expect limited resources to be split equally (Shaw & Olson, 2012). But they have two competencies that would be necessary to understand that inequality that occurs by choice is acceptable, including an understanding that people can desire different things (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997) and an ability to detect when actions are freely carried out (Kushnir et al., 2015).
- Study 1:** Do 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, and adults ($N=48$) think inequality is okay when one individual chooses to take fewer than his fair share of resources and a second takes more?
- Study 2:** Do 6-year-olds and 8-year-olds ($N=32$) think inequality is okay when one individual chooses to take less than his fair share and the other individual takes only his fair share?

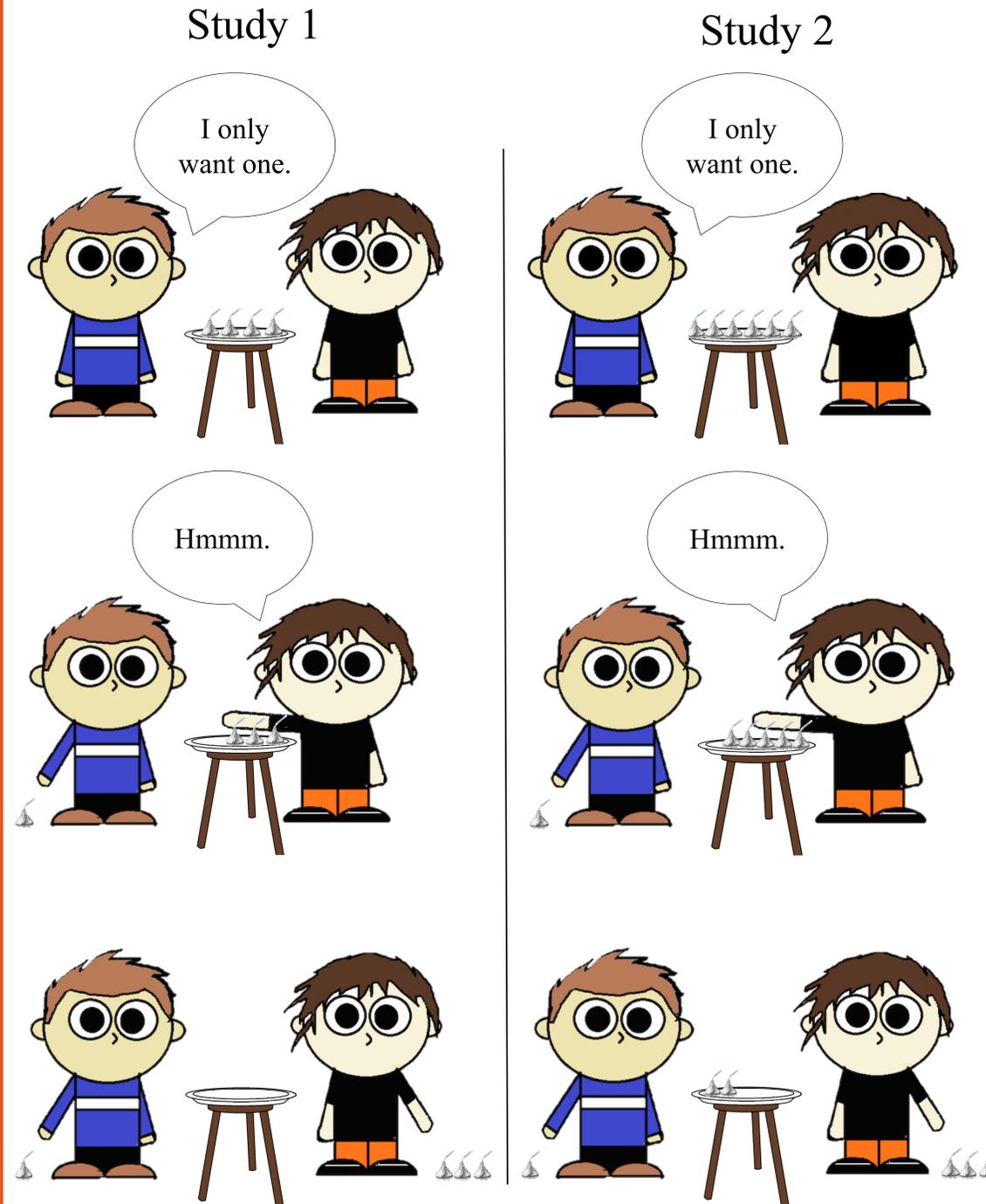
References

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- Repacholi, B. M., & Gopnik, A. (1997). Early reasoning about desires: Evidence from 14- and 18-month-olds. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 12-21.
- Shaw, A., & Olson, K. R. (2012). Children discard a resource to avoid inequity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 141, 382-395.

Acknowledgments

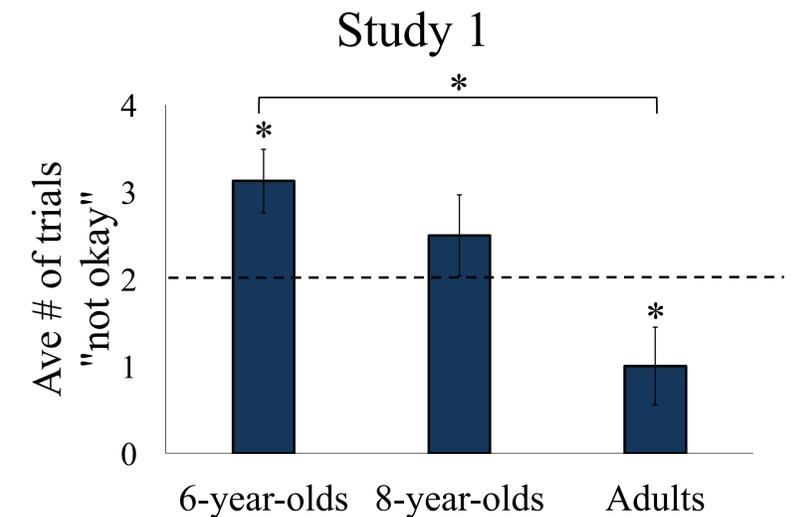
Thanks to the children and parents who participated in this research, and the research assistants in the Jaswal Lab who helped collect the data.

Method

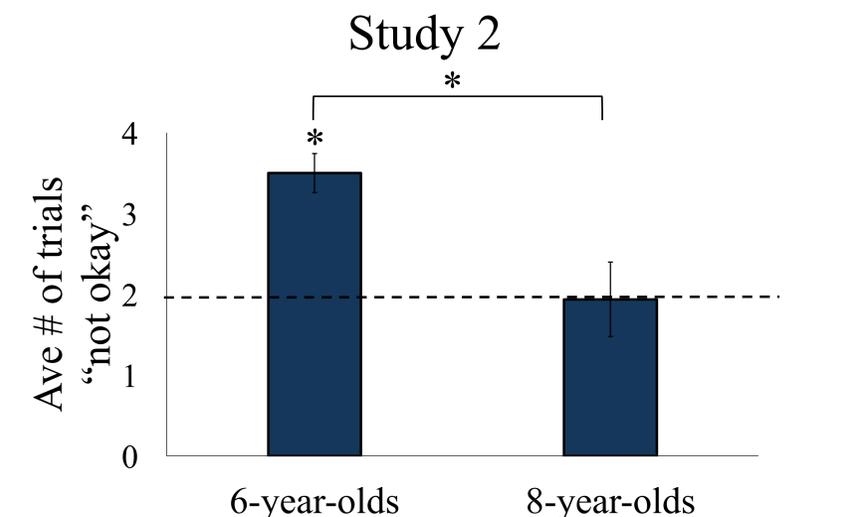


Test Question: Is it okay or not okay that this boy got one and this boy got three? $\times 4$

Results



- 6-year-olds were more likely than adults to object to inequality where one individual chose to take fewer than his fair share and the other took more. 8-year-olds, as a group, were ambivalent.



- 6-year-olds were more likely than 8-year-olds to object to inequality where one individual chose to take fewer than his fair share and the other took his fair share.

Conclusion

- 6-year-olds expect resources to be divided equally regardless of desire and continued access to half the resources. 8-year-olds are more likely to evaluate inequality as okay if the person who wants less still has access to his fair share of the items.