



Compulsory Equality: Young Children Think Resources Must be Divided Equally

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Introduction

- Communities develop norms for sharing limited resources and sanction individuals who take more but not less than the norm.
- Most adults believe that resource inequality is acceptable when one person has chosen to take *less* than his fair share. Do children agree?
- 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 of desire (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997) and free will (Kushnir et al., 2015).
- Study 1:** Do 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, and adults ($N=48$) think resource inequality is okay when an individual chooses to take less than the norm?
- Study 2:** Do 6-year-olds ($N=32$) think resource inequality is okay if someone who takes less than his fair share not only gives permission for another person to take the rest, but actually gives it to him?

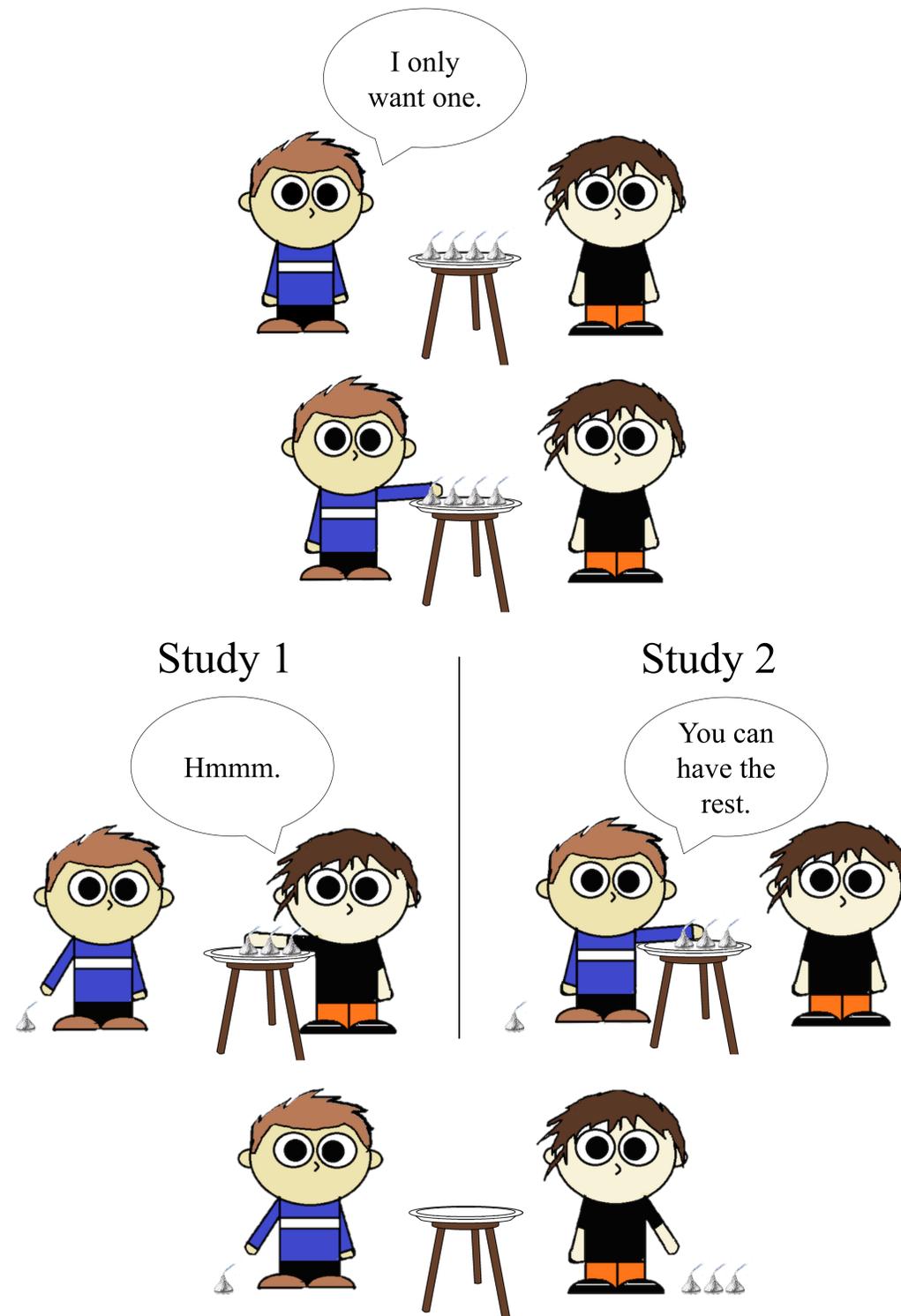
References

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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.
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Acknowledgments

Thanks to the children and parents who participated in this research, and the research assistants in the Child Language & Learning Lab who helped collect the data.

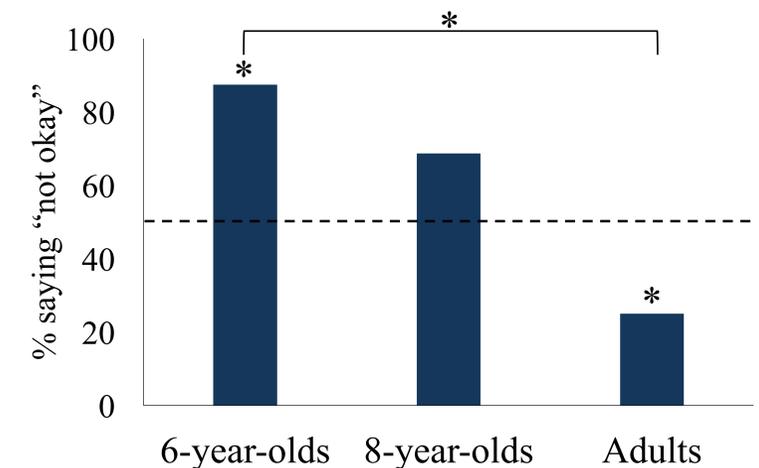
Method



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

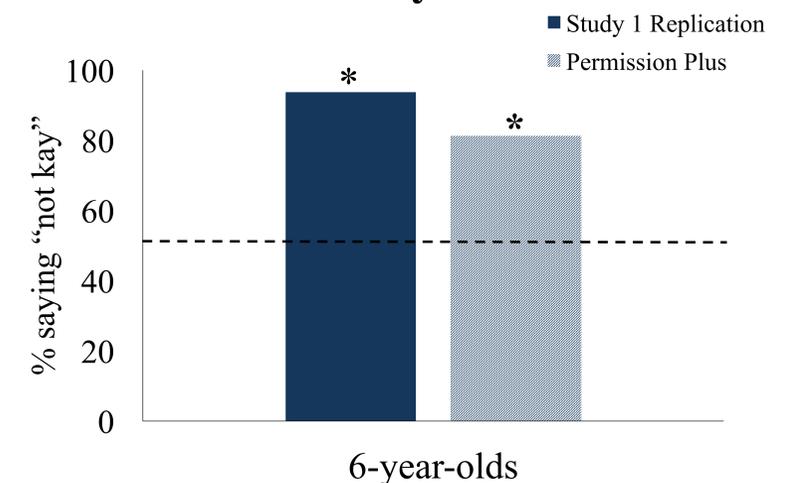
Results

Study 1



- 6-year-olds were more likely than adults to say this type of inequality was not okay. 8-year-olds were ambivalent.

Study 2



- 6-year-olds evaluated inequality as impermissible even when permission was granted and the items were given away.

Conclusion

- 6-year-olds expect resources to be divided equally even when one person wants less than his fair share.