

Expertise Outweighs Bias: An Investigation of Children's Selective Trust in Individuals with Disabilities

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INTRODUCTION

- Preschoolers trust informants based on characteristics such as reliability and expertise (Marble & Boseovski, 2020).
- Yet, children are susceptible to social bias such that they tend to trust informants from their in-group (Corriveau et al., 2013).
- Some research suggests that preschoolers lack trust in informants with physical disabilities, even reliable ones (Jaffer & Ma, 2015).
- The current study assessed children's trust in testimony in about facts and actions that were relevant or irrelevant to disabilities. We expected children to trust informants with disabilities more in disability relevant contexts.

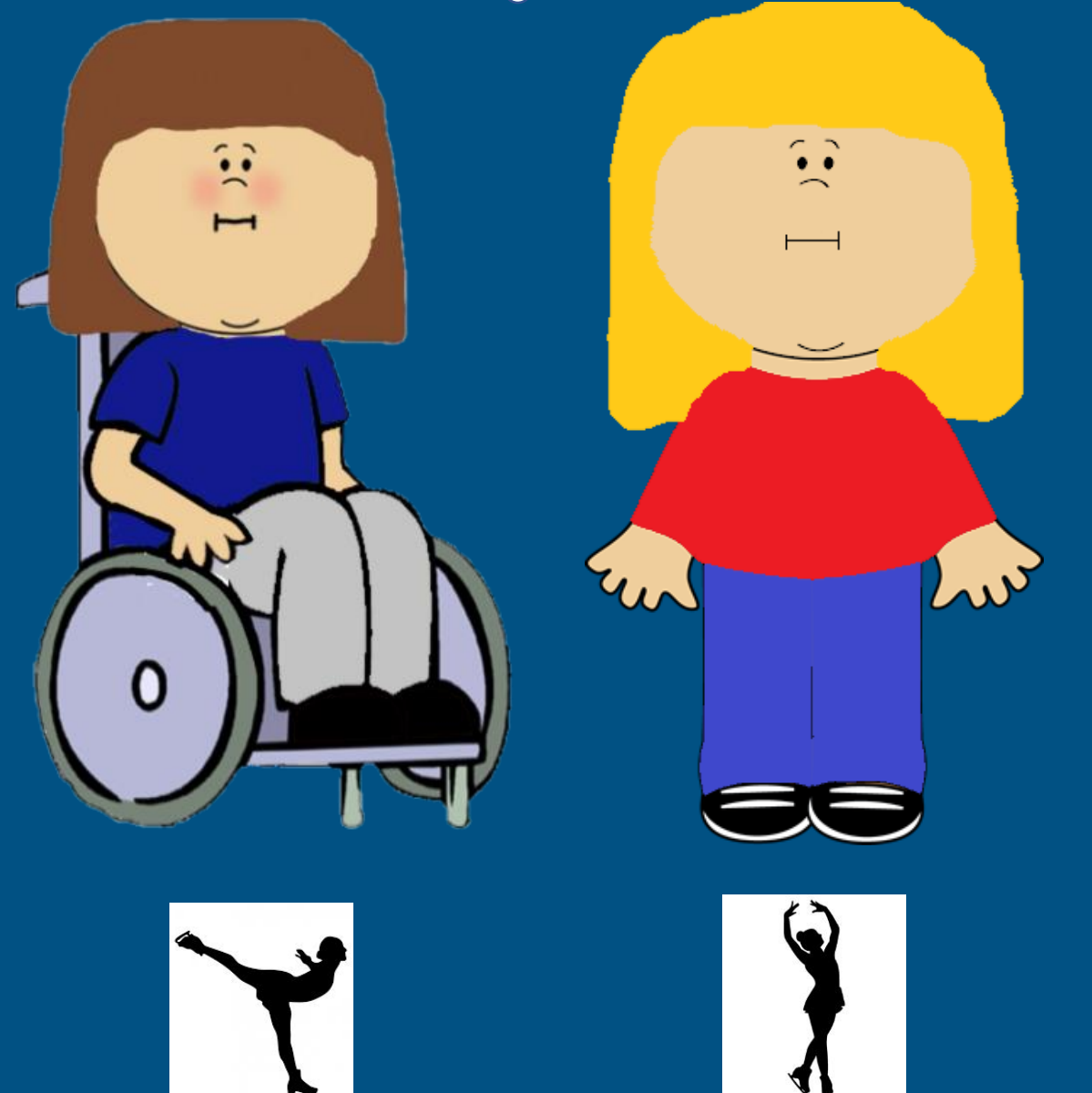
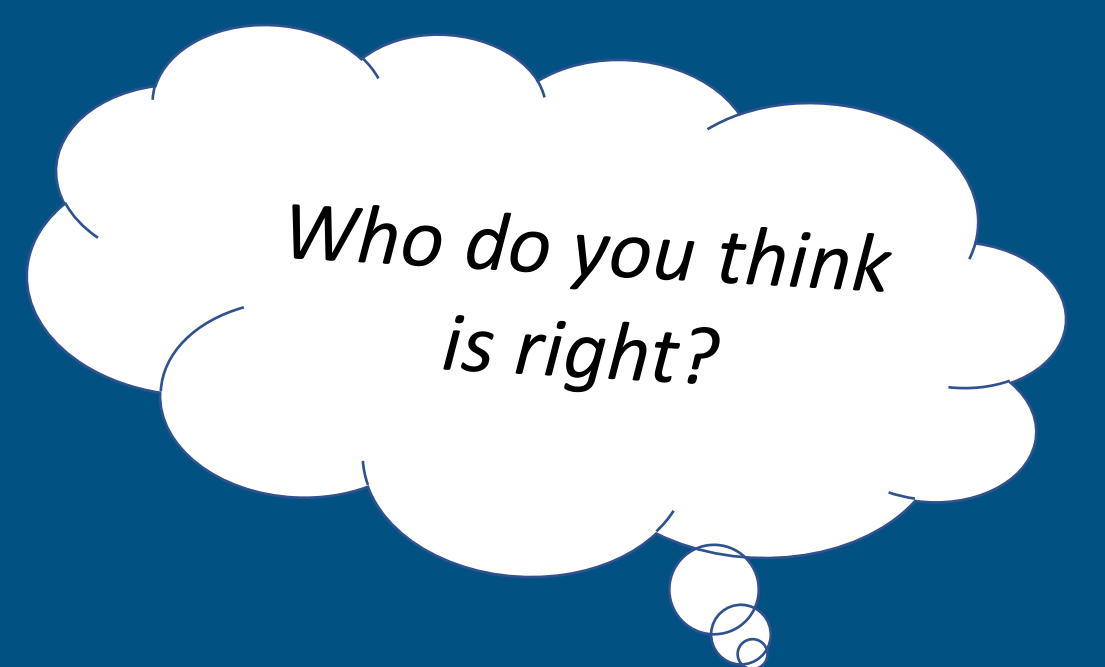
METHOD

- Participants: 88 3- to 6-year-olds vs. 7- to 11-year-olds.
- Participants heard two trials of testimony from each of the four conditions accompanied by pictures (see Table 1).
- Informants provided conflicting testimony about a topic (e.g., how to stop when using a wheelchair).
- Participants selected who they thought was right.

Table 1. Testimony conditions with

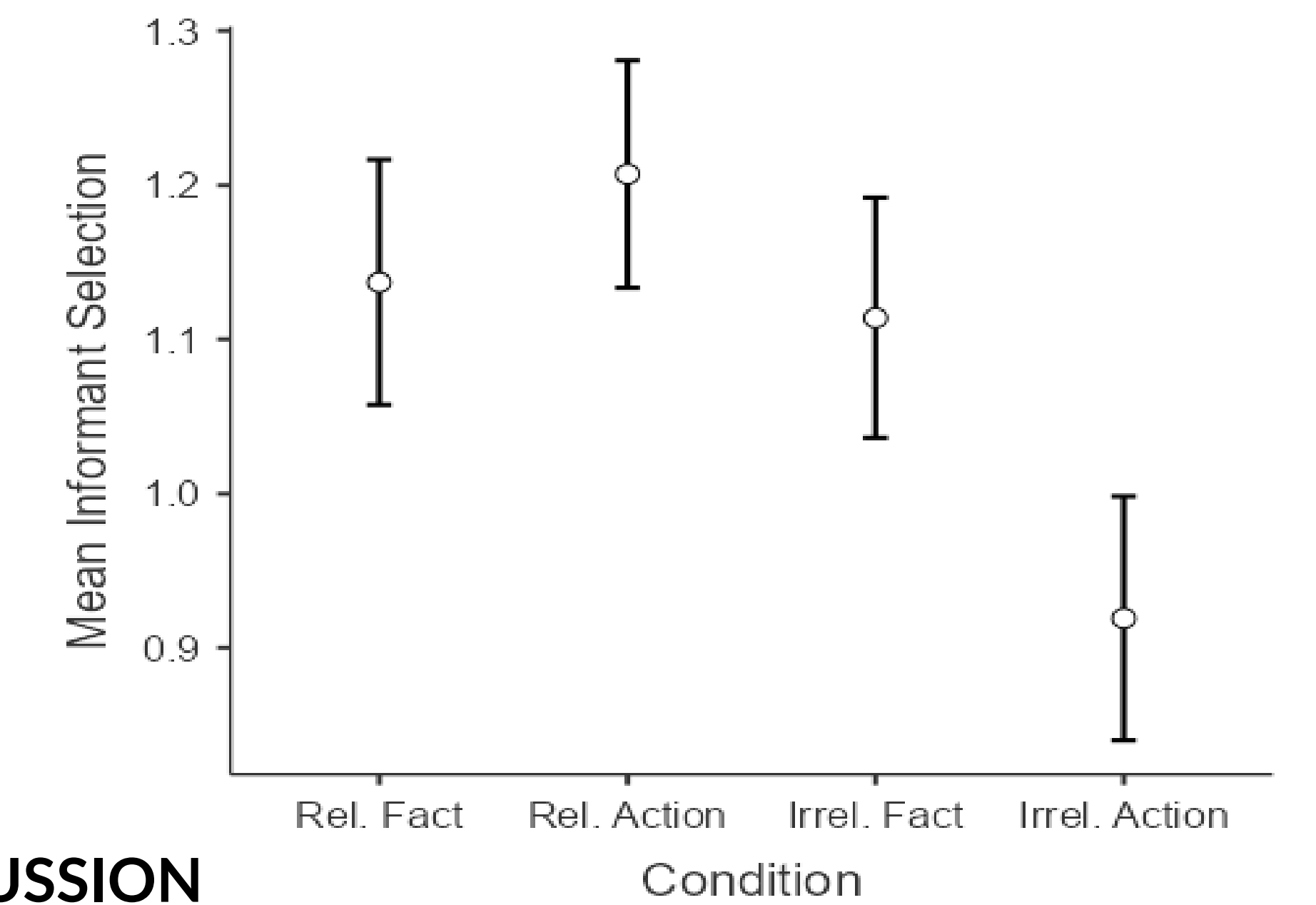
Condition	Question	Sample Testimony 1	Sample Testimony 2
Disability-Relevant Fact	Do you know what illness can make your legs not move?	Adam thinks that viruses can make your legs not move.	Brandon thinks that infections can make your legs not move.
Disability-Irrelevant Fact	Do you know at what time of day hair grows fastest?	Adam thinks hair grows the fastest in the morning.	Brandon thinks hair grows fastest in the evening.
Disability-Relevant Action	Do you know how to stop when using a wheelchair?	Adam thinks the correct way to stop a wheelchair is to grip the wheel bar at the front.	Brandon thinks the correct way to stop a wheelchair is to grip the wheel bar at the back.
Disability-Irrelevant Action	Do you know how axel skating is done?	Adam thinks that Axel skating is done on two feet.	Brandon thinks that Axel skating is done on one foot.

Children are more likely to endorse testimony of informants with physical disabilities when the testimony is about disability related actions (e.g., how to use a wheelchair) than when testimony is about facts or actions unrelated to disability.



RESULTS

- A 2x4 mixed ANOVA (age x condition) revealed significant effect of condition, $F(3, 261) = 2.67, p = 0.04, \eta_p^2 = 0.03$
- Children were more likely to endorse testimony of the informant using a wheelchair in the disability-relevant actions condition ($M = 1.21, SD = 0.07$) than the disability-irrelevant action condition ($M = 0.92, SD = 0.08$).
- There was no significant difference in the fact conditions.
- Children were more likely than chance to select the informant with a disability in the disability-relevant action condition, $t(91) = 2.88, p = 0.005, d = .30$, whereas selections were at chance in all other conditions, $ps > .10$.
- There were no significant effects of age and no significant interaction between condition and age, $ps > .09$.



DISCUSSION

- Findings suggest that children do not show an overall bias against individuals with disabilities in their informant selection.
- Conversely, children value the testimony of individuals with disabilities in contexts that seem most relevant.
- Future research should investigate other contexts in which children may also show greater trust in people with disabilities and how this can be used to increase positive perceptions of out-group members