

# Intergroup Bias in Arab Children's Preference for In- vs. Out-group Informants

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## Abstract

Much of what children know about out-groups is based on other people's testimony rather than personal observation. This information, however, is often times biased, and its effect on children's attitudes and beliefs is substantial. In fact, children's own requests and processing of information is biased. For instance, children manifest preferences regarding informants based on their expertise and group membership. To date, however, these parameters have not been examined when the information is about people. On the one hand, expertise considerations may guide children to prefer receiving information about a target person, from a member of the target's group. On the other hand, intergroup bias may direct children to prefer their own group's testimony regardless of the target's group membership. The present research examined whether Arab Israeli children are biased regarding their preference for informants.

Study 1 served as a baseline study. Sixty-seven children (34 kindergarteners,  $M_{age}=5.90$  years, and 33 2<sup>nd</sup> graders,  $M_{age}=8.01$  years; 45% female) were introduced in three trials to pictures of different places (Park, Mall, and Zoo), and pairs of informant-children who contrasted in their group membership (Arab as in-group, Jew as "conflict" out-group, and Scot as "neutral" out-group). In each trial, children were asked about expertise perception (e.g., "who do you think knows more about the park? Alon, the Jewish boy, or Rafik, the Arab boy?"), informant preference (e.g., "who do you prefer to tell you information about the park? Alon, the Jewish boy, or Rafik, the Arab boy?"), and acceptance of informants' positive and negative advice (e.g., "Here is a slide, both boys tell you that you should play with the slide; Rafik, the Arab boy says you should play on the slide in the afternoon, and Alon the Jewish boy says you should play on the slide but not in the afternoon. What would you want to do, go play on the slide in the afternoon like Rafik says, or go to play on the slide but not in the afternoon like Alon says?"). Results showed that whereas kindergarteners chose an in-group informant as expert and tended not to choose the conflict out-group informant, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders showed no

intergroup bias on expertise judgment. In terms of informant preference, both age groups preferred the in-group and much less the conflict out-group.

Study 2 investigated whether children's responses vary when the information to be obtained is about people whose group membership varies. Here, 65 participants (32 kindergarteners,  $M_{age}=5.90$  years, and 33 2<sup>nd</sup> graders,  $M_{age}=7.91$  years; 54% female) were introduced in five trials to pictures of target-children, and pairs of informant-children, with again having the possibility to choose between one of two informants who contrasted in their group membership, in terms of expertise, preference and acceptance of positive and negative advice. Whereas kindergarteners judged in-group members to be experts both on their in-group and on a conflict out-group, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders regarded as experts, the respective informant from each target's group. In terms of preferences, again kindergarteners preferred to receive information from an in-group informant both in regard to an in-group and a conflict out-group; 2<sup>nd</sup> graders also exhibited some bias, preferring to hear from an in-group informant when the target was in-group, and not showing any preference when targets were out-group. In both study 1 and 2, the findings regarding acceptance of positive and negative advice showed similar pattern in both age groups accepting the positive advice of the Jews and rejecting their negative one, while accepting Scots positive advice and turning down their negative one.

Overall, these studies reveal that Arab Israeli children manifest intergroup biases regarding informant preferences, especially within process of learning about people. These findings pioneer the way to further the understanding of intergroup biases within the context of conflict and they provide important implications regarding how to transmit information to children about groups.