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White Men in White coats: Children's Attributions of Scientific Knowledge based on Race and Gender

Lillian C. Holm
University of Louisville, lholm02@louisville.edu

Mariel R. Cox
University of Louisville, mariel.cox@louisville.edu

Khushboo S. Patel
University of Louisville, khushboosamirbhai.patel@louisville.edu

Judith H. Danovitch
University of Louisville, j.danovitch@louisville.edu

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White Men in White Coats: Children's Attributions of Scientific Knowledge based on Race and Gender

Lillian C. Holm¹, Mariel R. Cox¹, Khushboo S. Patel¹, Judith H. Danovitch¹

¹The University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, USA

ABSTRACT

Children use others' characteristics (e.g., intelligence and niceness) to evaluate how much a person knows (Landrum et al., 2016). However, little is known about how gender and race influence children's perception of adults' scientific knowledge. The current study examined how children ages 5-8 (N = 25; 11 girls, 14 boys) perceive adults' scientific knowledge. In the first task, children saw 8 different adults of varying race and gender (White man, White woman, Black man, Black woman) and rated their knowledge using a five-point scale. Children then chose one person out of two adults who they thought knew more about a scientific topic across 12 trials. In the last task, children saw 4 different adults of varying race and gender and chose which person was the scientist. Preliminary analyses showed no significant differences between children's knowledge ratings and selection of Black and White men and women. However, children chose White men as scientists in the greatest proportion of trials. The current study will expand our understanding of how children's perception of an adult's scientific knowledge is impacted by the adults' race and gender.

KEYWORDS: race, gender, children's learning, scientific learning, children's perception