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Object-context affects 5-to-6-year-olds' and adults' ownership reasoning about artifacts and natural kinds

Jessica Wang

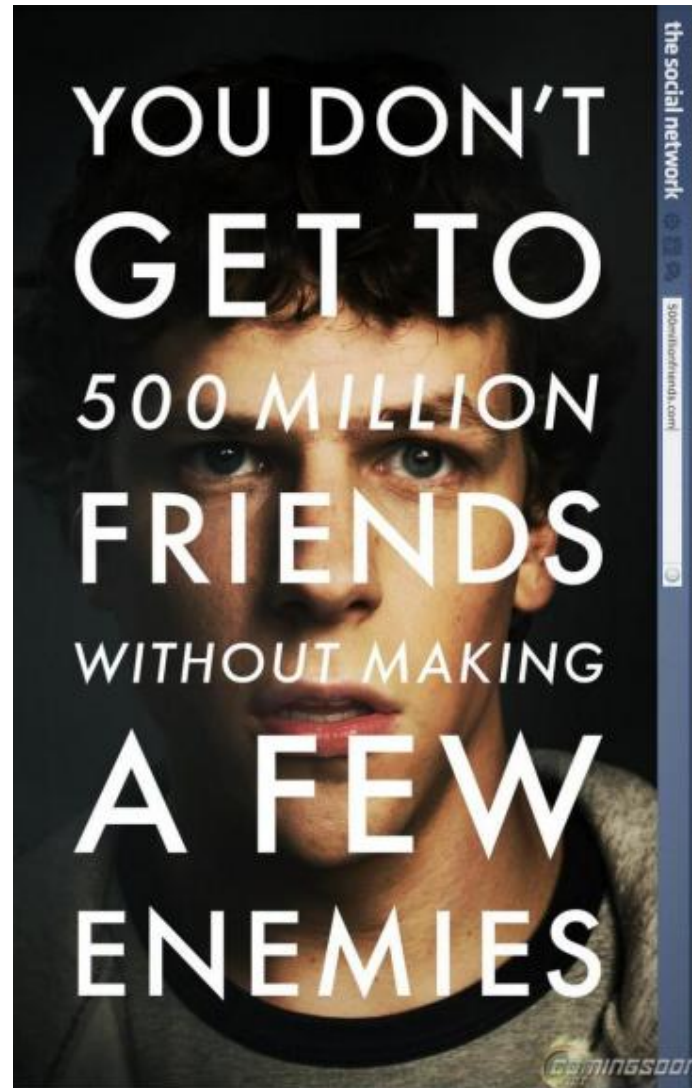
Greta Defeyter

Rachael Stabler

Ownership is a matter of social convention (Snare, 1972)

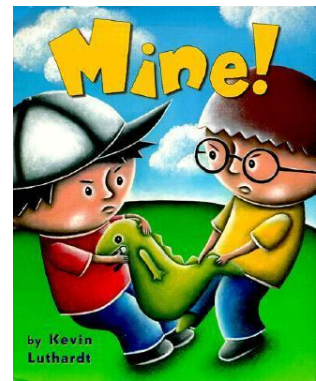
- Daily life
- Behaviour towards objects
- Behaviour towards others
- Morality

A famous example..



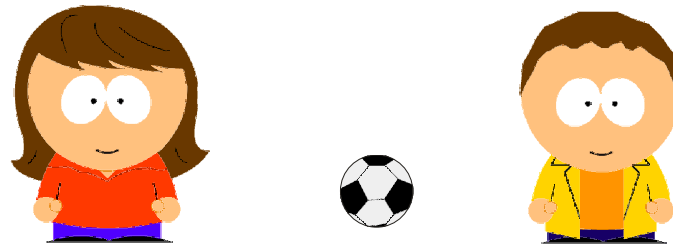
Young children's understanding of ownership

- At 18-to-24-month of age, children demonstrate an ability to identify owners of familiar objects (Fasig, 2000)
- Ownership takes precedence over possession in 2- and 4-year-old children's dispute outcomes with siblings (Ross, 1996)



Young children's ability to infer ownership

- Friedman & Neary (2008): children use 'first possession heuristics' when reasoning about ownership of objects, with which children are unfamiliar



Young children's ability to infer ownership

- Age 2:
 - Understanding of ownership (Fasig, 2000; Ross, 1996)
- Age 3:
 - First possession heuristics (Friedman & Neary, 2008)
- Age 4-5:
 - Control of permission (Neary, Friedman & Burnstein, 2009)
 - Transfer of ownership (Blake & Harris, 2009; Kim & Kalish, 2009)

Other factors in ownership reasoning

- The Role of Location (Malcolm, Defeyter & Friedman, in prep)
- Age associations (Malcolm, Defeyter & Friedman, under review)
- Gender associations (Malcolm, Defeyter & Friedman, under review)
- Creative labour (Kanngiesser, Gjersoe & Hood, 2010)

Rationale for current study

- Existing research has focused on who owns an artifact
- Little research has investigated whether all objects are in fact owned
- Inferences about object ownership may depend on object kind



Artifacts vs. Natural kinds









- Young children differentiate artifacts and natural kinds in terms of..
 - Origin (Gelman & Kremer, 1991)
 - Internal parts (Simons & Keil, 1995)
 - Mechanisms for reproduction (Springer & Keil, 1991)
 - Capacity for growth (Rosengren et al., 1991)
 - Questions asked about them (Greif et al. 2006)

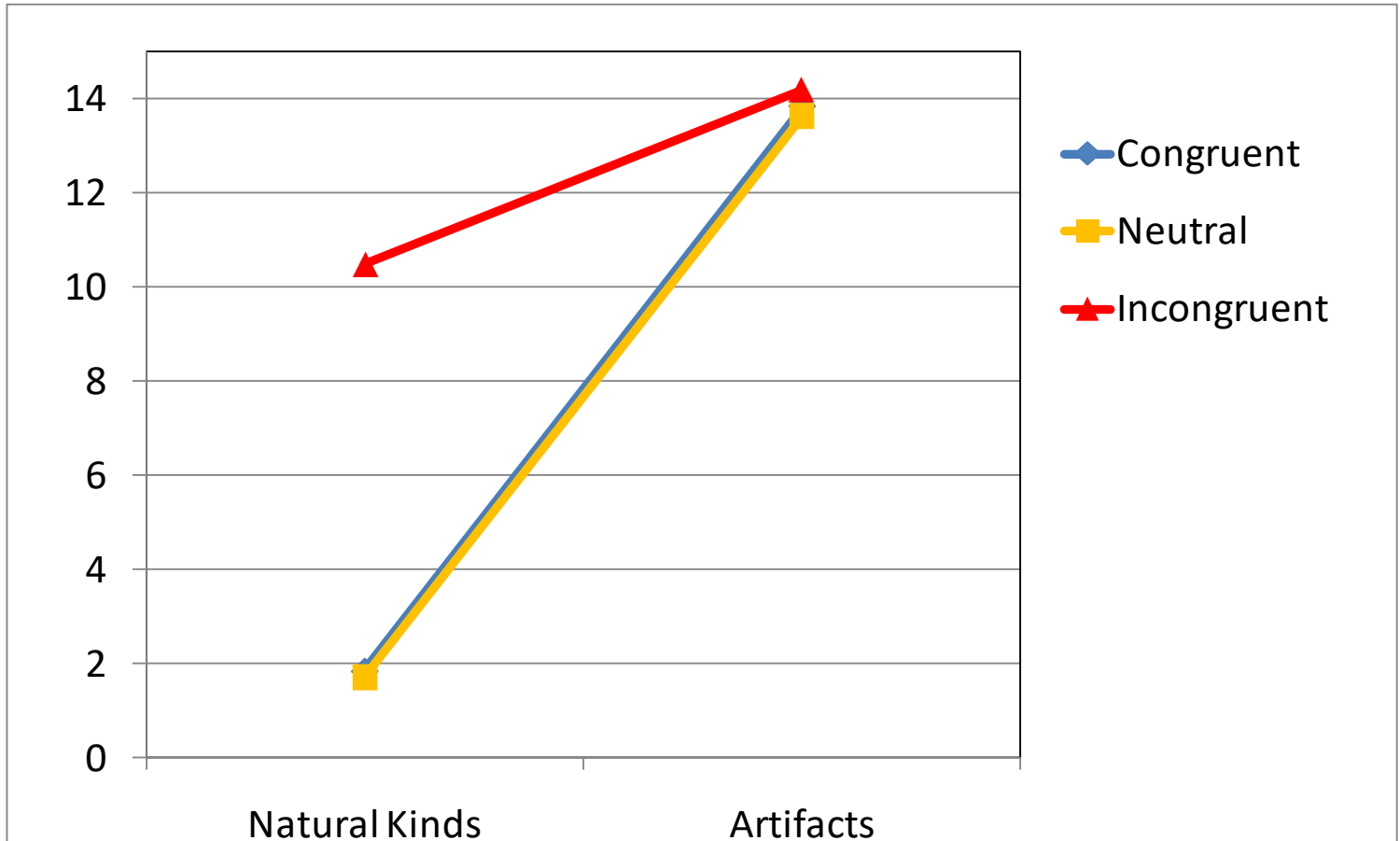
Current study

- Do children and adults make similar ownership judgements for natural kinds and artifacts?
- Does the context in which the object is placed affect ownership judgments?
- Participants: 24 adults and 39 5-to-6-year-olds
- 2 x 3 design object kind (natural kinds & artifacts) and context (neutral, congruent, & incongruent)

Experimental conditions

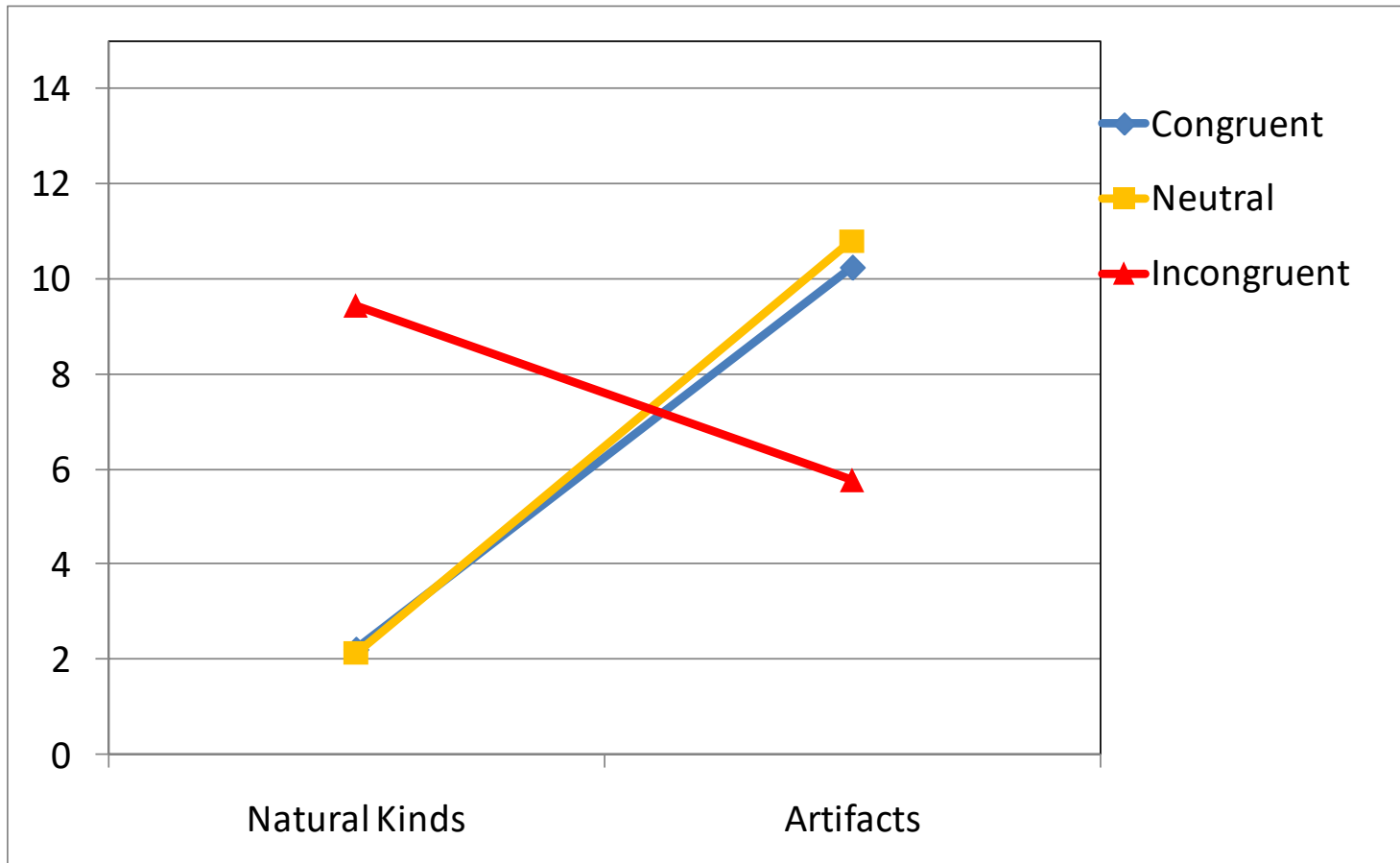
	Neutral	Congruent	Incongruent
Natural Kinds			
Artifacts			

Results: adults



Mean number of adult ownership judgements as a function of object kind and context

Results: 5-to-6-year-olds



Mean number of children's ownership judgements as a function of object kind and context

Discussion: natural kinds

- Both adults and children judged more artifacts as owned than natural kinds
- Ownership judgements for natural kinds were mediated by context
 - Significantly more natural kinds judged as owned in the incongruent context compared to the congruent and neutral contexts
 - Reconstructing history account (Friedman, Neary, & Defeyter, submitted)

Discussion: artifacts

- Adults judged artifacts as owned in all 3 contexts
 - Adults' default assumption for artifacts?
 - Exceptions?
 - Other factors?
- Children judged significantly fewer artifacts as owned in the incongruent context compared to the neutral and congruent contexts
 - Notion of abandonment



Thank you



jessica.wang@northumbria.ac.uk

Property Ownership

An owner has..

- (a) the right to possess property,
- (b) the right to use and enjoy property
- (c) the right to waste property
- (d) the right to exclude others from interference with property
- (e) the right to disposition or transfer of ownership either during life or upon death

Ownership

- Private ownership
- Public ownership
- Shared ownership
- Legal ownership
- Psychological ownership

Local > Edinburgh > Edinburgh city council

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Ownership dispute over Inverleith Park depot

Save Inverleith Park campaign continues as council investigates Common Good land records



Edinburgh Castle can be seen from the Inverleith Park depot | pic: Michael MacLeod

- Familiarity issue?
 - Is it best to test ownership with familiar objects or unfamiliar objects?
 - Depends on question you ask-- if one was to address whether children understands ownership, then children's own objects may be the best objects to use. If one was to address what affects children's ownership inferences, then it's best to use objects that do not belong to the children.

Understanding of ownership in development

- Ownership is abstract (Snare, 1972)
- Young children's disputes over ownership of objects suggests that children may not always respect the rights of the owner (Hay & Ross, 1982; Shantz, 1987)
- Important for social development and form an understanding of moral principles (Ross et al., 1990)