

OVERVIEW/ABSTRACT

From a young age, children readily recognize explicit cues to wealth (e.g., Chen et al., 2023; Horwitz et al., 2014). However, children's reasoning about nonobvious cues to wealth have largely not been studied. Yet, it is precisely these more subtle manifestations of wealth inequality that may disproportionately affect outcomes for lower- and higher-income children. Thus, this project aims to understand the extent to which children view one type of nonobvious cue to wealth, *access to variety*, as an indicator of differences in wealth and social power, and whether children's beliefs vary as a function of their own socioeconomic status. The project will use cognitive and behavioral measures with 5- to 8-year-old children.

Three studies comprise this project. **Study 1** will investigate whether children infer that access to a variety of resources confers greater wealth and social power. **Study 2** will investigate whether children value variety over resource quantity. **Study 3** will investigate whether children prefer to align themselves with characters who have access to a variety of resources. Findings from these studies will uniquely inform our understanding of the cues children use to evaluate wealth and social power, the mechanisms through which children come to ascribe greater wealth and social power to others, and the implications of children's inferences for group membership and selection.

Establishing variety as a robust cue to wealth and social power sets the stage for future investigations into the far-reaching consequences of access to varied resources and opportunities on children's social-cognitive development. Thus, findings from this project will be used to inform up to two National Science Foundation grant applications: one submitted to the Developmental Sciences program, and one submitted to the Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER). This project will also provide valuable training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and support the development of a participant database to accelerate future child research conducted by the PI.