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Children's and Adolescents' Evaluations of Intergroup Exclusion in Interracial and Inter-Wealth Peer Contexts

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Abstract

Children (N = 153, ages 8–14 years, M_{Age} = 11.46) predicted and evaluated peer exclusion in inter-wealth (high-wealth and low-wealth) and interracial (African-American and European-American) contexts. With age, participants increasingly expected high-wealth groups to be more exclusive than low-wealth groups. Further, children evaluated inter-wealth exclusion less negatively than interracial exclusion, and children who identified as higher in wealth evaluated inter-wealth exclusion less negatively than did children who identified as lower in wealth. Children often cited explicit negative stereotypes about high wealth groups in their justifications, while rarely citing stereotypes about low wealth groups or racial groups. Results revealed that both race and wealth are important factors that children consider when evaluating peer exclusion contexts.

Keywords

social cognition; social exclusion; stereotypes; race; wealth

Children's Evaluations of Intergroup Exclusion in Interracial and Inter-Wealth Peer Contexts

Social exclusion based on group membership, such as gender, race, and ethnicity, often leads to prejudicial outcomes. Understanding the factors that children view as legitimate bases to exclude a peer from a social group is an important window into the origins of prejudice in childhood (Killen & Rutland, 2011; Mulvey, 2016). One form of intergroup exclusion that is particularly prevalent in childhood is interracial exclusion—exclusion based solely on an individual's racial group membership (Brown, 2017; Dovidio, Glick, & Rudman, 2005). Interracial exclusion is grounded in group biases and preferences surrounding race that are present in young children and are often maintained throughout the lifespan. Race-based biases appear early in life and influence how children form and maintain social relationships

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(Kinzler & Spelke, 2011; Newheiser, Dunham, Merrill, Hoosain, & Olson, 2014), resulting in ingroup preference and in many cases prejudicial attitudes towards racial outgroup members (Liu et al., 2015; Renno & Shutts, 2015). Racial prejudices can be exacerbated in peer contexts, as children may selectively include those who are racially most similar to themselves while excluding those of other racial groups (Brown, 2017; Cooley, Killen, & Burkholder, 2018).

However, individuals are members of many social groups, in addition to race (McGuire, Rutland, & Nesdale, 2015; Rutland, Nesdale, & Brown, 2017). Moreover, social groups are often ascribed status in society. For example, an individual may be a member of a traditionally higher-status racial group (e.g., European American) and/or a traditionally lower-status gender group (e.g., female). Therefore, how these multiple group memberships and associated statuses intersect, as well as the outcomes of being a member of more than one group, has recently been discussed as an important topic for empirical investigation.

Indeed, children have multiple relevant group memberships that may influence how they perceive and are perceived by others, and influence their experiences of peer social exclusion (Rutland, et al., 2017). In particular, two group memberships that may be related in intergroup peer contexts are race and wealth status. Highlighting wealth and race as group memberships within peer exclusion contexts provides an important place to begin to disentangle how children evaluate peer exclusion within a multi-group context, as we know that race and wealth are associated both in society and within children's minds (Elenbaas & Killen, 2016; Olson, Shutts, Kinzler, & Weisman, 2012). Yet despite extensive research about social exclusion based on racial group membership, no research to date has been conducted on children's predictions and evaluations regarding peer exclusion based on wealth status (as a form of group membership).

We propose that including both target race and target wealth as factors in children's evaluations of exclusion provides a more complete picture of children's assessments of peer interactions in intergroup contexts. Not only may it expose children's evaluations of intergroup exclusion based on two relevant social group memberships in children's lives, but providing additional group information may impact children's evaluations of exclusion based on one group membership. For example, children may evaluate interracial exclusion more negatively when the members of both racial groups share the same wealth group membership (in contrast to having different wealth group memberships, such as when a high wealth European American group excludes a peer from a low-wealth African American group). Further, in contexts in which children must consider group memberships when making exclusion decisions, it becomes especially necessary to capture how children's prioritization of these factors changes with age and by the child's own group memberships. Specifically, to address this question, this study investigated children's perceptions of group exclusivity and evaluations of groups' decisions to exclude peers based on either their wealth or their racial group memberships. Further, this study tested whether children's own racial or wealth background contributed to their perceptions and judgments, and whether group-based stereotypes (e.g., stereotypes about wealth) influenced children's predictions and evaluations about intergroup exclusion based on an individual's wealth or racial group membership.

Children's Social Group Understanding about Wealth

By middle childhood, children have an emerging awareness of some of the factors contributing to wealth status (Bonn, Earle, Lea, & Webley, 1999; Leahy, 1981; Mistry, Brown, White, Chow, & Gillen-O'Neel, 2015; Shutts, Brey, Dornbusch, Slywotzky, & Olson, 2016; Sigelman, 2012). Most often, older children associate differing wealth statuses with the quantity of monetary resources an individual possesses, as well as with differing quality of material items (such as houses and cars) and access to opportunities (such as education, vacations, and summer camps) (Bonn et al., 1999; Driscoll, Mayer, & Belk, 1985; Elenbaas & Killen, 2018; Mistry et al., 2015). Children also make assumptions about an individual's wealth group membership by using physical appearance and levels of education (Ramsey, 1991; Sigelman, 2013).

Further, children's self-reported subjective social status, which is their perception of their familial wealth in relation to the community, has increasingly been utilized in developmental research to represent children's own wealth group membership (Goodman, Maxwell, Malspeis, & Adler, 2015; Goodman et al., 2000; Goodman et al, 2001; Mistry et al., 2015). Children's perceptions of their subjective social status, which are captured on a 10-point ladder representing the range of wealth in the child's community, become largely stable in late childhood and adolescence and correlate with traditional measures of socioeconomic status and their parents' subjective social status (Goodman et al., 2015; Mistry et al., 2015).

Children's subjective social status was used as a measure of wealth group membership in this study, as it was designed to capture children's level of wealth in comparison to the community in which the child resides (rather than compared to the country as a whole). Therefore, it may capture additional, important information about children's wealth understanding that traditional measures of socioeconomic status (i.e., parental income and education) may overlook. Most children categorize themselves in the middle to upper middle class range (Goodman et al., 2000; Goodman et al, 2001), which is representative of the income levels of participants reported in the studies and consistent with children's assumptions that middle class is "normal" (Mistry et al., 2015). Children's identification with their wealth status (poor, middle class, or rich) shows similarities to how children identify with and categorize themselves into other social groups, and there is some evidence that their subjective social status relates to their evaluations of members of different wealth groups (Mistry et al., 2015).

Stereotypes about Wealth.—In addition to categorizing themselves and others into wealth groups, children socially evaluate others based on their wealth group membership. Specifically, children hold stereotypes about wealthy and poor individuals related to character trait attributions or perceptions about the acquisition of wealth (Elenbaas & Killen, 2018; Mistry, et al., 2015; Sigelman, 2012). With age, children increasingly perceive members of high wealth groups as competent, hardworking, and smart, while members of low wealth groups are often associated with laziness and low ability (Leahy, 1981; Mistry et al., 2015; Sigelman, 2012; Woods, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2005). At the same time, research has also revealed negative stereotypes that children hold regarding high wealth groups (e.g., selfish, entitled) (Elenbaas & Killen, 2018). While much less developmental

research has focused on this latter type of assumption about wealth groups, research with adults shows similar patterns, with wealthy individuals perceived as competent but also as cold and calculating (Fiske, 2002). What remains unknown is whether and how children apply stereotypes about wealth status in peer contexts involving decisions about inclusion and exclusion, and how such decisions contrast with other categories for exclusion such as race or ethnicity. Because children hold negative stereotypes about high wealth individuals relating to selfishness and entitlement, it is possible that children associate wealth with exclusivity. Therefore, high wealth groups may be viewed as particularly exclusive in peer contexts, justified by stereotypes relating high wealth groups to unsavory social traits like entitlement.

Wealth in an Interracial Context

Wealth and race are salient group membership categories in many cultures in the world (Olson et al., 2012), and are also associated in many cultures (e.g., high wealth is associated with ethnic majority groups and low wealth is associated with ethnic minority groups). Children are often aware of the relations between wealth and race, as they associate wealth status with an individual's racial group membership (Elenbaas & Killen, 2016; Newheiser & Olson, 2012; Olson et al., 2012). Children in the United States most often associate ethnic majority groups (e.g., European American) with high wealth status and ethnic minority groups (e.g., African American) with lower wealth status (Elenbaas & Killen, 2016). Therefore, children may be using race to make inferences about wealth dis/similarities in peer contexts.

Given the prevalence of interracial exclusion in childhood, a crucial question remains concerning whether children's reasoning about peer exclusion might also be influenced by their conceptions of wealth status. Moreover, children may evaluate exclusion differently when both wealth and race are made salient. For example, children who justify interracial exclusion may do so due to their stereotypic associations of wealth and race. Therefore, it is necessary to systematically examine how children weigh information about peers' race and wealth status simultaneously when evaluating inclusion and exclusion decisions within peer contexts.

Group Membership in Intergroup Peer Exclusion

Children's wealth group membership (subjective social status) and racial group membership may also influence their evaluations about the wrongfulness or acceptability of exclusion. Previous research suggests that there may be an effect of racial group membership, with European Americans evaluating interracial exclusion as more likely and acceptable than their African American counterparts (Cooley et al., 2018; Newheiser & Olson, 2012). Additionally, European American children are also more likely to endorse reasons for engaging in interracial exclusion (such as a person's parents being uncomfortable) (Killen, Henning, Kelly, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007). Research has yet to explore children's evaluations of exclusion on the basis of wealth in an intergroup context, but based on previous research on interracial exclusion it is possible that wealth group membership may also differentially influence children's evaluations of inter-wealth exclusion perpetrated by others.

Present Study

The present study investigated children's predictions and evaluations of intergroup peer social exclusion based on wealth and race group memberships. Specifically, this study examined age-related changes in children's expectations of exclusivity of peer groups differing in wealth and in race, and whether children differentially evaluate intergroup exclusion on the basis of their own wealth or racial group membership. Children ages 8 – 14 years were sampled in order to capture a time in development when social understanding about wealth is increasing (Mistry et al., 2015; Sigelman, 2013). Moreover, the rate of interracial friendships declines dramatically by early adolescence (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003; Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987), and adolescents are more likely than children to expect interracial social exclusion (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008). Additionally, during this age range peer groups become increasingly important, and children have a developing awareness of the group factors contributing to their social decisions (Killen & Rutland, 2011). Thus, this developmental timeframe is especially relevant for addressing questions about intergroup peer exclusion based on wealth and race.

Participants in the present study were asked to make a series of peer group exclusion decisions, in which the race and the wealth status of peer groups were experimentally varied. The stimuli specifically featured African American and European American children, and participants were also African American and European American children (recruited from the same range of middle to upper middle income families). Participants also provided justifications for their predictions of group exclusivity and their evaluations of intergroup exclusion. Based on research that reveals that holding stereotypes about groups influences children's evaluations with intergroup exclusion contexts (Hitti & Killen, 2015; Horn, 2003), we coded participants' responses for explicit stereotypes about either wealth (specifically high or low wealth groups) or race (specifically African American or European American groups), as well as for other concepts relevant to social exclusion (Cooley et al., 2018; Rutland, Killen, & Abrams., 2010).

Theoretical Model.—Research aims, hypotheses, and design were informed by the Social Reasoning Developmental Model (SRD) (Killen & Rutland, 2011). SRD combines theories from developmental psychology (social domain theory) and social psychology (social identity theory) to frame children's intergroup exclusion decisions as grounded in reasoning about social norms, morality, and group identity (Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turiel, 2002). The SRD framework proposes that children do not uniformly endorse either exclusion or inclusion in intergroup contexts. Instead, children take a variety of different concerns into account when deciding how to construct their intergroup peer relationships. This includes moral concerns such as priority for fair and equal treatment of diverse others, as well as group concerns such as ingroup bias and stereotypes. When children interpret situations using moral reasoning, they often make inclusive decisions and reject exclusion of diverse others (Cooley et al., 2018; Crystal et al., 2008; Killen & Rutland, 2011).

Yet, when reasoning about stereotypes or group functioning is prioritized, children often endorse exclusion of outgroup members which leads to prejudicial treatment of those who

are different (Killen & Rutland, 2011). Often, these group concerns yield decisions informed by ingroup bias to justify outgroup exclusion (Crystal et al., 2008; Killen & Rutland, 2011). This becomes especially problematic when children are confronted with difficult or ambiguous decisions within interracial peer contexts. These decisions can be made complex by both the situation and the child's surrounding environmental composition. For example, European American children with low levels of intergroup contact are less likely to see potential for cross-race friendships between European-American and African-American peers, and are more accepting of interracial peer exclusion (McGlothlin & Killen, 2010).

In the current study, providing wealth group membership will give children more information about the individual being excluded, potentially eliminating one factor that may be used to justify exclusion. Indeed, there is evidence that, with age, children get better at considering multiple factors (such as both race and wealth status) to inform their predictions (Killen, Elenbaas, & Rutland, 2015). As there is evidence that by 8 years of age children begin to show understanding of the factors contributing to wealth, we would expect children to be able to increasingly associate race and wealth over time (Mistry et al., 2015; Sigelman, 2013). This developing knowledge about wealth may contribute to an emerging understanding that wealth may be a pertinent group membership to consider within peer contexts.

Hypotheses.—Regarding children's predictions of group exclusivity, we predicted that: (H1) with age, children would predict that high wealth groups, regardless of their race, would be more exclusive than lower wealth groups; (H2) with age, children would increasingly reference negative stereotypes about high wealth groups in justifying their perceptions, as previous research on children's wealth-based stereotypes has shown that the negative stereotypes associated with high wealth individuals may be especially relevant in peer contexts (Elenbaas & Killen, 2018).

Regarding children's evaluations of intergroup exclusion, we predicted that: (H3) children would evaluate exclusion based on wealth as less wrong than exclusion based on race, as previous research has shown that children recognize the wrongfulness of interracial exclusion while simultaneously endorsing exclusion of other social groups (Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin, & Stangor, 2002); (H4) children's own perceived group memberships (specifically their subjective social status and race) would influence children's evaluations of intergroup exclusion, with traditionally higher status group memberships (high wealth and European American) associated with evaluating exclusion as more acceptable; and (H5) children would be more likely to refer to stereotypes about wealth groups than to stereotypes about racial groups when justifying their evaluations, similar to past research showing that stereotype use is associated with rating exclusion as more acceptable (Hitti & Killen, 2015; Horn, 2003).

Methods

Participants included 153 children between the ages of 8 and 14 years of age (M_{Age} = 11.46 years, SD_{Age} = 1.72; 58% female) recruited from schools and summer camps in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Participants were balanced by racial group

membership and income levels. As identified by their parents, approximately half of the participants were African American (n = 80; M_{Age} = 11.25 years, SD_{Age} = 1.76) and half of the participants were European American (n = 73; M_{Age} = 11.69 years, SD_{Age} = 1.65). According to parent reported household annual income, both the African American families and the European American families reported slightly above average income levels for their family in comparison with the region, with African American participants' median household income averaging between $150,000 and $180,000, and European American participants' median household income averaging between $120,000 and $150,000 (the median income for a family of four in the region of data collection in 2017 was $110,300). African American families reported a slightly higher annual household income level on average than European American families, (F(1,93) = 4.75, p = 0.03).

Procedure

Participants completed individual interviews with a trained experimenter in a quiet space at their school or camp. The interview was accompanied by a PowerPoint that included brightly colored pictures of children and visual representations of wealth. The interview lasted 20 minutes. All participants received parental consent to participate.

Measures

Participants were introduced to clubs at a fictional school with photos of actual children associated with each club. The clubs were visually depicted to be made up of 6 members (3 boys and 3 girls) who shared the same racial group membership (African American or European American) and wealth group membership (low or high). Race was depicted through skin tone differences in the characters, and photos were matched for attractiveness and affect by research assistants. Wealth was depicted through monetary resources (a lot of money vs. a little money), type of house, type of car, and access to vacations. The high wealth group was associated with a large, expensive looking house, a brand new sports car, and a picture depicting a beach vacation. The low wealth group was associated with a small, worn down house, a rusty car, and a picture of an old swing set in a backyard. These depictions of wealth are consistent with previous literature on children's understanding of wealth (Elenbaas & Killen, 2016; Mistry et al., 2015).

Predictions of group exclusivity.—To examine whether participants would predict that groups would be more likely to exclude on the basis of wealth or on the basis of race, participants answered the following prompt, "Who do you think would be more likely to say that someone cannot join their club, [Club X] or [Club Y]?" while the research assistant pointed to the two clubs. The race and wealth of the clubs varied between subjects, such that approximately half of the participants (n = 81) viewed a high wealth European American Club and a low wealth African American club while approximately half (n = 72) viewed a high wealth African American club and a low wealth European American club.

Evaluations of intergroup exclusion.—To examine evaluations of intergroup exclusion, participants completed a measure consisting of four items in which each club excludes a peer.

For each item, the script was as follows (substituting the relevant group and target character for each item):

> Now let's say that [Peer] wanted to join the [Club]. The [Club] now has to decide if [Peer] can join their club. They decide that [Peer] *cannot* join their club. Is it okay or not okay for the [Club] to say that [Peer] cannot join their club?

Participants rated their evaluations of intergroup exclusion on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*really not okay*) to 6 (*really okay*). Importantly, we specifically manipulated group membership in this between- and within-subjects design so that the peer and club shared one group membership (either wealth or race) but not the other. See Table 1 for an outline of the design.

Interracial Exclusion Context.: In the interracial context, all children evaluated the exclusion of an African American peer from a European American club and the exclusion of a European American peer from an African American club. In both cases, the peer and the club shared a wealth group membership (either high-wealth or low-wealth, between-subjects).

Inter-wealth Exclusion Context.: In the inter-wealth context, all children evaluated the exclusion of a low-wealth peer from a high-wealth club and the exclusion of a high-wealth peer from a low-wealth club, but in both cases the peer and the club shared a racial group membership (either African American or European American, between-subjects).

As presented above, children evaluated social exclusion scenarios in which race and wealth status were experimentally varied so that children viewed interracial groups of the same wealth status and inter-wealth groups of the same racial group membership. This setup provided a unique opportunity to isolate how children evaluate intergroup exclusion based solely on one group membership (either race or wealth), because each context varied the group membership of interest (e.g., the child and club had different racial group memberships), while matching the other group membership (e.g., both the child and club were high wealth).

Children's Justifications.—Children's reasoning was captured for both the Perceptions of Exclusivity and Evaluation of Exclusion measures with verbal prompts ("Why?"). These justifications were coded by using coding categories drawn from the social reasoning developmental model (Cooley et al., 2018; Rutland et al., 2010). In accordance with the literature, responses were coded as: 1) Stereotypes (e.g., "They are rich so they will just brag about all their stuff"; "Black people are just nicer"); 2) Perceptions of Similarity (e.g., "Cause they do have similar things in common"; "Because they have more money and he has more money too"); 3) Wrongfulness of Exclusion (e.g., "He might feel left out, and that's not okay"; "It's wrong to exclude someone"); and 4) Wrongfulness of Discrimination (e.g., "Because they might be judging her on her skin color and it's not okay"; "It's not his fault he's living rich, they shouldn't exclude him"). Justifications that did not reference any of the above categories (e.g., "I don't know") were coded as Other.

Proportional data were used in the analyses for the reasoning data. Participants' responses were coded as 1 = full use of the category, .5 = partial use, 0 = no use of the category (see Posada & Wainryb, 2008, for a full explanation of this data analytic approach). Because participants could use all, partial, or none of the justification codes, concerns about the interdependence of the data was not an issue (the data were independent for coding purposes). Two research assistants who were blind to the hypotheses of the study conducted the coding. On the basis of 30% of the interviews ($n = 46$), Cohen's $\kappa = .84$ for interrater reliability was achieved.

Children's Social Group Memberships.—Children's racial group membership was obtained through parental report (as described above). To measure children's perceptions of their family wealth in relation to others in their neighborhood, participants completed the subjective social status measure (Goodman et al., 2000; Mistry et al., 2015). This pictorial measure consists of a ladder, each rung containing a number (1–10). Participants were told:

> Here is a ladder. Now think about where you live. At the top of the ladder are the people who have the most money and at the bottom of the ladder are the people who have the least money. Now, think about your family. Where do you think they would be on this ladder? Point to the step where your family would be on this ladder.

Participants indicated the rung on the ladder that best represented their family's wealth in comparison to where they lived, and a research assistant recorded the associated whole number. This measure has been effectively used to represent children's perceived wealth group memberships in several studies (Goodman et al., 2000; Goodman et al., 2015; Mistry et al., 2015). Moreover, in the current study children's perceptions were correlated with parent's reported annual income at $r = .25$, $p = .02$. This measure captures children's perceptions of their wealth status in relation to their community, as this is the area in which children spend the most time and have the most opportunity for social comparison.

Results

We first conducted preliminary analyses to confirm that children's predictions of group exclusivity and evaluations of intergroup exclusion, as well as their reasoning, did not differ significantly by gender. There were no significant effects of gender (ps > .05), thus gender was dropped from subsequent analyses.

Predictions of Group Exclusivity

First, we compared the proportion of participants who selected the high wealth club as the most exclusive (e.g., most likely to exclude a peer from the group) to the proportion of children who selected the low wealth club as the most exclusive. Overall, 92% ($n = 141$) of participants predicted that the high wealth club would be the most exclusive, significantly more than would be expected by chance, $\chi^2(1) = 108.77$, $p < .001$. There were no significant differences in children's expectations based on the racial group membership depicted (either African American or European American), $\chi^2(1) = .99$, $p = .38$. Thus, children viewed the

high-wealth group as most likely to exclude a peer, regardless of whether the members of that group were African American or European American.

To test our hypothesis (H1) that, with age, children would view high wealth groups as most exclusive, we ran a binomial logistic regression model testing the effects of Participant Age, Depicted Race of Club (African American, European American), Subjective Social Status, and Participant Race (African American, European American) on participants' predictions of group exclusivity. Consistent with our hypothesis, Participant Age and Depicted Race of Club were entered in the first step. Adding these variables resulted in a significant improvement from the null model, $\chi^2(2) = 6.82$, $p = .03$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .10$. Moreover, there was a significant main effect of Participant Age; increasing age was associated with increasing predictions that the high wealth group would be the most exclusive, $\beta = .47$, $t(153) = 4.88$, $p = .03$, Exp(B) = 1.60, 95% CI [1.05, 2.42]; see Figure 1. There were no significant effects of the Depicted Race of the Club, $\beta = .50$, $t(153) = .59$, $p = .44$, Exp(B) = 1.64, 95% CI [.46, 5.86]. Addition of the predictors Subjective Social Status and Participant Race did not result in a significant improvement in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1.87$, $p = .39$. Thus, the previous model was retained.

Together, these results provide support for H1. From middle childhood to early adolescence, children increasingly predicted that the high wealth group would be more exclusive than the low-wealth group, regardless of group race.

Justifications for Predictions.—Overall, 94% ($n = 143$) of children referenced stereotypes in their justifications for their predictions of group exclusivity, and there were no references to the other three reasoning categories (the remaining 6% of participants' reasoning did not fit into any category, and were thus coded as "other"). The majority of these participants ($n = 131$, 92% of stereotypes) cited negative references about high wealth groups. These stereotypes primarily focused on perceptions that the high wealth group would be exclusive due to unsavory qualities like entitlement or rudeness. Examples of the responses were: "Rich people tend to be very exclusive with who they hang out with. They want to be with people like them. They can be snobby and might not appreciate someone different." (13-year-old European American girl); "The rich people feel like they're better and people can't be as good as them" (13-year-old African American boy); and "The popular people and the people with a lot of money only want the people who are like them and they are kind of brats" (12-year-old African American girl). The remaining 8% of stereotypes included references to positive and negative stereotypes about the remaining group memberships.

To test our hypothesis (H2) that, with age, children would justify their predictions of group exclusivity by citing stereotypes about high wealth groups, we ran a binomial logistic regression model testing the effects of Participant Age, Depicted Race of Club (African American, European American), Subjective Social Status, and Participant Race (African American, European American) on participants' use of stereotypes about high wealth groups. Participant Age and Depicted Race of Club were entered in the first step. Adding these variables resulted in a significant improvement from the null model, $\chi^2(2) = 7.35$, $p = .03$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .12$. There was also a significant main effect of Participant Age.

Specifically, increasing age was associated with increasing use of negative stereotypes about high wealth groups, $\beta = .39$, $t(153) = 6.53$, $p = .01$, Exp(B) = 1.48, 95% CI [1.10, 1.99]; see Figure 2. There were no significant effects of the Depicted Race of the Club, $\beta = -.05$, $t(153) = .01$, $p = .92$, Exp(B) = .95, 95% CI [.37, 2.42]. Addition of the predictors Subjective Social Status and Participant Race did not result in a significant improvement in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1.54$, $p = .46$. The previous model was therefore retained.

Thus, H2 was supported. With age, children increasingly referenced negative stereotypes about high wealth groups when justifying their perceptions that high wealth groups would be the most exclusive.

Evaluations of intergroup exclusion

To test our hypotheses on children's evaluations of intergroup exclusion (H3 & H4), we conducted a 2 (Subjective Social Status; high, low by median split) by 2 (Participant Race; African American, European American) by 2 (Participant Age; 8–11 years-old, 12–14 years-old) by 4 (Exclusion; African American Excluded, European American Excluded, High Wealth Excluded, Low Wealth Excluded) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last variable.

Corresponding to our hypothesis (H3) that participants would evaluate exclusion based on wealth as more acceptable than exclusion based on race, the main effect of Exclusion was significant, $F(3, 444) = 14.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that participants evaluated both conditions of interracial exclusion as more wrong than both inter-wealth exclusion conditions, ps < .01. Additionally, there were no significant differences between evaluations of the two interracial exclusion decisions, as well as no significant differences between evaluations of the two inter-wealth exclusion decisions, ps > .05 (see Figure 3). Thus, H3 was supported. Overall, children judged exclusion on the basis of wealth as less wrong than exclusion on the basis of race.

Corresponding to our hypothesis (H4) that children's own group membership would affect their evaluations of intergroup exclusion, we found an interaction between Exclusion and Subjective Social Status, $F(3, 444) = 2.69$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that participants who had a higher subjective social status than their peers found it less wrong to exclude in the inter-wealth contexts than did participants with lower subjective social status than their peers, ps < .01 (see Figure 4). There were no significant differences in subjective social status on participants' evaluations of either interracial exclusion context, ps > .05. There was no significant interaction between Exclusion and Participant Age, $F(3, 444) = .63$, $p = .59$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$. Additionally, there was no significant interaction between Exclusion and Participant Race, $F(3, 444) = 1.14$, $p = .33$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Thus, there were no differences based on the age or race of the participant. Therefore, H4 was partially supported. Children with higher perceived wealth viewed exclusion on the basis of wealth as less wrong overall than children with lower perceived wealth, indicating that higher wealth children may view wealth as a more important or relevant group membership in general when making social decisions within peer contexts. However, children's racial group membership did not significantly affect their evaluations of exclusion based on race.

Children evaluated exclusion based on race as similarly wrong, regardless of their group membership.

Justifications for Evaluations.—Next we analyzed participants' reasoning to explain their decisions (see Table 2 for the proportions of reasoning).

Stereotypes.: To test our hypothesis (H5) that children would reference stereotypes more when reasoning in wealth exclusion contexts than in race-based exclusion contexts, we conducted a 2 (Subjective Social Status; high, low by median split) by 2 (Participant Race; African American, European American) by 2 (Participant Age; 9–11 years-old, 12–14 years-old) by 4 (Stereotype Use; African American Excluded, European American Excluded, High Wealth Excluded, Low Wealth Excluded) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last variable. The main effect of Stereotype Use was significant, $F(3, 444) = 20.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. Post hoc Bonferroni analyses revealed that participants referenced stereotypes significantly more when evaluating wealth exclusion contexts than when evaluating race exclusion contexts. Additionally, between the inter-wealth exclusion contexts, children referenced more wealth stereotypes when the high wealth child was excluded than when the low wealth child was excluded (Table 2). There was no significant interaction between Stereotype Use and Subjective Social Status, $F(3, 444) = .34$, $p = .80$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, between Stereotype Use and Participant Race, $F(3, 444) = .28$, $p = .84$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, or between Stereotype Use and Participant Age, $F(3, 444) = 1.33$, $p = .27$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

Children's stereotype use referenced primarily negative stereotypes about high wealth characters both in the condition in which the high wealth child was excluded (94% of stereotypes used) and the condition in which the low wealth child was excluded (88% of stereotypes used). For example, typical responses in the high wealth excluded condition included: "They probably think he is going to brag" (14-year-old European American boy); "I don't like people who just go around, you know wearing super fancy clothes, showing off" (11-year-old European American boy). Typical responses in the low wealth excluded condition included, "Because they would probably tease her if she was in the group 'cause she has less money and she was the only one" (11-year-old European American girl); "Because he would probably be the only one that might get bossed around a lot by all of them" (14-year-old African American boy). The remaining 6% of stereotypes in the high wealth excluded condition and 12% of stereotypes in the low wealth excluded condition were negative stereotypes about low wealth groups. Thus, H5 was supported, as children referenced stereotypes about group membership in inter-wealth exclusion contexts more than they did in interracial exclusion contexts, and these stereotypes primarily referenced negative perceptions of high wealth groups.

Perceptions of Similarity.: Using the same analytic approach as above, we explored children's references to Perceptions of Similarity in their justifications. The main effect of Perceptions of Similarity was significant, $F(3, 444) = 6.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ (Table 2). There was no significant interaction between Perceptions of Similarity and Subjective Social Status, $F(3, 444) = .09$, $p = .97$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, between Perceptions of Similarity and Participant Race, $F(3, 444) = .44$, $p = .73$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, or between Perceptions of Similarity and Participant Age, $F(3, 444) = 1.00$, $p = .39$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

A higher proportion of children referenced perceptions of similarity in the context in which the African American child was excluded than in either inter-wealth context, and a higher proportion of children also referenced perceptions of similarity in the context in which the European American child was excluded than in the context in which the low wealth child was excluded. Typical responses included “It’s not okay because they have lots in common” (10-year-old African American girl); “Because Taylor has so much in common with the Comets, why would they decline someone like that? It doesn’t make sense” (11-year-old European American boy).

Wrongfulness of Exclusion.: Using the same analytic approach as above, we explored children’s references to Wrongfulness of Exclusion in their justifications. The main effect of Wrongfulness of Exclusion was significant, $F(3, 444) = 8.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$ (Table 2). There was no significant interaction between Wrongfulness of Exclusion and Subjective Social Status, $F(3, 444) = .86$, $p = .46$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, between Wrongfulness of Exclusion and Participant Race, $F(3, 444) = 1.39$, $p = .25$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, or between Wrongfulness of Exclusion and Participant Age, $F(3, 447) = .75$, $p = .52$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

A higher proportion of participants referenced the general wrongfulness of exclusion (without making specific references to group membership) in all contexts but the one in which a low wealth child was excluded (see next section for an explanation for the proportional reasoning difference of the low wealth child). Typical responses included “It’s not fair because he might feel left out” (10-year-old European American boy); “That’s excluding people before you even get to know them, so it’s not okay” (12-year-old European American boy).

Wrongfulness of Discrimination.: Using the same analytic approach as above, we explored children’s references to Wrongfulness of Discrimination in their justifications. The main effect of Wrongfulness of Discrimination was significant, $F(3, 444) = 13.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$ (Table 2). There was no significant interaction between Wrongfulness of Discrimination and Subjective Social Status, $F(3, 444) = .34$, $p = .79$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, between Wrongfulness of Discrimination and Participant Race, $F(3, 444) = 1.20$, $p = .31$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$ or between Wrongfulness of Discrimination and Participant Age, $F(3, 444) = 1.48$, $p = .22$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

A higher proportion of children referenced the specific wrongfulness of discriminating against low wealth individuals than in any other context. Typical responses included “Because it’s not fair just because she doesn’t have money that you don’t want to be friends with somebody” (13-year-old African American girl); “Even though he is poor, it wouldn’t really be fair to not let him into a club that rich kids are in” (14-year-old European American boy).

Discussion

This study was the first to directly test children’s predictions and evaluations of groups’ decisions to exclude peers in contexts when wealth and race were experimentally varied. There were four novel findings of this study. First, children expected high wealth groups to be more exclusive than low wealth groups, regardless of the club’s racial group membership.

Second, children viewed inter-wealth exclusion as less wrong than interracial exclusion. Third, children who perceived themselves as higher in wealth evaluated inter-wealth exclusion as less wrong than their peers. Finally, children used negative stereotypes about high wealth individuals to explain their perceptions that the high wealth group would be exclusive as well as their evaluations of inter-wealth exclusion decisions.

Confirming our hypothesis (H1), a large majority of children viewed high wealth groups as most willing to exclude a peer, and this association significantly increased with age. This age-related change suggested that wealth becomes an increasingly important group membership within peer exclusion contexts over the course of late childhood and early adolescence. There were no age-related differences in children's perceptions of group exclusivity by racial group. Instead, children primarily focused on wealth as an indication for group exclusivity, which also provided evidence that wealth is indeed a salient variable in peer exclusion contexts. The idea that wealth might be an indicator of group exclusivity fits well with previous research relating wealth to status generally (e.g., Olson et al., 2012), and recent studies indicating that children sometimes hold negative perceptions of high wealth peers (Elenbaas & Killen, 2018).

What was unique in the present study, however, was that both wealth and race status were systematically varied such that children did not evaluate contexts in which wealth and race were confounded. Using this design, the large majority of children found the high wealth group to be the most exclusive, regardless of age. By 8-years-old, there is evidence that children understand certain components of wealth and are able to accurately identify their own wealth group (Mistry et al., 2015), two developmental milestones demonstrated in this study. Future research should continue to investigate this question with younger samples to determine the origins of this prediction.

Further, children found exclusion less wrong when the exclusion occurred due to wealth differences than when it occurred due to racial differences, which provided support for our hypothesis (H3). This study provided evidence that children consider race and wealth distinct group memberships in intergroup peer exclusion contexts, and children may consider it less deplorable to exclude peers of different economic backgrounds from joining their clubs than to exclude members of differing racial groups. This expectation held for whether the inter-wealth contexts were depicted with European American or African American characters (and whether the participants' own race was European American or African American). This could be due to perceptions of exclusivity based on wealth. It appears that children viewed the exclusion of high wealth peers as more acceptable than other groups since they expected that these peers would also be exclusive when given the chance.

Children may also be sensitive to patterns of wealth-based segregation that occurs in many school contexts, which may lead to assumptions about the acceptability of inter-wealth exclusion. Previous research has shown variation in children's evaluations of exclusion based on different social groups (e.g., between race and gender) (Killen et al., 2002). In fact, children take into account a variety of different concerns (such as ethnicity and shared interests) when navigating peer exclusion decisions, leading to differential evaluations

based on the relevant group membership and the context (Hitti & Killen, 2015; Killen & Rutland, 2011). Thus, wealth could be a social group that children also consider particularly important in peer contexts (Mistry, et al., 2015), leading to higher acceptability ratings of exclusion.

Children's own wealth group membership (measured through their subjective social status) predicted their evaluations of exclusion based on wealth, partially supporting our hypothesis (H4). Children who perceived themselves as higher in wealth compared to their community evaluated exclusion on the basis of wealth as less wrong than children who perceived themselves as lower in wealth. This is consistent with previous research showing that group membership plays a role in how exclusion is evaluated, with traditionally higher status groups (e.g., European Americans, boys) evaluating exclusion of lower status groups as less wrong than their peers (Killen et al., 2002; Cooley et al., 2018). Our finding is interesting because children with higher perceived wealth evaluated inter-wealth exclusion as more acceptable both when the low wealth and high wealth peer was excluded. These children may have believed that exclusion based on wealth was more valid overall, adhering to peer norms associating wealth with exclusivity, similar to the stereotypes revealed about high wealth groups in children's perceptions in this study. It could also be that lower wealth peers have experience with or fears about inter-wealth exclusion, highlighting the wrongfulness of the act. Importantly, this study was able to find a difference in children's evaluations even among a middle to high-middle income sample (the sample in this study did not include participants at the very top or bottom wealth brackets of the United States). Future research should expand this work to pinpoint whether the difference is driven by high or low wealth children's evaluations, and to examine if wealth differences in evaluations of inter-wealth exclusion become even more pronounced among especially high or especially low wealth samples.

Although this study did find differences in children's evaluations of inter-wealth exclusion based on their own perceived wealth (i.e., subjective social status), there were no differences in children's judgments of interracial exclusion based on children's own racial group membership. While previous research has found racial differences in evaluations of interracial exclusion (Cooley et al., 2018), the lack of racial differences in this study could be due to the fact that we experimentally manipulated wealth in the interracial context.

Matching wealth group memberships in interracial peer contexts may eliminate preconceptions about wealth which may typically infiltrate children's evaluations of interracial exclusion, thus aligning European American children's evaluations of interracial exclusion to similar levels as African Americans. There is clear evidence that children associate different levels of wealth with European Americans and African Americans (Elenbaas & Killen, 2016; Olson et al., 2012). Assumed differences in wealth between European Americans and African Americans may have contributed to European American children's acceptable evaluations of interracial exclusion in prior studies (e.g., Cooley et al., 2018). By experimentally manipulating wealth within the interracial context, we removed ambiguity that may account for why some children justify exclusion of ethnic minority peers (expecting them to be low wealth) (Stark & Flache, 2012). These findings suggest that in cases of interracial exclusion children could be taking their own assumptions about wealth

differences into account as a justification for exclusion. If this is the case, it would provide an avenue for intervention in children's evaluations of interracial exclusion as well as for the promotion of cross-race friendships.

Explicitly matching the wealth group membership of the characters within the interracial context may also give European American children less covert avenues for justifying exclusion. Previous research has shown that matching shared interests, for example, increases perceived similarity among peers of different races (McGlothlin & Killen, 2005), and children prefer inclusion of individuals who share interests over those with differing interests but the same racial group membership (Hitti & Killen, 2015). Matching wealth group membership could be operating in a similar way to shared interests, giving children evidence of mutual similarities other than race. Future research should directly test this prediction by manipulating different assumptions about wealth that might affect interracial exclusion. Future research should also explore avenues of intervention that highlight similarities between social groups and educate children that neither racial nor wealth group memberships should constitute a barrier to peer inclusion.

Finally, children referenced stereotypes about wealth when revealing their perceptions and evaluations (supporting our hypotheses H2 and H5), and these stereotypes often surrounded negative perceptions about high wealth characters, such as being snobby, mean, or rude. These results indicate that children may hold more negative perceptions about high wealth individuals when operating within peer contexts, which is different than when children reveal stereotypes about competence, for example, which tend to be more negative about low wealth groups (Mistry et al., 2015; Shutts et al., 2016; Sigelman, 2012). This novel finding supports recent evidence that children hold negative stereotypes about high-wealth peers as selfish or entitled in resource allocation contexts (Elenbaas & Killen, 2018). In the current study these negative stereotypes were extended to decisions about peer exclusion.

In particular, this study revealed that stereotypes about high wealth individuals were related to children's perceptions that high wealth groups would be exclusive. Even among this middle to high-middle income sample, most children used negative stereotypes about high wealth groups to justify their perceptions of group exclusivity. This may be because children often visualize the extreme end of the economic spectrum (such as "billionaires") when describing rich individuals (Mistry et al., 2015). Additionally, although there is evidence that children view differing levels of wealth as distinct social groups (Mistry et al., 2015), wealth is a changeable entity which makes it different from other social group memberships, such as race or gender, that tend to remain stable throughout one's lifetime. The malleability of wealth could create especially potent stereotypes about wealth groups. In fact, there is evidence that stereotypes about competency and work ethic lead children to assume that individuals have full agency (and responsibility) to change their wealth group membership (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999). Children's stereotypes about entitlement and selfishness could be operating in a similar way, with children assuming that wealthy people used cold and conniving traits to gain their social stature.

Additionally, children used stereotypes about wealth to justify their evaluations of inter-wealth exclusion but not to justify their evaluations of interracial exclusion. In fact, children

revealed primarily negative stereotypes about high wealth individuals both when the high wealth child was the target of exclusion and when the low wealth child was the target of exclusion (by a high wealth group), which has implications for how children may navigate wealth as a social group within peer contexts. Previous research has linked children's stereotype use to more acceptable ratings of peer exclusion (Hitti & Killen, 2015). However, these stereotypes are usually about members of lower status groups (e.g., stereotypes about ethnic minority peers). These negative stereotypes about traditionally high status groups (e.g., high wealth groups) are particularly novel, especially in intergroup peer exclusion contexts. Future research should further examine children's stereotypes about wealth within peer exclusion contexts and other social contexts relevant in childhood.

This study demonstrated that wealth is an important group in intergroup exclusion contexts, which has implications for intergroup relationships, including stereotypes, bias, and prejudice, as well as for building social knowledge about inequalities that exist in society. Moreover, the link between wealth and race is important, and future research should further investigate how the two social groups are related in peer contexts. Children's beliefs about interracial and inter-wealth peer exclusion provide evidence for how to reduce negative peer interactions based on group membership as well as promote cross group friendships. Addressing these conceptions in childhood is important, as these potentially negative beliefs about wealth and race, as well as negative relationships between differing wealth and racial groups may become entrenched by adulthood. Therefore, it is increasingly important to continue this line of work in order to uncover the emergence and changes in understanding about interracial and inter-wealth peer exclusion in childhood.

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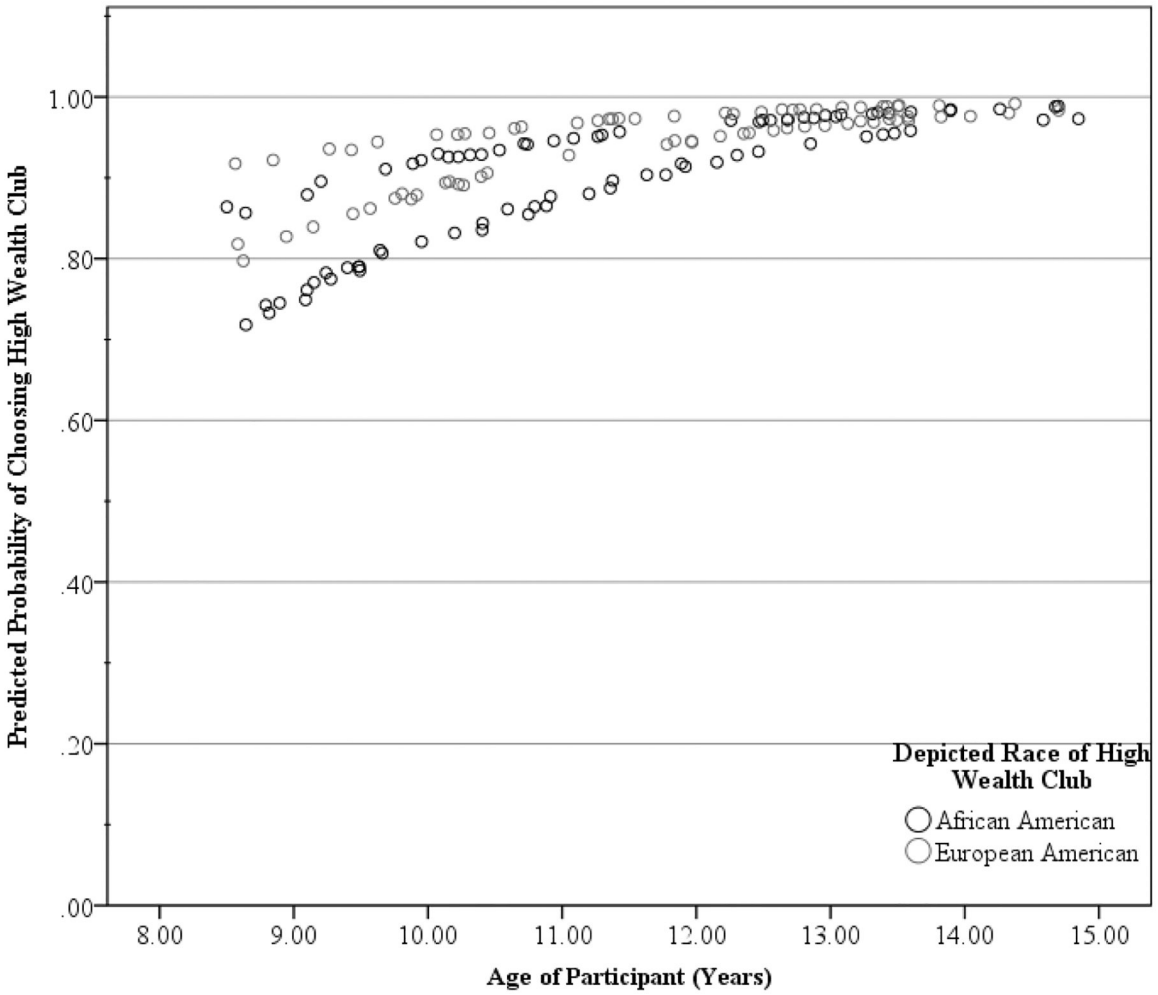

Figure 1.

Children's predictions of group exclusivity for the high wealth group.

Note. Circles indicate predicted probabilities of selecting the high wealth group as most exclusive.

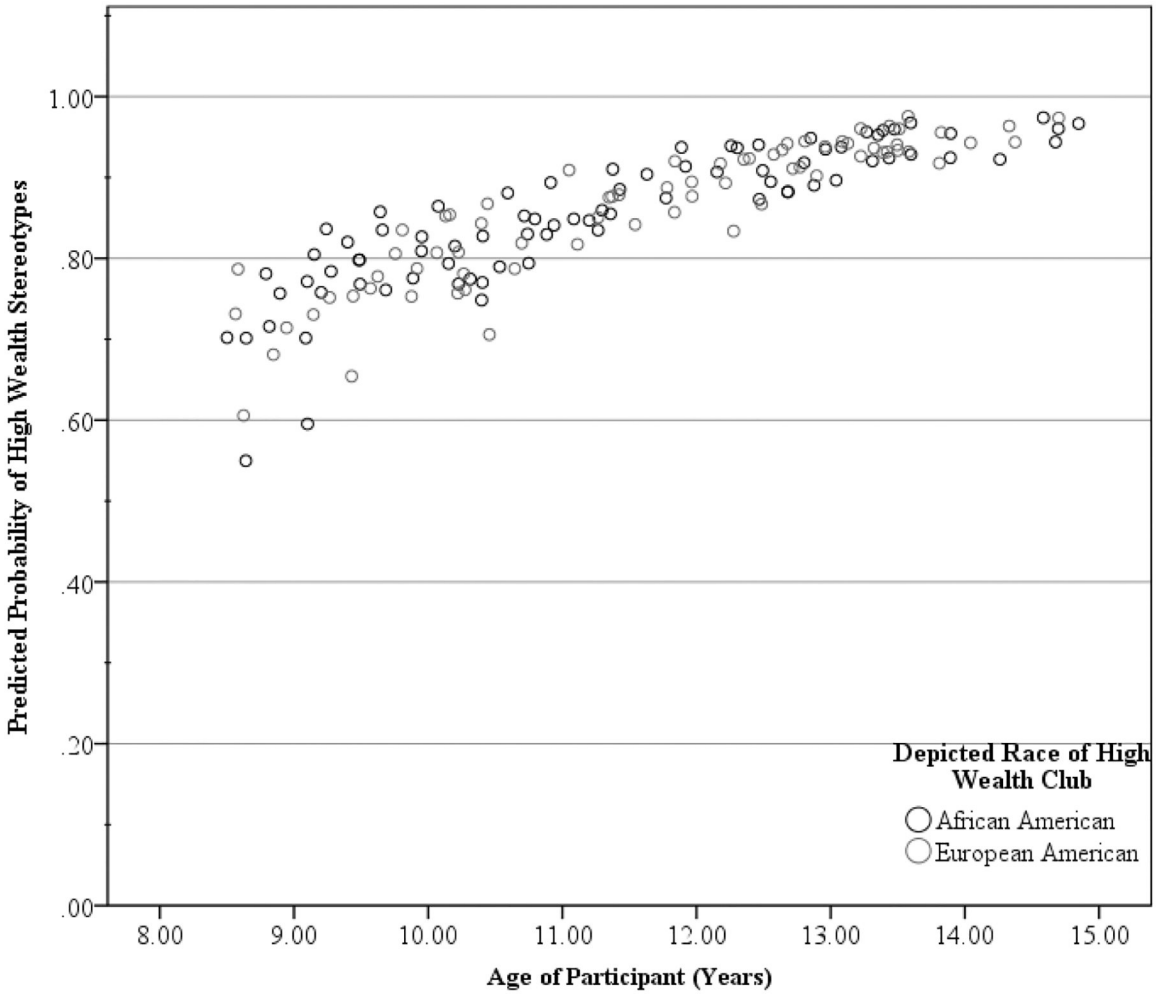

Figure 2.

Children's use of high wealth stereotypes to justify predictions of group exclusivity.

Note. Circles indicate predicted probabilities of using stereotypes about the high wealth group.

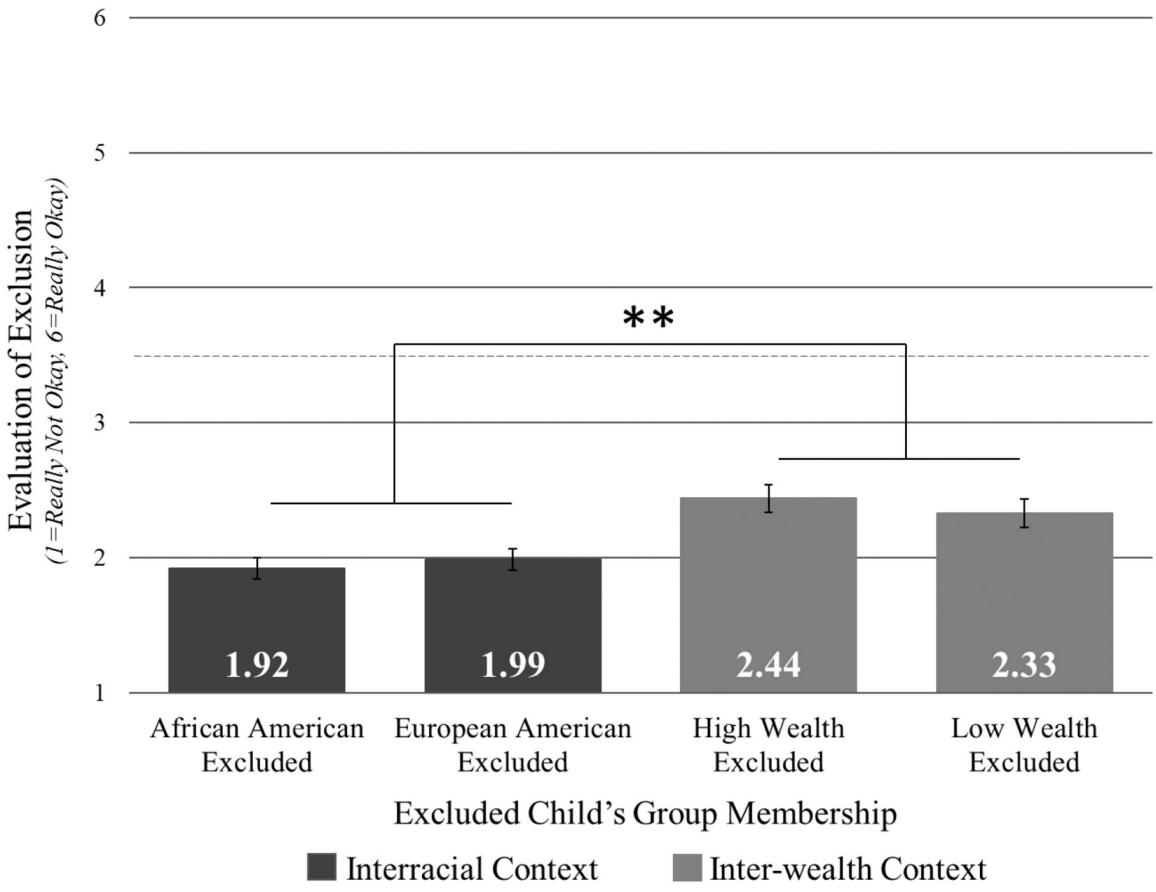

Figure 3.
Evaluations of Intergroup Exclusion in Interracial and Inter-Wealth Contexts.
Note. ** indicates significance at the .01 level.

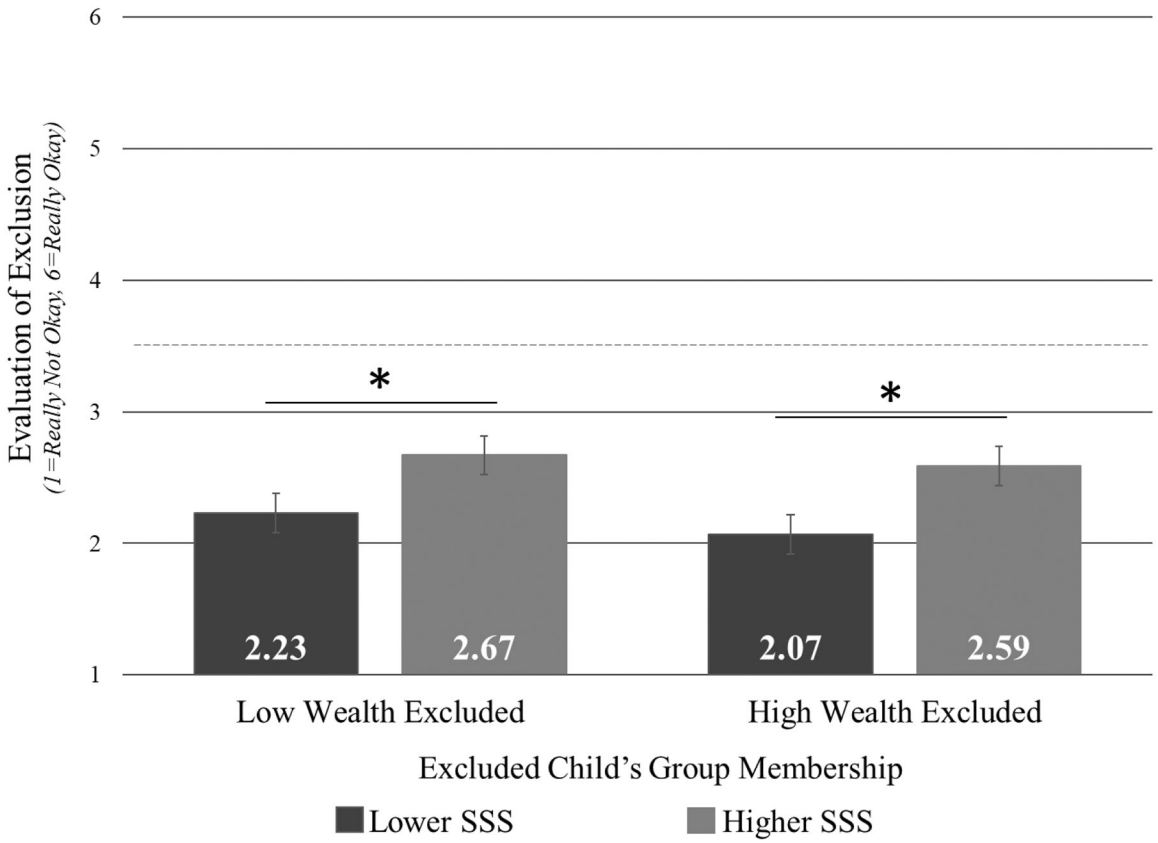

Figure 4.
Participants' Evaluations of Inter-Wealth Exclusion by Subjective Social Status.
Note. * indicates significance at the .05 level.

Table 1.

Intergroup Exclusion Condition by Shared Group Membership

Interracial Exclusion Context	
Condition (within subjects)	***Shared Group Membership (between subjects)***
African American peer excluded from European American club	High Wealth
	Low Wealth
European American peer excluded from African American club	High Wealth
	Low Wealth
Inter-wealth Exclusion Context	
Condition (within subjects)	***Shared Group Membership (between subjects)***
High Wealth peer excluded by Low Wealth club	African American
	European American
Low Wealth peer excluded by High Wealth club	African American
	European American

Table 2.

Children's Justifications for their Evaluations of Intergroup Exclusion

Context by Target Group	Stereotypes		Perceptions of Similarity		Wrongfulness of Exclusion		Wrongfulness of Discrimination		Other	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Interracial Context										
AA Excluded	.01[a]	(.11)	.25[a]	(.41)	.40[a]	(.48)	.28[a]	(.44)	.06	(.25)
EA Excluded	.00[a]	(.00)	.21[ab]	(.36)	.39[a]	(.47)	.29[a]	(.43)	.11	(.32)
Inter-wealth Context										
HW Excluded	.19[b]	(.38)	.14[bc]	(.34)	.32[a]	(.46)	.22[a]	(.40)	.13	(.33)
LW Excluded	.10[c]	(.29)	.11[c]	(.31)	.22[b]	(.42)	.46[b]	(.49)	.11	(.31)

Note. Row proportions total to 1.0. Subscripts that do not match within a column indicate proportions that differ from each other at $p < .05$.