

# Theory of mind is related to children's resource allocations in gender stereotypic contexts <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

This article is available for download through Research Gate.

Full PDF online <sup>[2]</sup>

The current study expands on previous research, examining how the development of Theory of Mind (ToM) in children contributes to gender-based stereotypes impacting resource allocation. Findings suggest gender discrimination takes root in childhood as stereotypes form, and that ToM plays a significant role in mediating bias.

## Abstract

The present study investigated the relations between 4- to 6-year-old children's (N = 67) gender stereotypes, resource allocations, and mental state knowledge in gender stereotypic contexts. Participants were told vignettes about female and male characters completing gender-stereotyped activities (making dolls or trucks). Children held stereotypic expectations regarding doll- and truck-making abilities, and these expectations predicted the degree of bias in their allocations of resources to the characters. Critically, children's performance on a ToM scale (Diverse Desires, Contents False-Belief, Belief-Emotion) was significantly related to their allocations of resources to individuals whose effort did not fit existing gender stereotypes (e.g., a boy who was good at making dolls). With increasing ToM competence, children allocated resources based on merit (even when the character's effort did not fit existing gender stereotypes) rather than based on stereotypes. The present results provide novel information regarding the emergence of gender stereotypes about abilities, the influence of stereotypes on children's resource allocations, and the role of ToM in children's ability to challenge gender stereotypes when allocating resources.

keywords: moral development; fairness; gender stereotypes; ToM; bias

**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/18/05/theory-mind-related-childrens-resource-allocations-gender> <sup>[2]</sup>

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