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Chinese Children Learning Higher-Order Generalizations through Free Play: The Influence of Parenting Style

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Abstract

Rational constructivism believes children are active learners, they are able to learn causal rules through free play. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that 2- and 3-year-old children successfully identified causality and acquired higher-order generalizations using self-generated evidence during free play, and their performances were same as in didactic learning (Sim & Xu, 2017). However, if this conclusion is true across cultures? In the current study, we used the same methods and found that 2.5- to 4-year-old Chinese children could also acquire higher-order generalizations under two different learning conditions, but their performances were better in the didactic condition than that in the free play condition. One of the reasons affected childrens learning is parenting styles, but only in the free play condition: children with authoritative parents performed significantly better than children with authoritarian parents.

Key words: free play, active learning, higher-order generalization, parents cultural belief systems, parenting style