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Children Value Objects With Distinctive Histories

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Abstract

From ancient objects in museums to souvenirs obtained on vacation, we often value objects for their distinctive histories. The present experiments investigate the developmental origins of people's feelings that objects with distinctive histories are special. In each of four experiments, 4- to 7-year-olds (total $N = 400$) saw pairs of identical-looking objects in which one object was new and the other had a history that was either distinctive or mundane. In the first experiment, the histories did not involve people; in the remaining experiments, the histories were personal and related the objects to particular people. Distinctive histories affected children's valuations of regular objects (all experiments), but not their valuations of stuffed animals. Both older and younger children viewed regular objects with distinctive histories as more special than those with mundane histories. Older children mostly viewed objects with distinctive histories as more special than new objects, and younger children showed similar judgments when judging which object a person cared about more. Together, the findings reveal a novel way that information about the past influences children's judgments about the present, and suggest that young children's valuations of objects depend on objects' histories.

Children Value Objects With Distinctive Histories

Consider a vase from ancient Greece, the very first bicycle, and a seashell you brought home from your last vacation. These objects differ in many ways, but your regard for each likely depends on its past. The vase is from an interesting time and place, and the first bicycle has an important historical role. Adults value such objects over similar-looking objects without distinctive histories. For example, adults judge such objects are worth a lot of money and belong in museums, and they express an interest in owning and touching such objects (e.g., Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, & Hood, 2009; Gjersoe, Newman, Chituc, & Hood, 2014; Marchak & Hall, 2017). The seashell is also from an interesting place, and although you may recognize that it is not worth much money, you may value it nonetheless because of your experiences with it and the place you found it (e.g., Belk, 1988, 1991; Grayson & Shulman, 2000). Such examples show that we often value objects for their distinctive histories, and not just for their current features.

In this paper, we investigate the developmental origins of people's regard for objects with distinctive histories. Investigating this can inform us about how regard for objects is affected by factors besides their physical properties and affordances, and about how children's judgments about the present are affected by knowledge of the past. On the first issue, we know that some non-physical factors affect children's regard for objects. For example, 3-6-year-olds show increased regard for objects they own (i.e., the "mere ownership" and "endowment" effects; e.g., Gelman, Manczak, & Noles, 2012; Hartley & Fisher, 2018; Hood, Weltzien, Marsh, & Kanngiesser, 2016), and 5-6-year-olds show increased regard for objects they have created (the IKEA effect; Marsh, Kanngiesser, & Hood, 2018; also see Li, Shaw, & Olson, 2013). On the second issue, we know that young children consider objects' histories in some judgments. For

example, from age 2, children consider the intentions of an object's creator when making decisions about its identity (Gelman & Bloom, 2000; Preissler & Bloom, 2008), and from age 3 or 4 they consider, and even infer, an object's history when reasoning about who owns it (e.g., Gelman, Manczak, Was, & Noles, 2016; Goulding & Friedman, 2018; Nancekivell & Friedman, 2014). However, we do not have a clear understanding of whether children value objects for their distinctive histories.

Some findings suggest children value objects with *one* type of distinctive history—past ownership and use by famous people. From age 4, children judge such objects belong in museums and understand they are worth more than identical-looking objects owned by regular people (Frazier & Gelman, 2009; Gelman, Frazier, Noles, Manczak, & Stilwell, 2015; also see Hood & Bloom, 2008). However, such judgments could reflect beliefs about the objects' *current* properties, rather than regard for their histories. Children and adults often evince beliefs in “sympathetic magic” (Nemeroff & Rozin 1994, 2000), and respond as though objects retain traces of former owners—the owner's *essence* (e.g., Gelman et al., 2015; Gelman & Hirschfeld, 1999; Marchak & Hall, 2017; Newman, Diesendruck, & Bloom, 2011; also see Huang, Ackerman, & Newman, 2017). For example, their judgments are affected by information that an owned object was cleaned or sterilized, as this implies that traces of the owner have been removed (e.g., Diesendruck & Perez, 2015; Nemeroff & Rozin, 1994; Newman & Bloom, 2014; Uhlmann & Zhu, 2013). Hence, children may value the possessions of famous people because they believe these objects currently bear traces of former owners, and not because of the distinctive histories of these objects.

Clearer evidence about whether children value distinctive histories could come from their assessments of objects like the ancient vase, the first bicycle, and the seashell from your

vacation. Heightened regard for such objects is unlikely to depend on essentialist beliefs, as these objects were not owned or used by famed individuals.¹ If children value these objects over similar objects without distinctive histories, this would suggest that these histories increase children's regard for objects.

However, we know little about how children value such objects. No studies have investigated children's regard for objects like the ancient vase, which are special because they come from an interesting time and place. Some studies have asked children about "original creations" like the first bicycle, but with inconclusive findings. By age 5, children know these objects belong in museums (Frazier & Gelman, 2009); but before age 11, children fail to recognize that original creations are worth more than similar-looking objects (Gelman et al., 2015). This suggests that young children have learned that original creations belong in museums, but might not actually value these objects. Finally, no studies have examined children's regard for objects like the seashell, which are valued *for* their owner's prior experiences with them. For example, no work has examined young children's regard for souvenirs (but see Baker, Kleine, & Bowen, 2006 for a study on older children aged 8-13).

We investigated the development of heightened regard for objects with distinctive histories in four experiments. In each experiment, younger (4-5-year-olds) and older (6-7-year-olds) children saw pairs of identical-looking objects, in which one object was described as new, and the other was described as having a history that was either distinctive or mundane. In Experiment 1, the histories were similar to those of the ancient vase and the first bicycle (i.e., they did not concern any person's experiences with the objects), and children judged which

¹ People could infer that some famed inventor created the first bicycle (without knowing who the inventor was) and feel it retains the inventor's essence. However, if this essence is all that mattered, the first bicycle would be no more special than any other bicycle the inventor made.

object was more special. In Experiment 2, and all subsequent experiments, we modified the histories to be more similar to the history of the seashell—they were personal, and concerned a person’s past with the object. In Experiments 3A and 3B, we compared judgments about regular objects and stuffed animals, as previous works suggests that children might be especially likely to link history with specialness for stuffed animals (Gelman & Davidson, 2016; we discuss this possibility in more detail below). Finally, in Experiment 4, rather than judging which object was more special to a person, children instead judged which object the person cared about more.

In each experiment, we examined how children view objects with distinctive histories in two ways. First, we examined whether children more frequently chose objects with distinctive histories or those with mundane histories. Second, we examined whether children preferred objects with distinctive histories to new objects. This latter comparison may be especially important for environmental sustainability, as this requires making used goods more desirable than new ones (Hood, 2016).

Experiment 1

Methods

Participants. We tested 80 children: 40 4-5-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 5;0$ [years; months], range = 4;4-5;11, 19 males), and 40 6-7-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 6;8$, range = 6;0-7;8, 20 males). In all experiments, we tested 20 children per age. Because we grouped children as either younger (4-5-year-olds) or older (6-7-year-olds), there were 40 children per age group; similar samples have proven sufficient in related studies featuring similar designs (e.g., Frazier et al., 2009; Gelman & Davidson, 2016; Hood & Bloom, 2008). Children were individually tested in their schools, with different children tested in each experiment. All studies reported in this paper were approved by the Office of Research Ethics at [INSTITUTION].

Materials and Procedure. Children completed a set of eight trials in which they saw different pairs of identical-looking objects (images shown on a laptop computer). In each trial, the experimenter said one object was new, and described the other object's history. Across trials, there were four types of history (each mentioned in two trials): 1) interesting location of origin (e.g., from a castle); 2) interesting method of creation (e.g., made by a robot); 3) original creation (e.g., the very first hammer); and 4) mundane history (e.g., from a store). For each pair, children were asked which object was more special. See Figure 1 for scripts, histories, objects, and information about counterbalancing from all experiments.

The word “special” is often used to characterize objects valued for distinctive properties, and so we felt that using it in our test question would provides a relatively direct measure of regard for objects with distinctive histories (e.g., Dyl & Wapner, 1996; Frazier & Gelman, 2009; Gelman et al., 2015; Grayson & Shulman, 2000; Lehman, Arnold, & Reeves, 1995; Zeegers, Readdic, & Hansen-Gandy, 1994). However, to address concerns that children could have interpreted “special” differently, we conducted an additional experiment (Experiment S1; see the Supplementary Information) to test whether children understood the term as intended. The results of that experiment confirm that children understand that objects described as special are valued.

	<u>sample slide and script</u>	<u>items</u>	<u>histories</u>
Experiment 1	<p>Look, here are two flutes. This flute is from a castle. This flute is new. Which flute is more special?</p>	flutes bowls hammers lamps nets vases spoons balls	This X is from a castle [location] This X is from a spaceship [location] This X was made by a robot [method] This X took a month to make [method] This is the very first X [original] This is the very first X [original] This X is from a store [mundane] This X is from a school [mundane]
Experiment 2	<p>Here are two umbrellas. Jesse won this umbrella as a prize. This umbrella is new. Which umbrella is more special to Jesse?</p>	keychains piggybanks baseballs pencil cases flashlights water bottles picture frames umbrellas	Jesse got this X on vacation in Hawaii [location] Jesse got this X on a trip to a farm [location] Jesse won this X as a prize [method] Jesse got this X as a present [method] This is the first X Jesse ever had [original] This is the first X Jesse ever used [original] Jesse bought this X at a store last week [mundane] Jesse got this X at school last week [mundane]
Experiments 3A&3B	<p>This is Sam. And look! Here are two baseballs. These two baseballs belong to Sam. This is the very first baseball Sam ever had. This baseball is new. Which baseball is more special to Sam?</p>	baseballs pencil cases umbrellas piggybanks [3A] keychains [3B]	Sam won this X as a prize [distinctive, 3A] Sam got this X on a trip to a farm [distinctive, 3A] This is the first X Sam ever had [distinctive, 3B] This is the first X Sam ever had [distinctive, 3B] Sam bought this X at a store last week [mundane] Sam got this X at school last week [mundane]
Experiment 4	<p>This is Jesse. And look! Here are two keychains. These two keychains belong to Jesse. Jesse won this keychain as a prize. This keychain is new. Which keychain does Jesse care about more?</p>	baseballs pencil cases umbrellas keychains	Jesse won this X as a prize [distinctive] Jesse got this X on a trip to a farm [distinctive] Jesse bought this X at a store last week [mundane] Jesse got this X at school last week [mundane]

Figure 1. Sample slides, trial scripts, items, and histories from each experiment. The gray rectangles occlude faces, but were not in the actual stimuli. In all experiments, the pairs of objects were presented in a fixed order (as listed under the items heading), and the objects were always introduced from left-to-right. The order of histories and side of the older object (left or right) were counterbalanced across participants.

Results and Discussion

In all experiments, Generalized Estimating Equation models (binary logistic data, with unstructured correlation matrixes) examined how often children chose the older object rather than the new one; other responses were infrequent (<1% of responses across experiments) and not analyzed. When there were interactions with age, pairwise comparisons tested whether children at each age chose objects with each distinctive history more often than they chose objects with a mundane history. Single-sample tests (using intercept-only models) then examined whether children chose objects with each type of history over new objects. Table 1 outlines the predictors entered in each analysis, and all significant and marginal effects; see the Supplementary Information for a table showing all means and standard deviations. The data from all experiments and syntax for the main GEE models are available at <https://osf.io/67gkh/>.

Table 1
Predictors and significant and marginal effects in each GEE model.

Study & predictors	Significant and marginal effects	Wald χ^2	<i>p</i>
Experiment 1	history	27.42	<.001
history: location, method, original, mundane	history*group	11.68	.009
group: younger, older			
Experiment 2	history	35.44	<.001
history: location, method, original, mundane	group	5.62	.018
group: younger, older			
Experiments 3A&B	history	25.40	<.001
history: distinctive, mundane	group	4.90	.027
group: younger, older	history * group	3.52	.061
experiment: 3A, 3B	history * object	7.96	.005
object: regular, stuffed animal			
Experiment 4			
history: distinctive, mundane	history	29.09	<.001
group: younger, older			

In this experiment, children's choices differed across history-types, $Wald \chi^2(3) = 27.42, p < .001$, but this effect was qualified by an interaction between history and age-group, $Wald \chi^2(3)$

= 11.68, $p = .009$; see Figure 2. Younger children were no more likely to choose objects with each distinctive history than to choose objects with a mundane history, all $ps \geq .254$. Older children, in contrast, chose objects with each distinctive history more than they chose objects with a mundane history, all $ps < .001$. When choosing between the new and older objects, younger children mostly chose new objects, $p = .001$; older children responded at chance when choosing between new objects and objects with distinctive histories, all $ps \geq .465$, and mostly chose new objects over ones with mundane histories, $p < .001$.

In sum, older children viewed objects with distinctive histories as more special than those with a mundane history, but younger children did not. However, even for older children, objects with distinctive histories were no more special than new objects. We wondered, though, whether children might better appreciate *personal* distinctive histories, where a person might find an object special because of their own distinct experiences with it. We examined this possibility in the next experiment.

Figure 2. Choices of older objects over new ones in Experiments 1 (top) and 2 (bottom).

Experiment 2

Methods

Participants. We tested 80 children: 40 4-5-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 5;1$, range = 4;0-5;11, 19 males), and 40 6-7-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 6;8$, range = 6;0-7;9, 24 males).

Materials and Procedure. Children were first shown a picture of a child named Jesse (gender matched to the participant). Then they completed eight trials in which they saw pairs of identical-looking objects that children are likely to own (e.g., keychains) and judged which object was more special to Jesse. In each trial, the experimenter said one object was new, and described the other object's history in relation to Jesse. There were four types of history (each mentioned in two trials): 1) acquired from interesting location (e.g., obtained on vacation in Hawaii); 2) acquired by interesting method (e.g., won as prize); 3) original-acquisition (e.g., first keychain owned by agent); and 4) mundane method of acquisition (e.g., purchased at a store last week).

Results and Discussion

Children's choices again differed across history-types, $\text{Wald } \chi^2(3) = 35.44, p < .001$; see Figure 2; choices also differed across age-groups, $\text{Wald } \chi^2(1) = 5.62, p = .018$, with older children overall more likely than younger ones to choose older objects. Children chose objects with each distinctive history more frequently than objects with a mundane history, $ps \leq .039$. Younger children responded at chance when choosing between new objects and objects with distinctive histories, all $ps \geq .127$, and mostly chose new objects over ones with mundane histories, $p = .010$. In contrast, older children chose interesting-location and interesting-acquisition objects over new ones, $p = .030$ and $p < .001$ respectively, and responded at chance

when choosing between new objects and original-acquisitions and objects with mundane histories, $p_s \geq .325$.

In sum, children again viewed objects with distinctive histories as more special than those with a mundane history. Further, older children viewed objects with two kinds of distinctive history as more special than new objects.

We next examined whether children's judgments differ between regular objects and stuffed animals. We thought that children might be especially likely to link history with specialness for stuffed animals, and that asking about stuffed animals could reveal greater understanding in younger children (e.g., they might choose stuffed animals with distinctive histories over new ones). We expected a stronger link with history for stuffed animals because 3-year-olds prefer their old stuffed animals and sleep items over new replacements, but do not have this preference with regular toys (Gelman & Davidson, 2016). Also, adults' valuations of an object are enhanced if the object is presented with a historical narrative (e.g., detailing how it was obtained or created); however, this effect is greater for objects that resemble living things than for other objects (Newman, 2018). So perhaps history matters more for people's valuations of objects that are easily anthropomorphized. We investigated this possibility with items acquired from interesting locations and in interesting ways in Experiment 3A, and with original-acquisitions in Experiment 3B.

Experiments 3A and 3B

Methods

Participants. In Experiment 3A, we tested 80 children: 40 4-5-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 4;9$, range = 4;0-5;11, 19 males), and 40 6-7-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 7;0$, range = 6;1-7;11, 19 males). In

Experiment 3B, we tested a further 80 children: 40 4-5-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 4;9$, range = 4;0-5;10, 16 males), and 40 6-7-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 7;0$, range = 6;1-7;11, 21 males).

Materials and Procedure. Children completed four trials. In each trial, children saw two identical-looking objects, and a picture of a different child who owned the objects. The experimenter said one object was new, described the other object's history, and asked children which object was more special to the owner. The older objects had distinctive histories in two of the trials, and mundane histories in the other two trials. In Experiment 3A, one object with a distinctive history was acquired from an interesting location and the other was acquired in an interesting way; in Experiment 3B, both were original-acquisitions.

In each experiment, equal numbers of children at each age were randomly assigned to one of two between-subjects conditions. These conditions only differed in whether the objects were regular items (e.g., baseballs) or stuffed animals; hence, except for the differences in object names, the scripts across both conditions were identical. In Experiment 3A, the "regular" condition included a pair of piggybanks. In Experiment 3B, these were replaced with keychains to avoid the potential for children to view the banks as akin to stuffed animals.

Results and Discussion

To maximize power, we examined the results of Experiments 3A and 3B in a single analysis, including experiment as a factor (see Table 1). Children's choices differed with history-type, $Wald \chi^2(1) = 25.40$, $p < .001$, but this effect depended on whether children were asked about regular objects or stuffed animals, $Wald \chi^2(1) = 7.96$, $p = .005$; see Figure 3. For regular objects, children chose objects with a distinctive history more often than they chose objects with a mundane history, $p < .001$. In contrast, for stuffed animals, this effect was only marginal, $p = .073$. Children's choices also differed between age-groups, $Wald \chi^2(1) = 4.90$, $p = .027$, as older

children were overall more likely than younger ones to choose older objects. There were no other significant or marginal effects, all $ps \geq .147$.

For regular objects, younger children responded at chance when choosing between new objects and objects with distinctive histories, $p = .889$, and they mostly chose new objects over those with mundane histories, $p = .005$. In contrast, older children chose regular objects with distinctive histories over new ones, $p = .017$, and chose new objects over those with mundane histories, $p = .010$. However, we saw a strikingly different pattern for stuffed animals. Children at both ages chose between new objects and older objects at chance rates, $ps > .114$, though there was a marginal effect for younger children to prefer new stuffed animals over ones with a mundane history, $p = .070$.

Figure 3. Choices of older objects over new ones in Experiments 3A&B

In sum, children's choices depended on the types of objects they considered. For regular objects, children's choices generally resembled those in the previous experiments—they viewed objects with distinctive histories as special. In contrast, and opposite to our expectations, children did not link distinctive histories with specialness for stuffed animals. Before considering explanations for this finding, it is worth noting that this effect of object-type rules out potential concerns that task demands led children to feel they were *supposed* to choose the objects with the more interesting histories. If children had felt this, we would have observed similar findings for regular objects and stuffed animals.

We were surprised that distinctive histories did not affect regard for stuffed animals. One reason is that findings from one earlier study suggested children might be *more* sensitive to histories for stuffed animals than for other objects. Specifically, Gelman and Davidson (2016) found that 3-year-olds preferred their old stuffed animals and sleep items over new replacements, but did not show this preference with other toys. Although their study did not feature pairs of identical-looking stuffed animals, another study did use these as stimuli (Gutheil, Gelman, Klein, Michos, & Kelaita, 2008) and found that 4- and 5-year-olds do track the spatiotemporal histories of stuffed animals—doing so allows children to judge which of two identical stuffed animals knows a fact that only one of them observed.

One explanation for our stuffed animal findings is that children's attraction to the physical features of these items led them to neglect the distinctive histories. The salience of physical features even leads adults to discount non-obvious features. When adults objectify a woman, they focus on her appearance and neglect her non-obvious features, leading them to view her as less competent, warm, and moral (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick,

Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010). Applied to our findings, this suggests (somewhat ironically) that children may objectify some objects more than others.

A related explanation, helpfully suggested by a reviewer, is that many children may view the prospect of receiving a new stuffed animal as more exciting than receiving other kinds of new objects. Hence, newness might overpower (or distract children from) distinctive histories for stuffed animals, but not for other kinds of objects. If this account is correct, though, we might expect different findings if we only examined children with a stuffed animal as an attachment object. Given their strong feelings about their attachment objects, these children might be especially likely to value stuffed animals with distinctive histories over new duplicates (for findings consistent with this, see Hood & Bloom, 2008; also see Gjersoe, Hall, & Hood, 2015).

In the experiments so far, children were asked to judge which object in each pair is more special. We conducted a final experiment to test whether they would respond similarly if asked a different test question. In this experiment, children were told about pairs of regular objects (i.e., not stuffed animals) and were asked about which object the person cares about more. We asked about *caring* as this term is often used to characterize people's feelings about objects they value emotionally (e.g., Gelman & Davidson, 2016; Richins, 1994).

Experiment 4

Methods

Participants. We tested 80 children: 40 4-5-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 5;0$, range = 4;0-5;11, 22 males) and 40 6-7-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 6;11$, range = 6;0-7;10, 14 males).

Materials and Procedure. Children again completed four trials. In each trial, they saw two identical-looking regular items (e.g., baseballs) and a picture of a different child who owned the objects. The experimenter said one object was new and described the other object's history.

However, rather than asking about which object was more special to the child, the experimenter instead asked which object the owner cares about more. The older objects had distinctive histories in two of the trials (acquired from an interesting location; acquired in an interesting way), and mundane histories in the other two trials.

Results and Discussion

Children chose objects with a distinctive history more often than they chose objects with a mundane history, $Wald \chi^2(1) = 29.09, p < .001$; see Figure 4. In contrast with the previous experiments, there were no effects of age, $ps \geq .603$. Also, children chose objects with distinctive histories over new ones, $p < .001$, and chose new objects over those with mundane histories, $p = .026$.

Figure 4. Choices of older objects over new ones in Experiment 4

These findings show that children's valuations of objects with distinctive histories are not limited to judgments about which objects are special. This assuages the concern that children in the previous experiments only considered which objects were more distinctive. In fact, the present findings are even stronger than those from the previous experiments; this was the only experiment in which younger children judged that the person valued objects with distinctive histories over new ones.

General Discussion

Our findings show that children recognize that distinctive histories affect how objects are valued, though children only showed this understanding for regular objects, and not for stuffed animals. When children judged which regular objects were special, they generally indicated objects with distinctive histories more often than objects with mundane histories. Also, older children mostly chose objects with distinctive histories over objects that were new. Younger children generally chose between objects with distinctive histories and new objects at chance, but chose new objects over those with mundane histories. This difference between younger and older children could stem from a developmental increase in children's regard for objects with distinctive histories or from a decline in their regard for new objects. However, our final experiment casts doubt on both explanations, as younger and older children responded similarly when judging which objects owners care about more. So perhaps younger children's competence was masked by the questions about which objects were more special.

Children's heightened regard for objects with distinctive histories was clearest when histories involved specific people (Experiments 2, 3A&B, and 4), as compared with when histories were impersonal (Experiment 1). Although further work is needed to explore this distinction, it raises the possibility that children's regard for objects with distinctive histories

begins with an understanding that objects can remind people of important places and events. This proposal is broadly consistent with findings that young children understand that seeing objects in the present can cue emotions tied with past events (e.g., Lagattuta & Wellman, 2001; Lagattuta, Wellman, & Flavell, 1997).² The distinction between personal and impersonal histories may be linked with people's assessments of authenticity, as people's methods for assessing whether items are authentic may also be personal or impersonal (internal or external; Newman & Smith, 2016).

Together, our findings demonstrate that children's valuations of objects often depend on their pasts. Because the objects had not belonged to famous people, children's judgments cannot reflect beliefs that objects retain the essences of *illustrious* owners (but see Newman, 2016, for a conception of essentialism that may encompass past events). It is still possible that children believed the owned objects (Experiments 2, 3A&B, and 4) had taken on their owner's essence. But such beliefs are unlikely to underlie judgments that these objects were special. If the owner's essence was key, then all of that person's possessions would be special to them (i.e., including possessions with mundane histories). Also, original-acquisitions (e.g., first keychain owned by the owner) might be especially valued, because these objects have had the most time to acquire the owner's essence. Against this, findings from the second experiment suggest that children sometimes struggle to see this type of distinctive history as increasing regard. This finding does not undermine the possibility that children view owned objects as imbued with their owners' essences. But it does cast doubt on the possibility that such essentialist beliefs are responsible for children's recognition that objects with distinctive histories are valued.

² This might also explain why findings in Experiment 2 were weaker for original-acquisitions than objects with other kinds of distinctive histories. Objects acquired from interesting location or by interesting methods are typically tied to specific positive (or at least distinctive) past events. Describing a possession as the first of its kind, in contrast, connects it to the past, but not to a specific positive event.

Regardless, the findings extend knowledge of factors that affect children's valuations of objects and of the effects of information about the past on children's reasoning about the present. Previous studies show that children recognize the heightened value of objects owned and used by famous people, and also suggest children might understand this for original creations (Frazier & Gelman, 2009; Gelman et al., 2015). The present findings show that children's valuations are also affected by a variety of other kinds of distinctive histories. This said, the effects of history on children's valuations could have been *indirect*, as children might have used historical information to make inferences about the objects' present qualities, and then based their valuations on these inferences. For example, children could have inferred that a baseball won as a prize is of better quality than a baseball with a mundane history. Even allowing for this possibility, history remains important for children as they may use it to infer objects' current, but non-observable, features.

The findings also increase knowledge of how children understand other people's regard for objects. Previous work has examined how children infer other's preferences and desires (e.g., Fawcett & Markson, 2010; Jara-Ettinger, Gweon, Tenenbaum, & Schulz, 2015; Kushnir, Xu, & Wellman, 2010). Our findings suggest children may understand other kinds of regard for objects—feeling an object is special, or caring about it, probably differs from simply liking or wanting it. More research is needed, but it may turn out that young children's understanding of forms of regard and value are quite granular. We know that children understand that some objects are special, cared about, museum-worthy, and expensive. But children may also recognize that these forms of regard do not always coincide. The owner of a valued memento might refuse to put a price on it, or to think of it in monetary terms (McGraw, Tetlock, & Kristel, 2003; Richins, 1994), and children may recognize this.

Finally, our findings may also be environmentally relevant. Sustainable living can be encouraged by making used goods more desirable than new ones (Hood, 2016), and our findings provide preliminary evidence that this may be accomplished by highlighting the distinctive histories of used objects. This said, it will be important to more directly examine the effects of highlighting distinctive histories on children's decisions about which objects they would like to play with or keep. Again, different forms of regard do not always align, and so decisions about what to acquire may match assessments of what is most special.

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