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Parental Mind-mindedness and Autonomy Granting are Associated with Singaporean Children's Free Will Beliefs

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Abstract

Parents' mind-mindedness may influence their provision of opportunities for children to make decisions on their own, which can influence children's sense of agency and autonomy regarding choices. We examine this hypothesis by measuring children's free will beliefs and testing its correlation with parental measures. In Study 1, mind-mindedness for 90 parents of 3- to 6-year-old Singaporean children were coded from their written descriptions of their children. Those who scored high on mind-mindedness had children who were more likely to endorse free will during an online interview. In Study 2, self-reported autonomy granting collected from 89 parents of 4- to 9-year-old Singaporean children were correlated with their children's free will beliefs after controlling for children's age, children's gender, parent's gender, and household income. These results suggest that children who are perceived and treated as autonomous by their parents may become more likely to exercise their autonomy to make difficult choices.