

Prototype 01

Provocation

What if children make the rules that adults must follow?

What I am testing

Will people still follow a rule automatically when there is no reasonable explanation for it?

Will people's attitudes toward a rule change once they know it was made by a child?

pdf

Don't Step on the Line.pdf

365 KB

What to observe

1. Participant A did not immediately obey or break the rule. Their first response was to look for clues that might explain why the line should not be crossed. After learning that the rule was made by a child, she treated it more playfully and said she might even cross the line on purpose to tease the child. If the same rule had been made by an adult, she would instead keep asking for an explanation.

2. Participant B would simply avoid stepping on the line and would not think much about it.

What it revealed

1. The perceived legitimacy of a rule changed depending on who created it. A child-made rule was read as more playful and negotiable, while an adult-made rule was treated as something that should be justified.

2. This suggests that some people may automatically grant legitimacy to a clear prohibition without needing to know the specific reason behind it.

Prototype 02

Provocation

What if children's game rules had real authority over adults?

What I am testing

I want to see which rules feel funny, uncomfortable, unfair, or surprisingly acceptable once children's game logic is given real authority.

pdf

Rules Made by Children.pdf

398 KB

What to observe

1. Participant A felt that if these rules had real consequences, people would become much more careful about what they say and do. At the same time, they might actively search for loopholes, cycles, or ways to use the rules to achieve their own goals.

2. Participant B said she would simply follow the rules.

What it revealed

When playful or seemingly trivial rules begin to produce real consequences, people quickly start treating them as a serious system. This suggests that authority may come not from a rule being reasonable, but from its ability to produce real consequences.

Prototype 03

Provocation

What if a ritual were no longer for the person it is usually centered around?

What I am testing

I want to question why we assume that a ritual belongs to a particular person, and whether the person positioned as the ritual's "main character" is actually the person the ritual serves.

pdf

Changing the Main Character.pdf

4.5 MB

A birthday celebration is for the birthday person.

~~mother~~

A wedding ceremony is for the couple.

~~ex-partners~~

A graduation ceremony is for the graduates.

~~freshmen~~

A funeral is for the deceased.

~~Next person to die~~

What to observe

1. Participant A had very different reactions to each change. She liked the idea of making "the next person to die" the focus of a funeral, because it made her think about people taking part in, or even planning, their own funeral. She was neutral about making the mother the focus of a birthday celebration. She felt that the mother is connected to the birthday, but the birthday person should still remain the main person. She did not agree with making freshmen the focus of a graduation ceremony or ex-partners the focus of a wedding, because she felt these rituals are closely connected to the people who are going through those events. She also suggested that instead of having a wedding for ex-partners, it would make more sense to hold a "funeral" for the past relationship.

2. Participant B only accepted shifting the focus of a birthday celebration to the mother, and even that depended on age. She said that when she was younger, she would have been more protective of the idea that "my birthday is my birthday." As an adult, however, birthdays have become less important to her, so she would be more open to celebrating the mother as well, or even shifting some of the attention toward her. Other than that, she strongly rejected changing the central person in a graduation ceremony, wedding, or funeral. She felt that a graduation ceremony must be for the graduates, while freshmen should have their own separate ceremony. A wedding must be for the couple, and involving ex-partners would feel inappropriate and unfair to the current partner. She also felt that a funeral should be for someone who has already died; holding one for someone who is still alive but expected to die soon would be emotionally difficult and hard to accept.

What it revealed

1. Participant A's acceptance of a changed ritual focus depended on whether she saw the original person as inseparable from the ritual's core meaning. More interestingly, when a change felt inappropriate, she looked for another ritual that better matched the situation, such as moving the ex-partner from the context of a wedding to that of a funeral. This suggests that ritual meanings can move across different life events and be reorganized, rather than remaining fixed within one ritual form.

2. Participant B's responses made me notice that rituals may also help maintain a clear order of time and relationships. People seem to have expected positions within different stages: who belongs to the past, present, or future, and who should appear at each moment. When those positions are brought into the wrong stage, she feels strong discomfort. Birthday felt more flexible because the mother and the birthday person could both be included without disrupting that order. This made me wonder whether maintaining rituals may also be a way of maintaining boundaries between roles, relationships, and life stages.