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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 45(45)

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Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed

Children Leverage Confidence to Rationally Integrate Beliefs

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Abstract

It can be difficult to uncover the truth when presented with two conflicting beliefs. Adults integrate beliefs in a rational way by placing more weight on beliefs held with high confidence than beliefs with low confidence. Here, we investigate the development of this rational integration in 5- to 10-year-old children. Children at all ages selected the higher confidence belief if confidence differed, and older children (8-10) preferred an integrated belief when two informants presented beliefs with equal confidence. We interpret this as evidence that children use expressed confidence to inform rational decision-making, consistent with the principles of rational cue combination.