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Authors

Wang, Jinjing Jenny

Yang, Yang

Macias, Carla

et al.

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Children with immature intuitive theories seek domain-relevant information

Jinjing (Jenny) Wang

Rutgers University-Newark, Newark, New Jersey, United States

Yang Yang

Rutgers University-Newark, Newark, New Jersey, United States

Carla Macias

Rutgers University-Newark, Newark, New Jersey, United States

Elizabeth Bonawitz

Rutgers University - Newark, Newark, New Jersey, United States

Abstract

A growing body of research suggests that infants and children are sensitive to signals of information gain. However, the value of a piece of information may also change as the learner knows more. How do changes that occur naturally in childrens intuitive theories contribute to their subsequent learning? Here we tested whether children who are at different stages of understanding an intuitive theory also differ in their interest in acquiring more information in the same domain. We tested childrens performance in three distinct domains, including intuitive biology, psychology, and beliefs about psychosomatic events. We found that children at earlier stages of their intuitive theories were more likely to seek information in the related domain than children with mature knowledge. These results are the first to show the relationship between natural changes in childrens existing knowledge and childrens future learning preferences.