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The role of viewpoint in event segmentation

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Abstract: The ability to perceive and understand experience is influenced by a process that divides it into meaningful parts. This process, called event segmentation, is frequently studied by asking participants to identify meaningful units of activity in films that depict it from a third person perspective. However, because segmentation is associated with changes in the perceptual and conceptual features of film, it could differ for films that present the same activity from a first person perspective. This study therefore examined segmentation for simultaneously recorded films that depicted identical activities from different perspectives. In several experiments participants were asked to segment these movies into natural and meaningful units of activity. Measures of segmentation frequency and agreement provided little evidence that segmentation reliably differed across first and third person perspectives. These preliminary findings suggest that participants identify similar events when they are viewed from different perspectives.