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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Inferences from Disagreement

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 44(44)

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Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed

Inferences from Disagreement

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Abstract

To figure out what happened in the past, we often rely on others' testimony. One challenge is that people can disagree in their interpretations of what happened. We will investigate children's use of disagreement as evidence for what happened, specifically, inferring that the event itself was ambiguous and could generate multiple interpretations. Children (N = 50; 7 to 11 years) will hear two observers' testimony, in which the observers either agreed about another speaker's desires (e.g., both observers agreed that the speaker wanted an intervention) or disagreed (one observer was sure the speaker wanted the intervention, while the other observer was sure the speaker did not want it). Children will then be asked to infer which of three events happened: the speaker uttered an unambiguous request (should be inferred more in agreement trials), an ambiguous request (should be inferred more in disagreement trials), or a random statement (neither trial type).