Children consider informants’ sources when deciding whom to believe

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### Introduction
- Agents’ claims are often based on others’ testimony, rather than firsthand experience.
- Do children look to agents’ sources when evaluating their claims?
- Do children re-evaluate their beliefs after learning more about a claim’s source?

### Procedure

- **Experiment 1**: Do children attend to an individual’s source?
  - Blue!
  - Green!
  - They saw it there!
  - She saw it there!
  - “Why did you say that?”

- **Experiment 2**: Do children attend to a group’s source?
  - Blue!
  - Green!
  - They saw it there!
  - She saw it there!
  - “Why did you say that?”

- **Experiment 3**: Do children really attend to sources?
  - Blue!
  - Green!
  - They saw it there!
  - She saw it there!
  - “Why did you say that?”

Test question, all experiments: “Where is the hamster?”

### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiment 1: Attending to an individual’s source (n = 120)</th>
<th>Experiment 2: Attending to a group’s source (n = 120)</th>
<th>Experiment 3: Does source really matter? (n = 80, ongoing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Percent Correct</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

While five- to seven-year-olds endorsed the testimony of an agent with more sources (Expt. 1), only six- to seven-year-olds also endorsed the testimony of a group with more sources (Expt. 2), and preferred to endorse the testimony of an individual with many sources over that of a group who heard from a single source (Expt. 3, ongoing).

Note: All procedures, predictions, and analyses were pre-registered

### General Discussion & Conclusion
- These findings suggest that an understanding of the social nature of testimony continues to develop between the ages of four and six.
- Only by age six did children reliably consider a claim’s source when evaluating its merit.
- Past research demonstrates that, all else equal, children prefer to endorse the testimony of a consensus. In Experiment 3, children may have planned to endorse the testimony of the group until they learned about the group’s sources. Our results hint that children may be able to re-evaluate this initial judgment in light of subsequent source information.

References:
Hu, Whalen, Buchsbaum, Griffiths, & Xu (2015); Luchkina, Corriveau, & Sobel (under review); Miller, Hardin, & Montgomery (2003)