

Says who?

Children consider informants' sources when deciding whom to believe

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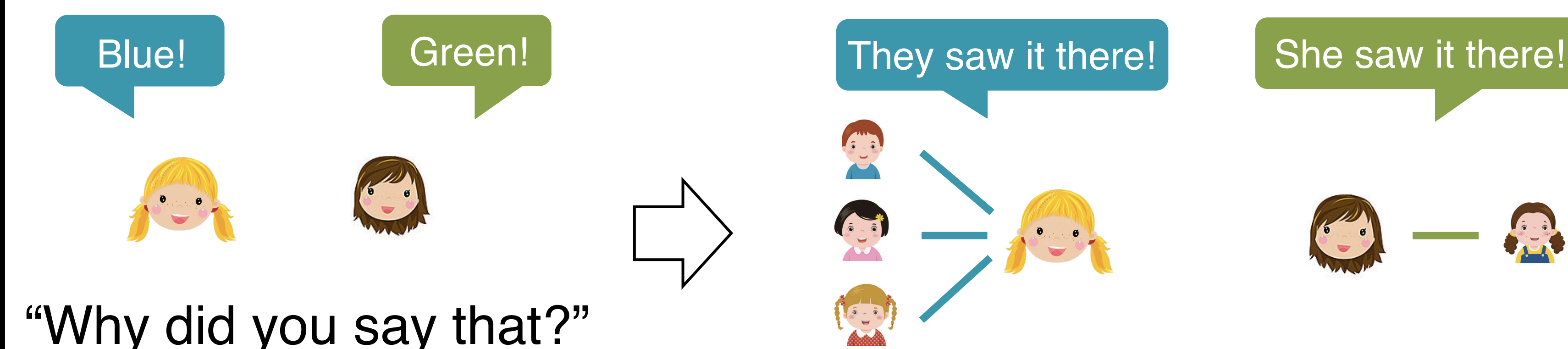
Introduction

- 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?

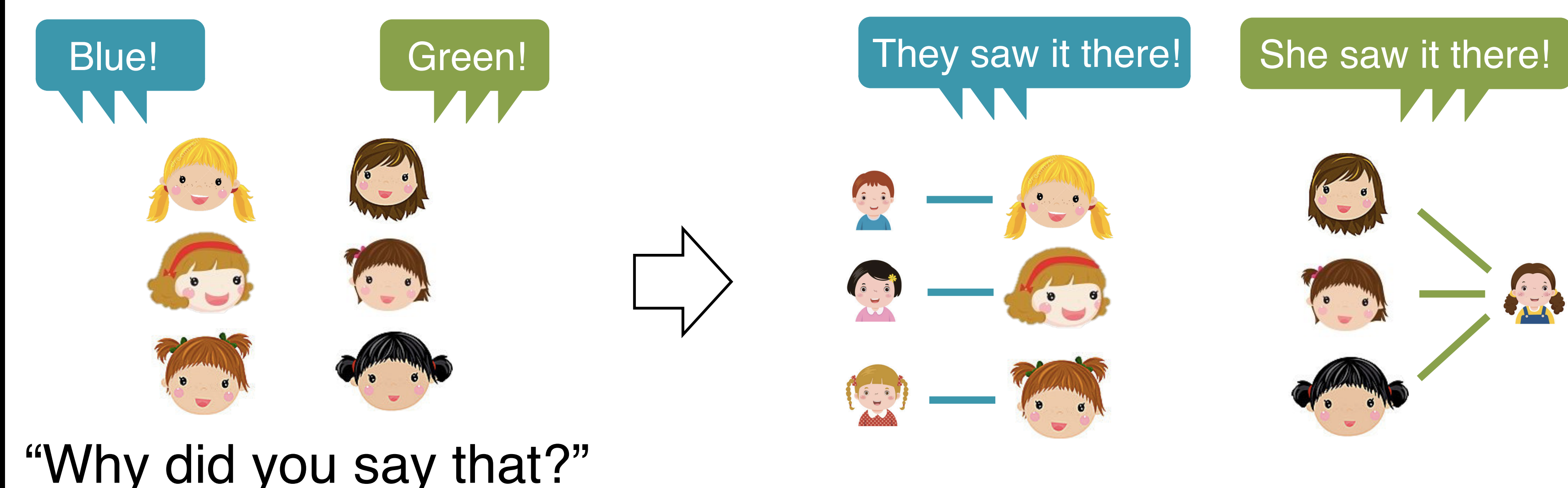
Procedure

Today the class hamster ran away! The teacher needs to know if he ran through the blue door, or the green door.

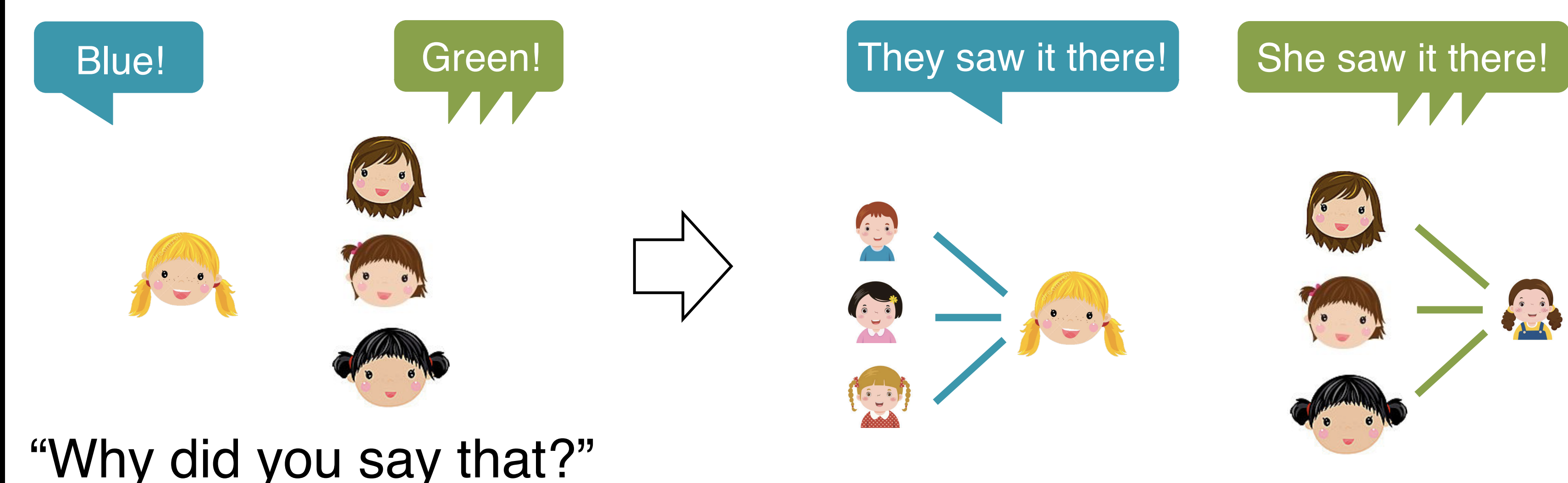
Experiment 1: Do children attend to an individual's source?



Experiment 2: Do children attend to a group's source?

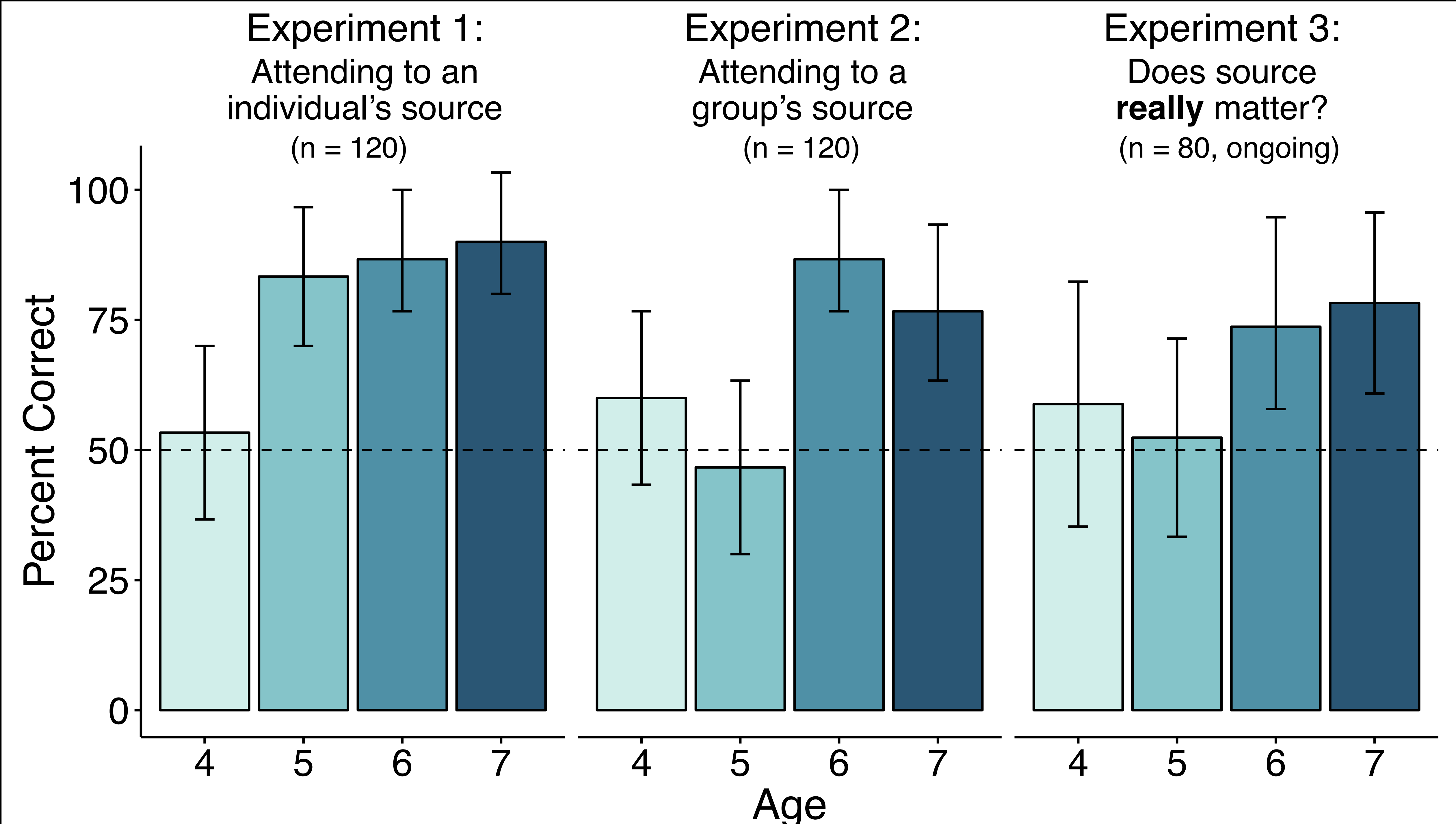


Experiment 3: Do children **really** attend to sources?



Test question, all experiments: "Where is the hamster?"

Results



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)