
The Ontogeny of Second-order Epistemic Vigilance

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Abstract

Humans are endowed with cognitive mechanisms that allow them to face the risk of misinformation and underlie their ‘epistemic vigilance’ towards the trustworthiness of the source of the information and the believability of its content. Mazzarella and Pouscoulous (2021) have proposed that irony comprehension requires the exercise of so-called ‘second-order epistemic vigilance’: the ability to assess others’ epistemic vigilance. To examine the emergence of second-order epistemic vigilance in childhood, we designed a new selective trust experiment. Children have to choose the correct label for unfamiliar objects by relying on the testimonies of informants whose gullibility/vigilance will be experimentally manipulated.

Keywords: epistemic vigilance, cognitive development, word learning

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