

How is children's exploratory play influenced by evidence conflicting with their theory?

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Abstract: Bonawitz, Lim, and Schulz (2007) demonstrated that children's exploratory play is affected by the interaction of their naïve theories and the evidence they observe. 6- and 7-year-olds were more likely to play with a balance toy when they observed evidence inconsistent with their balancing theory than when they observed evidence consistent with their balancing theory. The present study was set up to investigate how children's exploratory play is influenced by evidence that conflicts with their theory. Do children who observe inconsistent evidence play more systematically and make more informative comparisons than children who observe consistent evidence? 4- to 6-year-olds' naïve theories on shadow size were assessed with the shadow task (Siegler, 1981). 52 children with one specific naïve theory were selected and shown evidence consistent or inconsistent with their theory. Preliminary results show that the inconsistent group made more informative comparisons during free exploratory play than the consistent group.