

Title: How Children Change Their Minds

Abstract:

How do children make sense of a causally ambiguous, probabilistic world – rapidly and accurately changing beliefs about it? I will suggest that computational models can provide a precise framework for considering how children should update their beliefs as they encounter new evidence, and they also provide a starting point for considering how ideal learners should interpret ambiguous evidence. Considering how computational models connect to real learners also provides insight into the mechanisms by which child learners approach probabilistic evidence. In this talk, I will present three factors that help children interpret and learn from ambiguous evidence: explanatory biases, the ability to explore and explain away ambiguous evidence, and a simple algorithm for sequentially updating beliefs. This three-part investigation will demonstrate that a research program bridging computational models and empirical data provides a productive means to examine how children change their minds.