

Background

Do children prefer to trust their own memory or defer to someone else?

- Adults use other people as memory resources (transactive memory; Wegner, 1986), but it is not known whether children do this.
- The closest related research on parent-scaffolded reminiscing examines how parents prompt children to remember shared experiences (Fivush et al., 2006). However, we do not know whether children can actively seek assistance with remembering.
- Preschoolers do request help when they are uncertain in other domains (e.g., perceptual identification; Coughlin et al., 2014). But children under 6 years old may not understand the benefit of asking others for help with remembering (Kreutzer et al., 1975).
- We investigated whether children defer to someone else when that person's memory is likely better than their own, but trust their own memory when that person's memory is likely worse.

Participants

5-year-olds ($N = 64$, $M = 65$ mo) and 7-year-olds ($N = 63$, $M = 89$ mo) participated in one of four conditions:

- Easy-Item Baseline
- Hard-Item Baseline
- Easy-Item Helper
- Hard-Item Helper

References

- Coughlin, C., Hembacher, E., Lyons, K. E., & Ghetti, S. (2014). Introspection on uncertainty and judicious help-seeking during the preschool years. *Dev. Sci.*, 1–15.
- Fivush, R., Haden, C. A., & Reese, E. (2006). Elaborating on elaborations: Role of maternal reminiscing style in cognitive and socioemotional development. *Child Dev.* 77(6), 1568–1588.
- Kreutzer, M. A., Leonard, C., & Flavell, J. H. (1975). An interview study of children's knowledge about memory. *Monogr. Soc. Res. Child Dev.*, 1–60.
- Wegner, D. M. (1986). Transactive memory: A contemporary analysis of the group mind. In B. Mullen & G. R. Goethals (Eds.), *Theories of group behavior* (pp. 185–208). New York: Springer-Verlag.

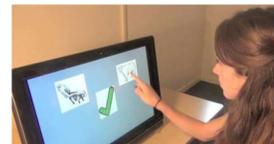
Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the members of the Child Language and Learning Lab for their hard work and helpful suggestions, and to the children and parents who participated in this research.

Procedure

Video Exposure

Easy-Item Helper & Baseline

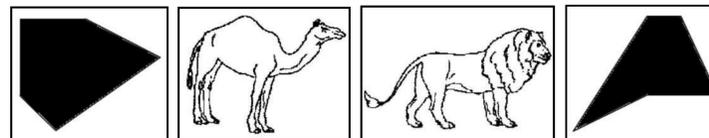


Hard-Item Helper & Baseline



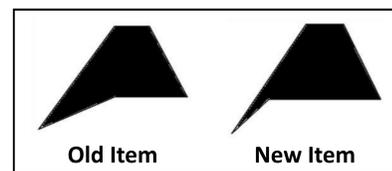
Study Phase

10 easy items (animals) and 10 hard items (shapes)

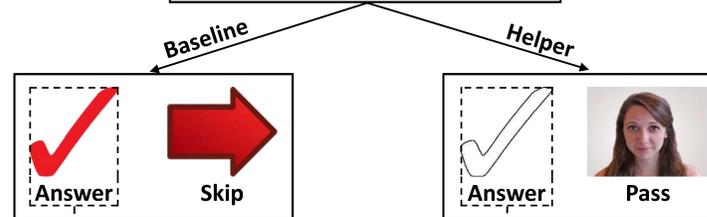


Free Report Recognition Test

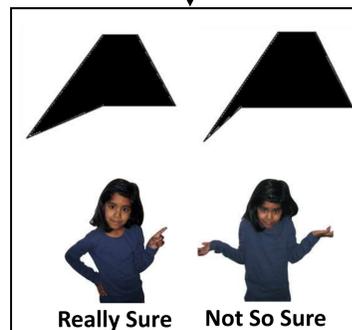
1) Presentation



2) Decision



3) Response

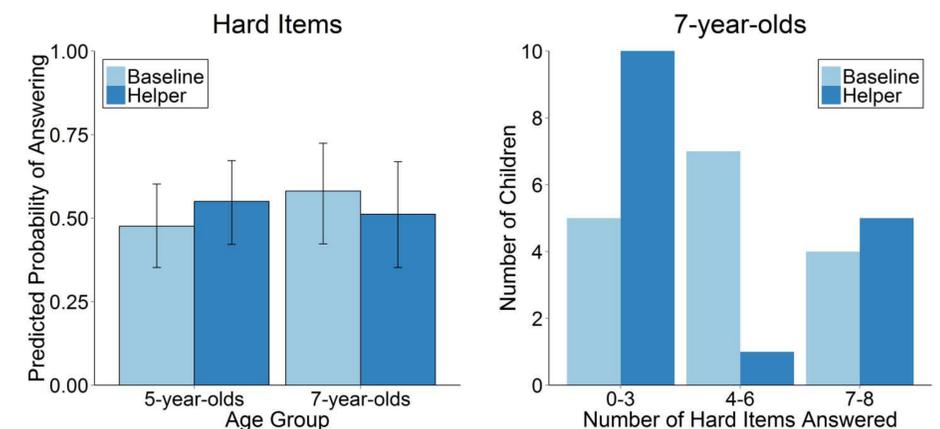


4) Confidence

Results

Hard-Item Helper vs. Hard-Item Baseline

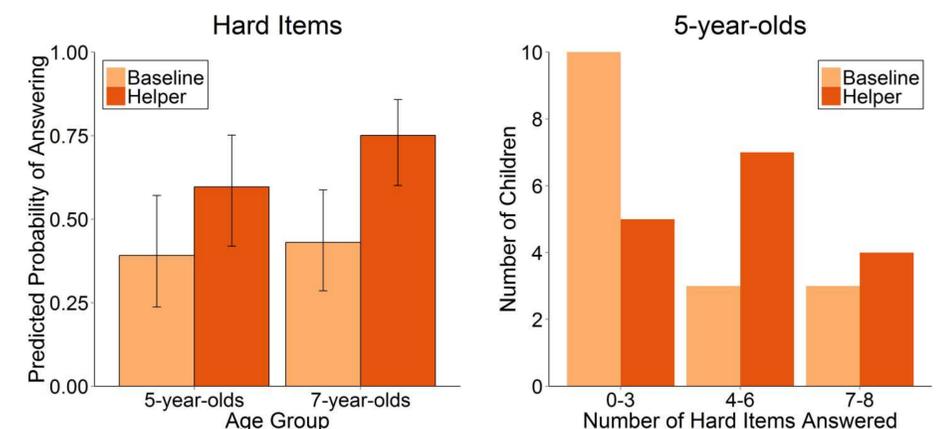
- Overall neither age group took advantage of the helper who was good at remembering hard items: They were not less likely to answer in the Hard-Item Helper condition.
- However, many of the 7-year-olds showed a pattern that was consistent with strategic use of the helper.



Error bars: 95% CIs

Easy-Item Helper vs. Easy-Item Baseline

- 7-year-olds avoided passing hard items to the helper who would be incorrect: They were more likely to answer in the Easy-Item Helper condition. The distribution of 5-year-old's responses also showed some evidence of avoidance.



Error bars: 95% CIs

Conclusion

When deciding whether to seek help, children did consider the other person's likelihood of remembering, but avoidance of someone with a bad memory was stronger than approach to someone with a good memory.