

Background

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

- Young children’s memory abilities are still developing, and there are likely many instances where they need help remembering.
- Other people can serve as memory resources, but children need to be able to withhold their own responses and decide whether the other person’s memory is more accurate.
- On a perceptual task, preschoolers used their level of uncertainty to decide whether to respond to a question or withhold their answer (Lyons & Ghetti, 2013).
- On a memory task, 3.5-year-olds strategically withheld responses; they were more accurate on items that they chose to answer than ones they chose to skip (Balcomb & Gerken, 2008).
- What would children do if instead of being able to skip a question, they could ask someone else to answer?
- We addressed whether children will 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

Study 1

5-year-olds (N = 16, M_{age} = 5.6 yrs)

Study 2

Easy Item Helper: 5-year-olds (n = 14, M_{age} 5.4= yrs)

Hard Item Helper: 5-year-olds (n = 15, M_{age} 5.5= yrs)

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Procedure

Study 1: Answer vs. Skip

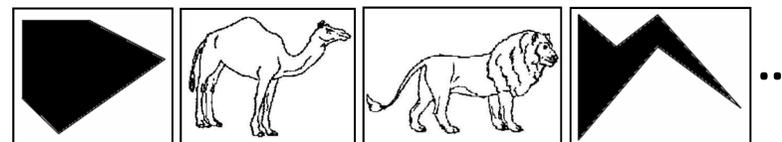
Study 2: Answer vs. Pass

Helper good at remembering animals (easy items) OR shapes (hard items)



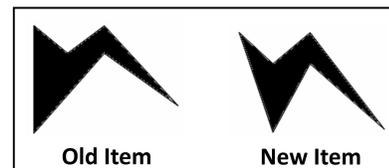
Study Phase

10 animals and 10 shapes (4 sec each)



Recognition Test (free report)

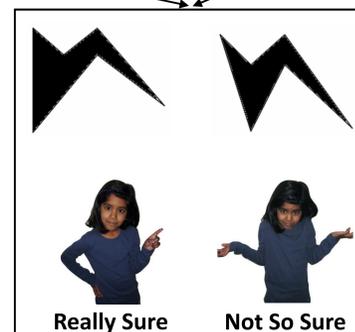
1) Presentation



2) Decision



3) Response



4) Confidence

Recognition Test (forced report)

• Same trials as free report recognition test

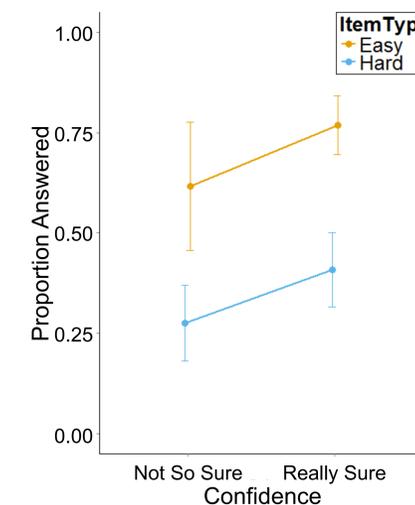
• No option to skip

Memory check

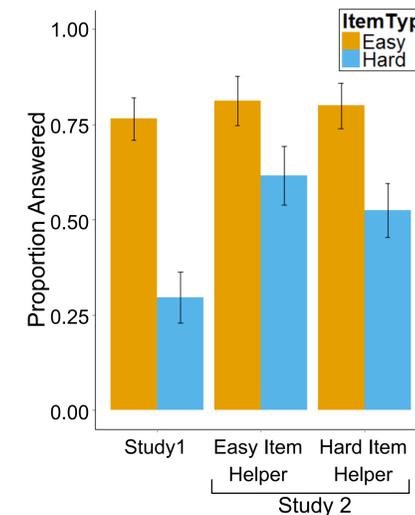
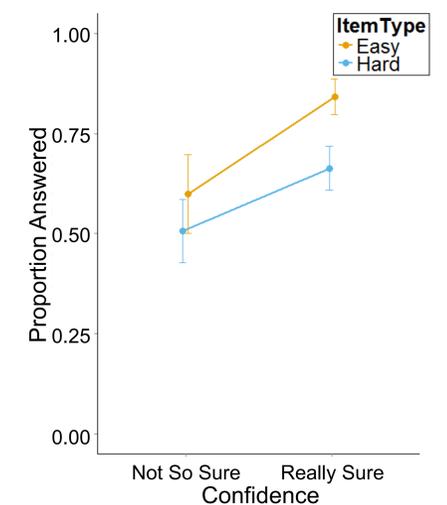
Results

• Children based their decisions of whether to answer on how confident they were.

Study 1: Answer vs. Skip



Study 2: Answer vs. Pass



• However, children in Study 2 did not strategically pass on items the helper would be better able to answer.

• Additionally, children in Study 2 answered more hard items than the children in Study 1, even when they could have passed to a helper who had a very good memory for hard items.

• Children may have focused primarily on their own confidence when making these decisions, and not sufficiently considered the likelihood of the helper providing the correct answer.

References

- Balcomb, F. K., & Gerken, L. (2008). Three-year-old children can access their own memory to guide responses on a visual matching task. *Developmental Science*, 11(5), 750–760.
- Lyons, K. E., & Ghetti, S. (2013). I Don't Want to Pick! Introspection on Uncertainty Supports Early Strategic Behavior. *Child Development*, 84(2), 726–736.
- 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.