Effects of ‘We’-Framing on Preschoolers’ Helping, Commitment, and Sharing
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1. Background.
- Language is used to create and frame social goals and values (Tomasello, 2008), e.g., conceptions of social groups and collective tasks (Stanley, 2015).
- Adults: Framing and social decision making (e.g., Ellingsen et al., 2012).
- Children: Normative turn around 3 years of age (Tomasello, 2019).

2. General Methods.
- Overview: Child and puppet (E2) “decorate for a party” by coloring papers alongside one another. Decorating is introduced using either ‘you’- or ‘we’-framing. Measures taken while decorating (Figure 1).
- Participants and design: Goal n = 80, sample age: 2;6 – 4;6 (2 age groups: partition at 3;6), 2-condition between-subjects design.
- Measures:
  - Helping: Is ‘we’-framing associated with shorter latency to help?
  - Commitment: Is ‘we’-framing associated with more leave-taking?
  - Sharing: Is ‘we’-framing associated with more equal sharing?
- Manipulation:
  - ‘You’-framing: e.g., “You can help decorate by decorating this colorful paper. You will color your paper with your markers…”
  - ‘We’-framing: e.g., “We can help decorate by decorating this colorful paper together. We will color our papers with our markers…”

3. Expected Pattern of Results.
- Apparent differences indicate expectations of statistical significance.
- Graphs indicate expected directionality of effects, not exact values.
- Differential predictions stem from prior theory that group-minded thinking may have stronger influence on senses of obligation and fairness, while helping may be more sympathy-related (Tomasello, 2019).

Research Question.
- Does framing a task using either individual- or group-oriented language influence children’s helping, commitment, and sharing with a puppet?
- Controlling for effects of, e.g., joint attention, collaboration, etc.

Helping. No effect of ‘we’-framing.

Commitment. Age x condition interaction, main effect of condition on percent of children taking leave, simple main effect of age within ‘we’-framing.

Sharing. Main effect effect of condition, no effect of age on children’s resource distribution.

References.