



Empathy and Justice: Preschoolers' responses to broken joint commitment and remorse



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Background

3-year-olds

- Take merit into account when sharing resources after collaboration (Hamann, Bender, & Tomasello, 2014)
- Behave differentially based on the type of defection in a broken joint commitment (Kachel, Svetlova, & Tomasello, 2017)

3- and 4-year olds

- Distribute resources by taking merit into account as a third party observer (Baumard, Mascaró, & Chavallier, 2012)

5-year-olds

- Are more upset with a transgressor who did not display guilt than with one who did (Vaish, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2011)

Question

In a group task involving joint commitment & collaboration, will a child react differently to a defector who shows remorse vs a defector who does not?

Design

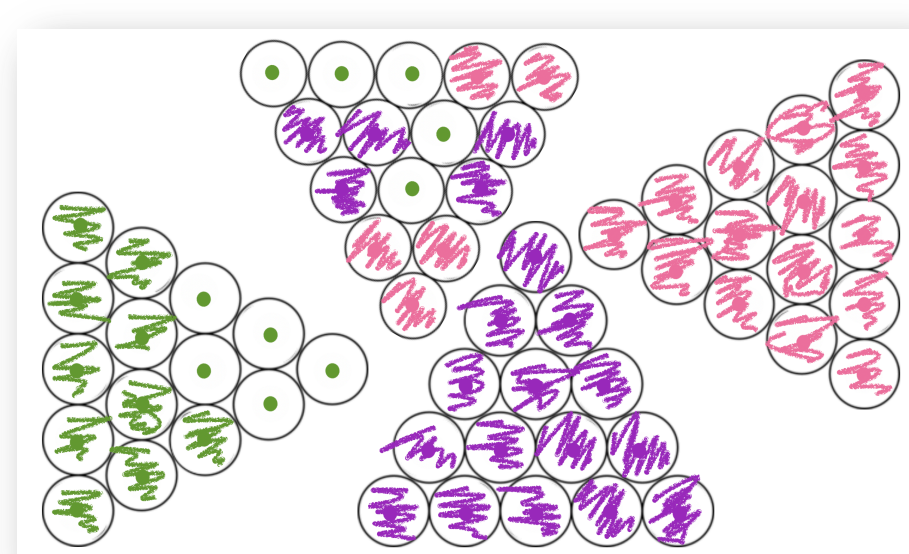
Participants:

- 4-6 year old children ($N = 64$)

Procedure:

- 1 child and 2 partners (puppets) work together to color a coloring page; they are told all circles must be colored to earn reward from an impartial “magic” machine. Each player is assigned color to highlight their role. They make a joint commitment to work together.
- Halfway through the task, 1 puppet (Defector) states that they do not feel like continuing, other puppet (Hard-Worker) and child continue to work. The coloring page is not completed.
- Experimenter announces that there are fewer rewards than if the whole page had been colored. Defecting puppet carries out either the remorseful or non remorseful condition. Then, resources are distributed.

Ex: final coloring page (defecting puppet was assigned **green circles**)



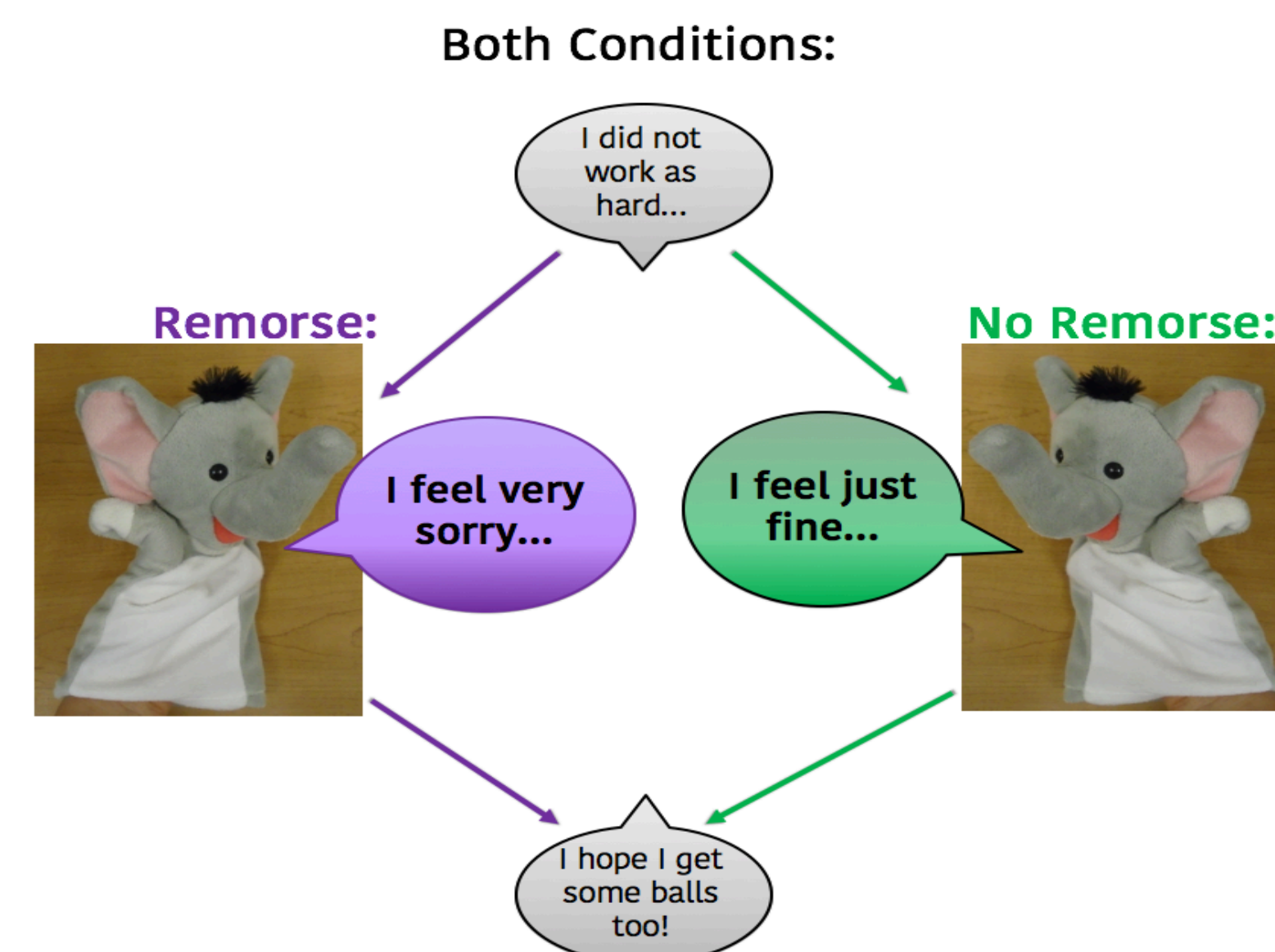
Design

Conditions:

Remorse	No Remorse
Defecting puppet feels remorseful about their lack of participation and apologizes profusely, promising to work harder next time.	Defecting puppet does NOT feel remorseful about their lack of participation and announces that they do not feel badly and do not think they will work harder next time.

Three part statement:

Acknowledge Defection + Remorse/No Remorse + Desire



Measures

Resource Distribution between Defector and Hard-Worker

- Experimenter Guided**
 - Odd # (1/4)
 - Even # (1/3)
 - Child can correct
- Child Directed**
 - Odd # (1/4)
 - Even # (1/3)

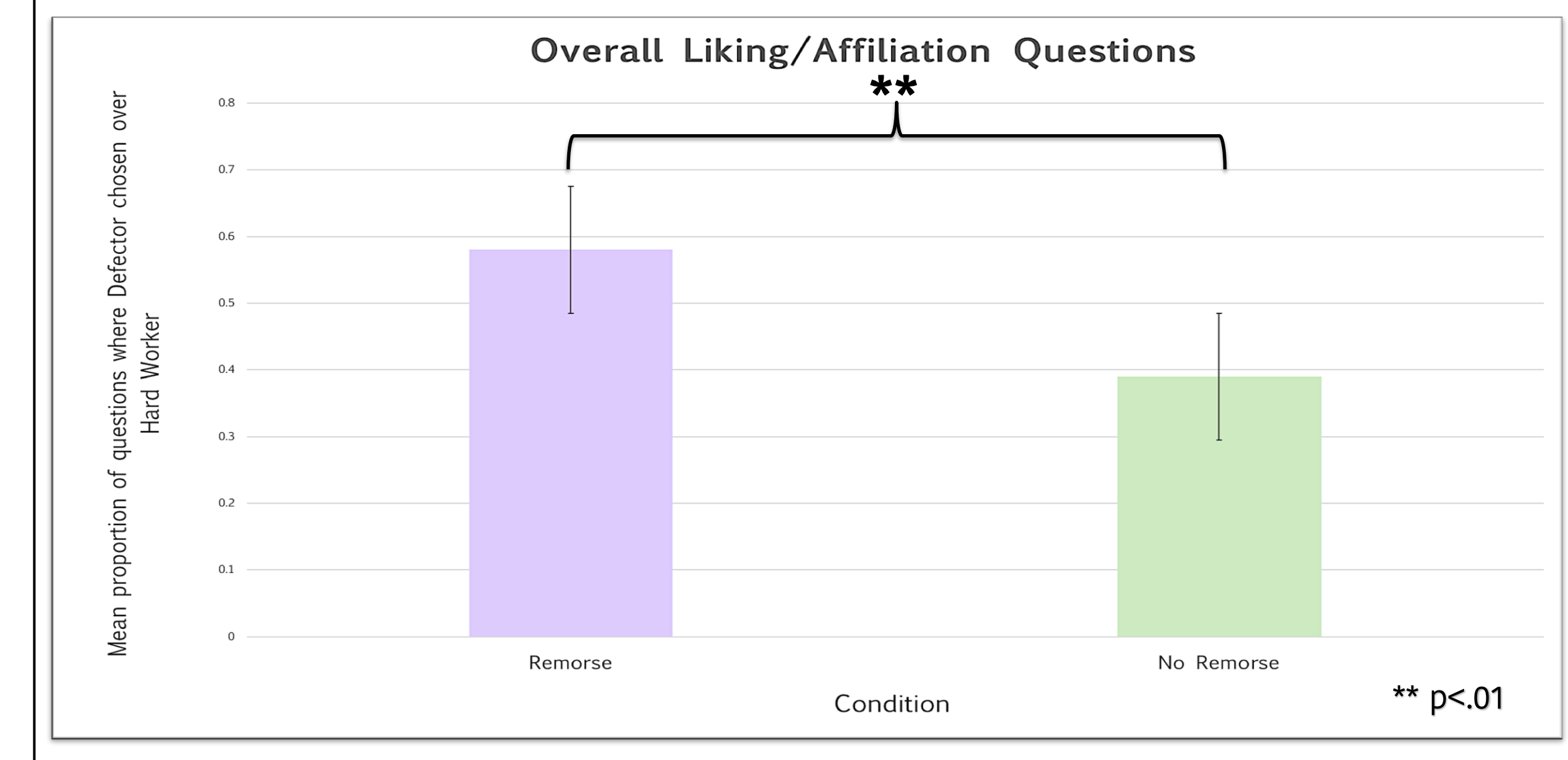
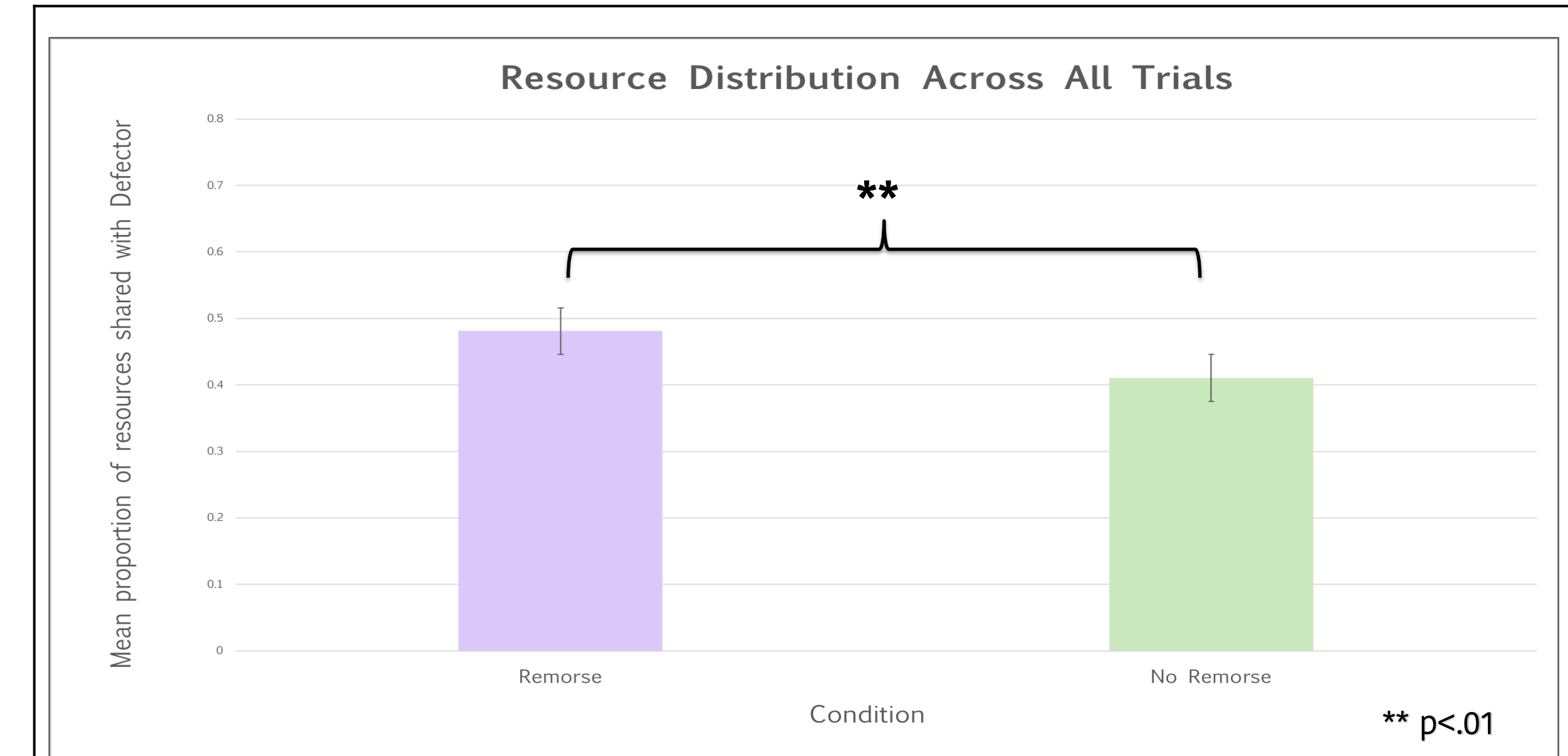


Ex: Child Directed distribution

Liking/Affiliation Questions

- Who did you like more? (**liking**)
- Whose feelings did you care about? (**caring**)
- Who would you ask for help? (**trusting**)
- Who do you want to play with again? (**affiliating**)
- Who do you think needs a hug right now? (**comforting**)

Results



Discussion

Resource Distribution:

- Children shared a greater proportion of their resources with a remorseful defector than with a non-remorseful defector
- On average, children did not share a majority of their resources (more than 50%) with the remorseful defector, implying that they still favor a fair distribution of resources based on merit

Liking Affiliation Questions:

- Children chose the defector over the hard worker more often when the defector was remorseful than when they were not
- On average, children chose the defector over the hard worker for a majority of the liking/affiliation questions in the remorse condition, implying they may feel more positively towards a remorseful defector than a hard worker

Conclusion

Preschoolers have a nuanced understanding of collaborative roles and take a defector's remorse into account when evaluating a broken joint commitment.

References and Acknowledgements

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