



Child Development Labs
at the University of Virginia

“She Didn’t Even Say Sorry!” Children Remember When Transgressors Fail to Apologize

Marissa B. Drell, Siny Tsang, & Vikram K. Jaswal

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Contact: mdrell@virginia.edu



Introduction

- Conflicts are inevitable and frequent among young children.
- Apologies can help restore the victim-transgressor relationship: Transgressors who apologize acknowledge having harmed the victim and (implicitly) promise not to do so again (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Schlenker, 1980).
- Children and adults who have been victims of a transgression prefer apologetic over unapologetic transgressors (Drell & Jaswal, in press; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Smith & Harris, 2012).
- Victims may perceive unapologetic transgressors as a continued threat that should be avoided.
- Research in other domains suggests that young children and adults seem to have a better memory for individuals they perceive as a threat (Kinzler & Shutts, 2008; Buchner, Bell, Mehl, & Musch, 2009).
- Do **6- and 7-year-olds ($N = 36$)** remember transgressors who fail to apologize better than those who do?

References

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- Kinzler, K. D., & Shutts, K. (2008). Memory for “mean” over “nice”: The influence of threat on children’s face memory. *Cognition*, 107, 775-783.
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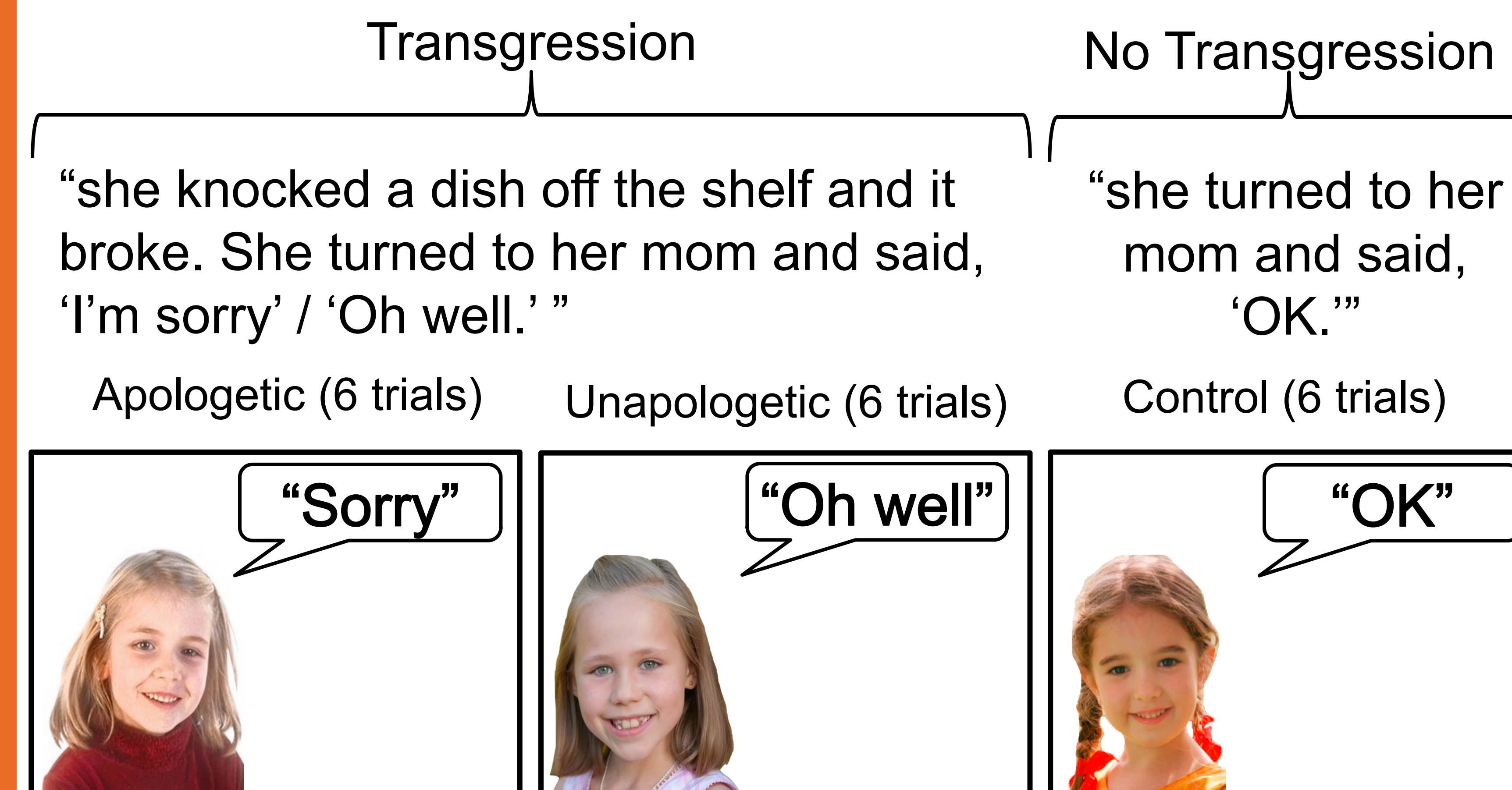
Acknowledgments

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Method

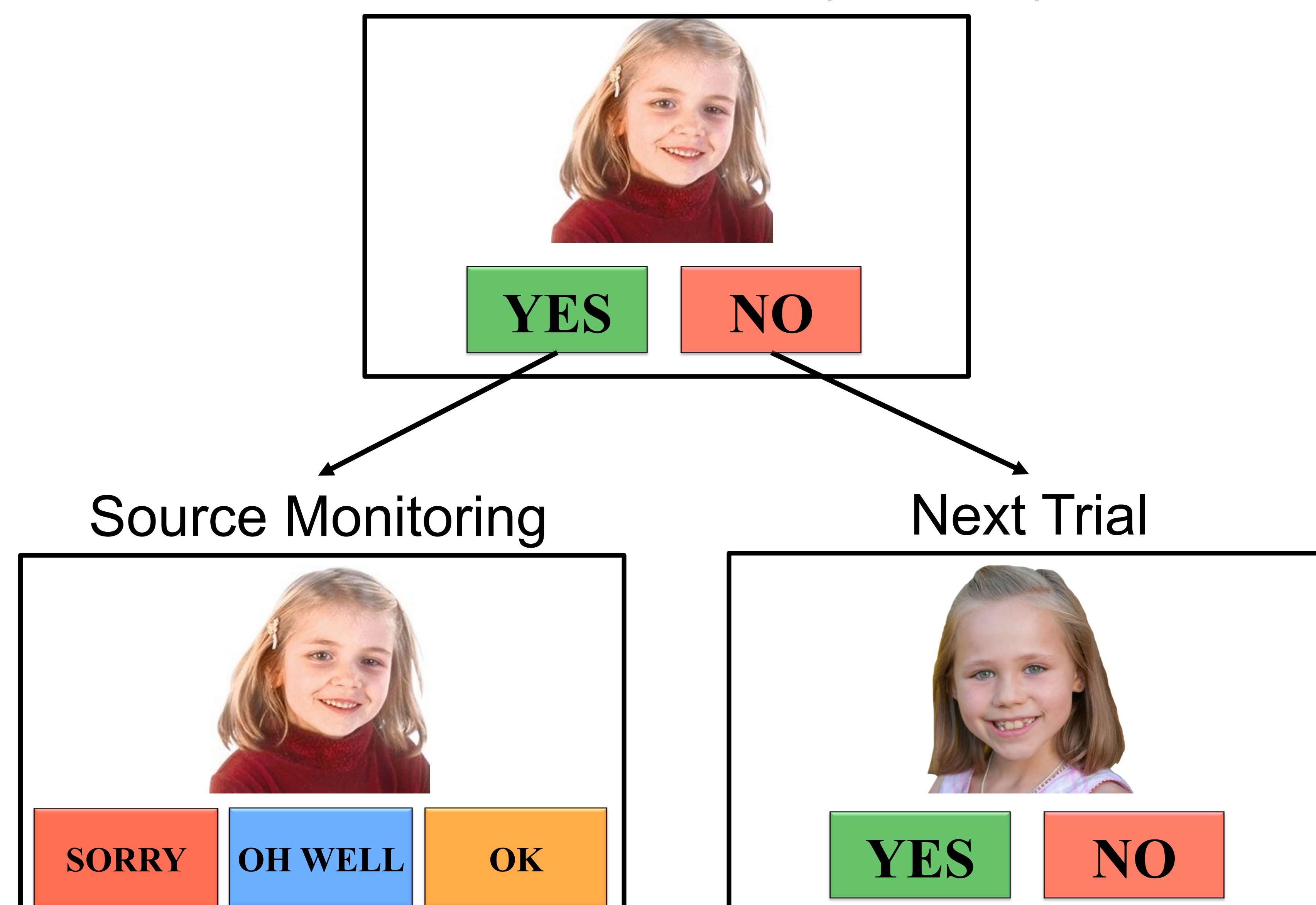
1) Study Phase

Example vignette: “This girl climbed on the kitchen counter and then heard her mom tell her to get down. When she jumped down:”



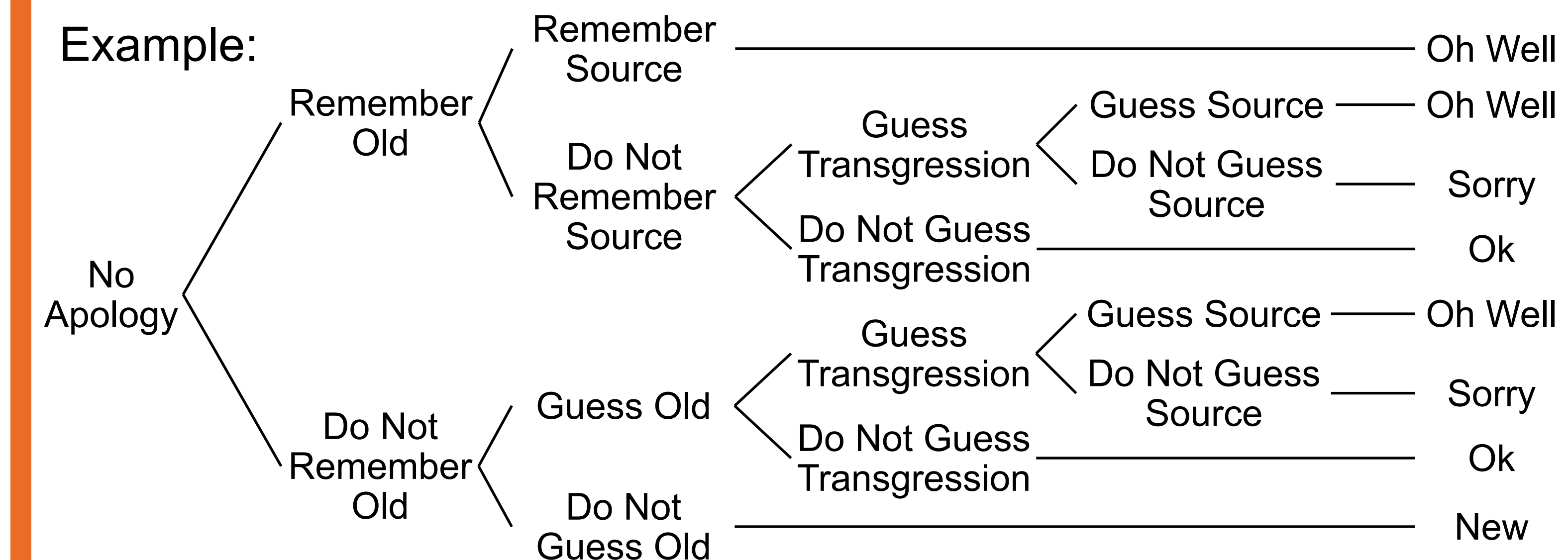
2) Test Phase

Old/New Distinction (36 trials)



Multinomial Model of Source Memory

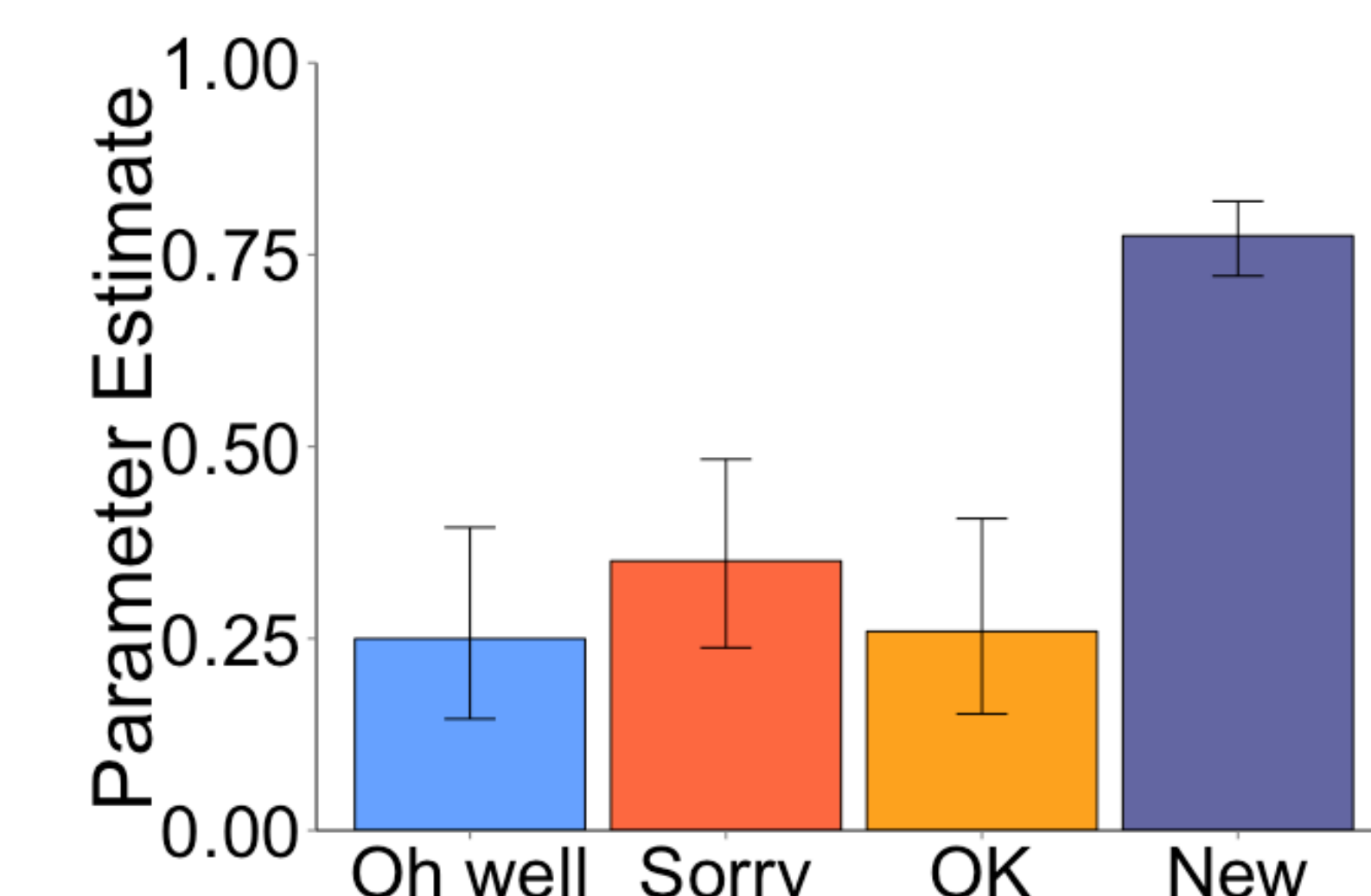
Multinomial source memory models permit independent measurement of old-new discrimination and source memory recognition while taking into account guessing.



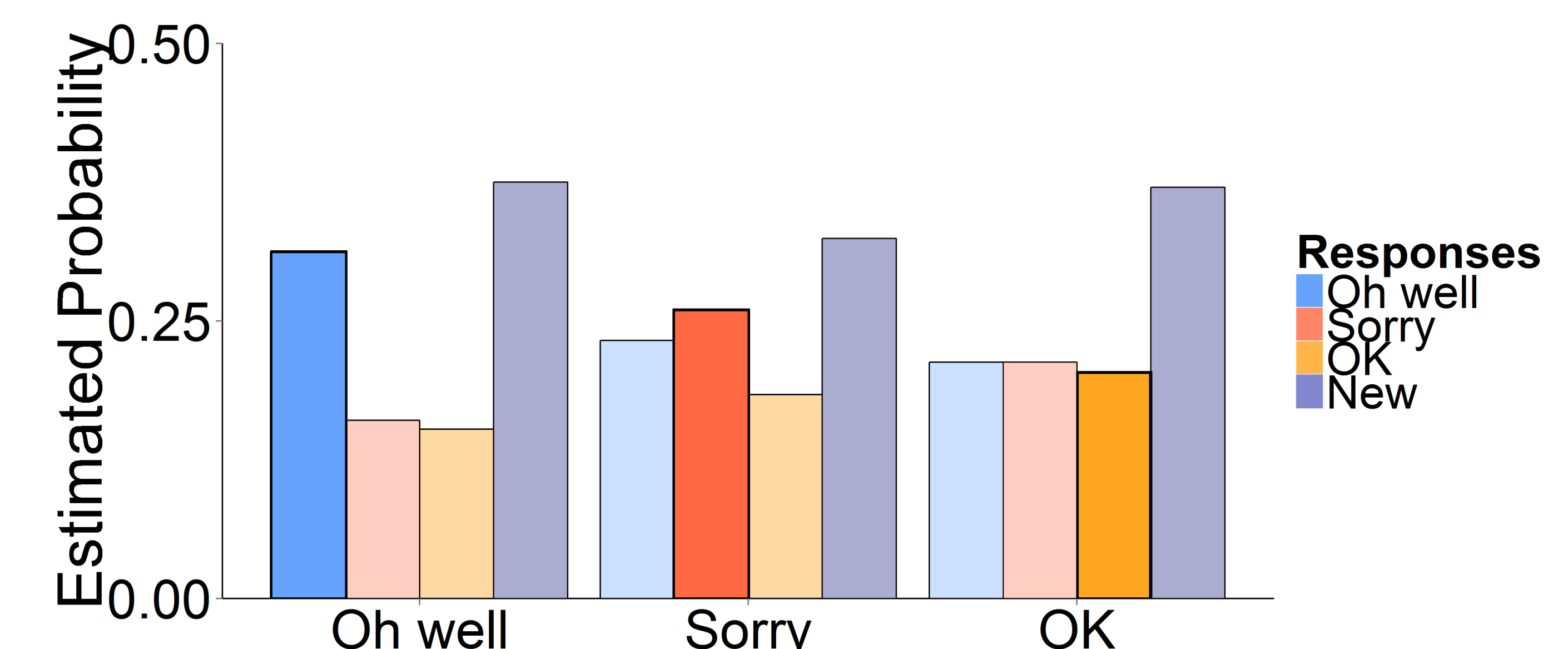
Model comparisons were used to examine whether parameters were significantly different from each other.

Results

Accounting for guessing, children’s ability to distinguish between old faces did not differ depending on condition.



Yet, children were better at remembering when characters who transgressed said, “Oh well,” than when characters who transgressed said, “I’m sorry,” and characters who did not transgress said, “OK.”



Unapologetic transgressors might represent a continued threat: Remembering that an individual did not say, “I’m sorry,” could help children avoid that person in the future.