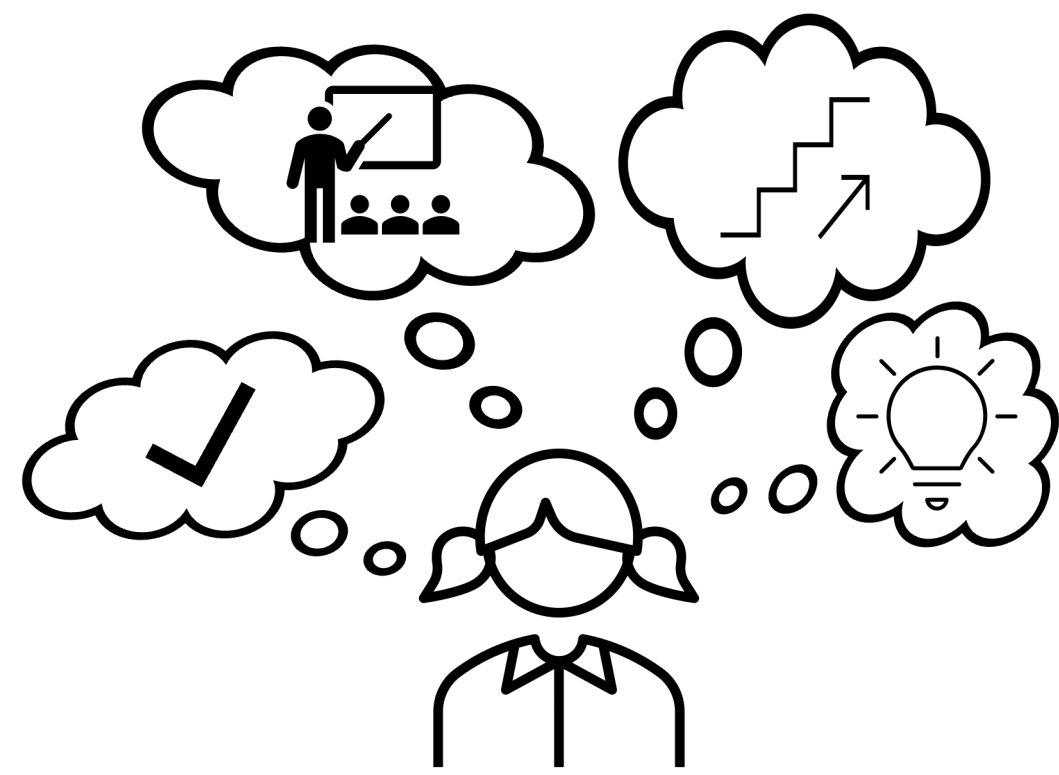


Background

Do people consider the expected internal cognitive experience, specifically *insight*, when deciding what tasks to pursue?



Children have insight experiences as early as infancy, and can recognize insight in others by age 6 (Prenevost et al., 2025; Haugen et al., 2024)

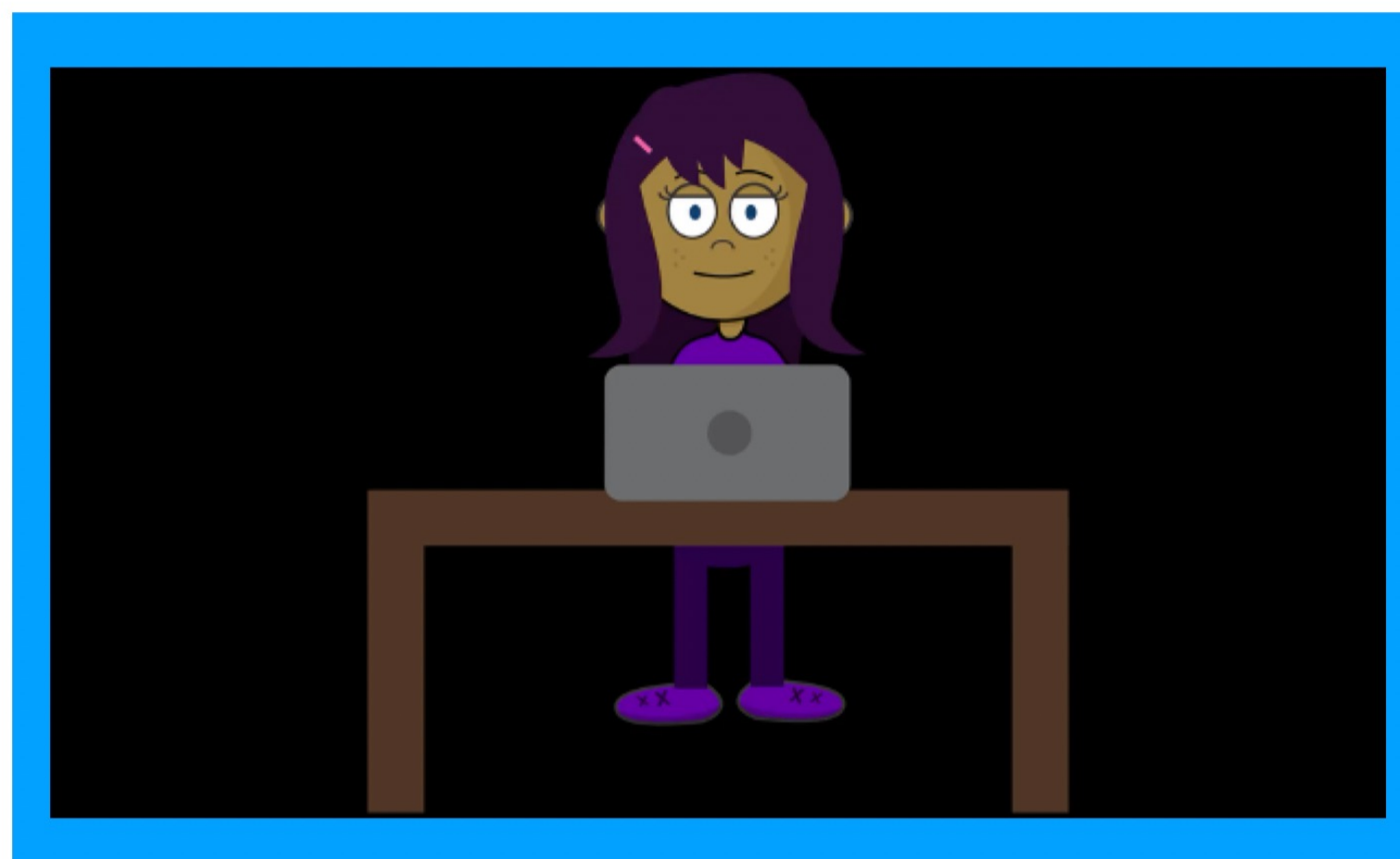
There is some evidence that adults prefer insight (Mercier et al., 2025), but there are confounds like positive affect and confidence (Kounios & Beeman, 2014)

Do people prefer the cognitive dynamics involved in insight when removing other possible confounds?

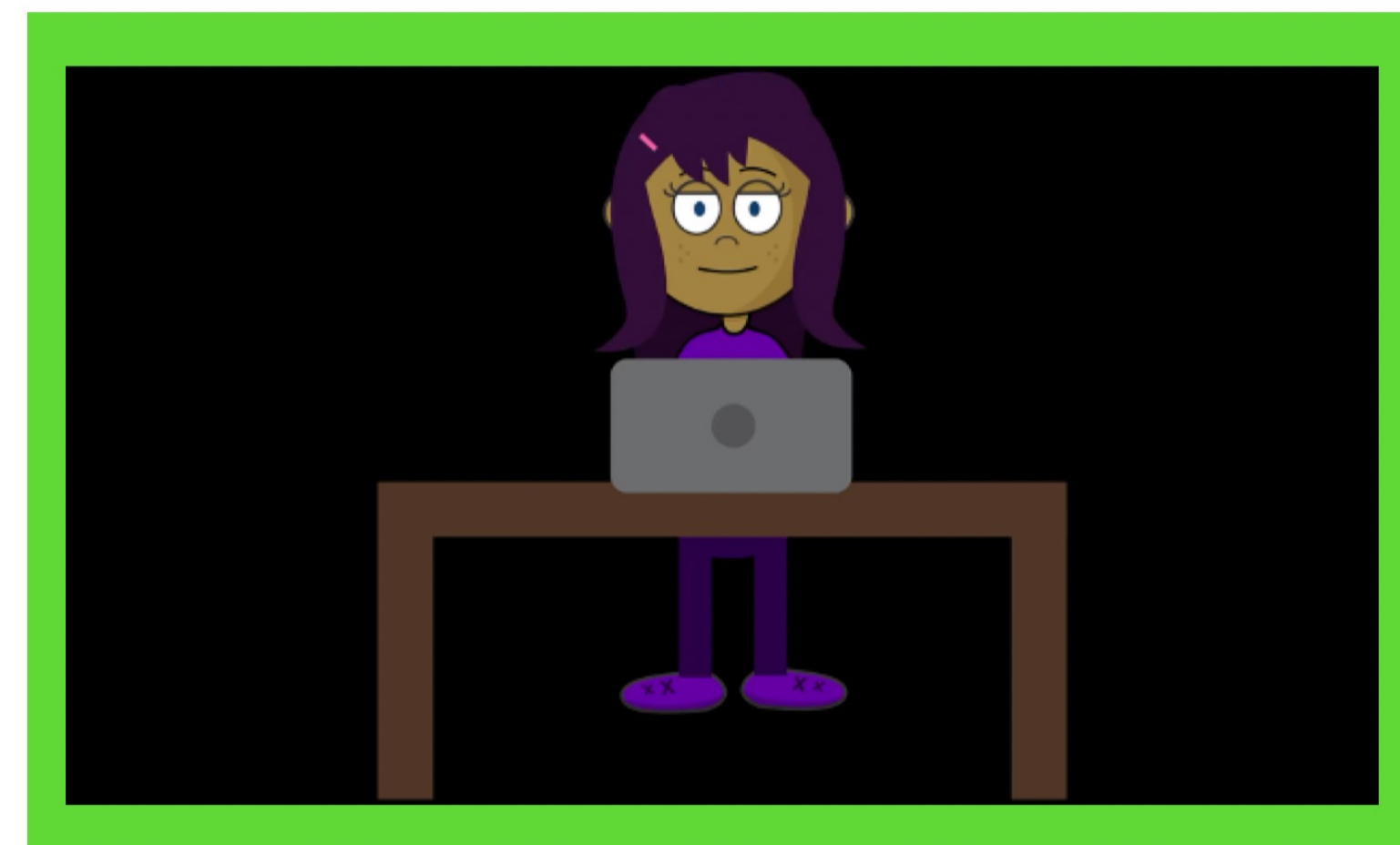
How does the preference for insight vary across contexts and development?

Stimuli Development

Participants see two videos that differ only in problem solving dynamics



Insight - "All at Once"



Incremental - "Step by Step"

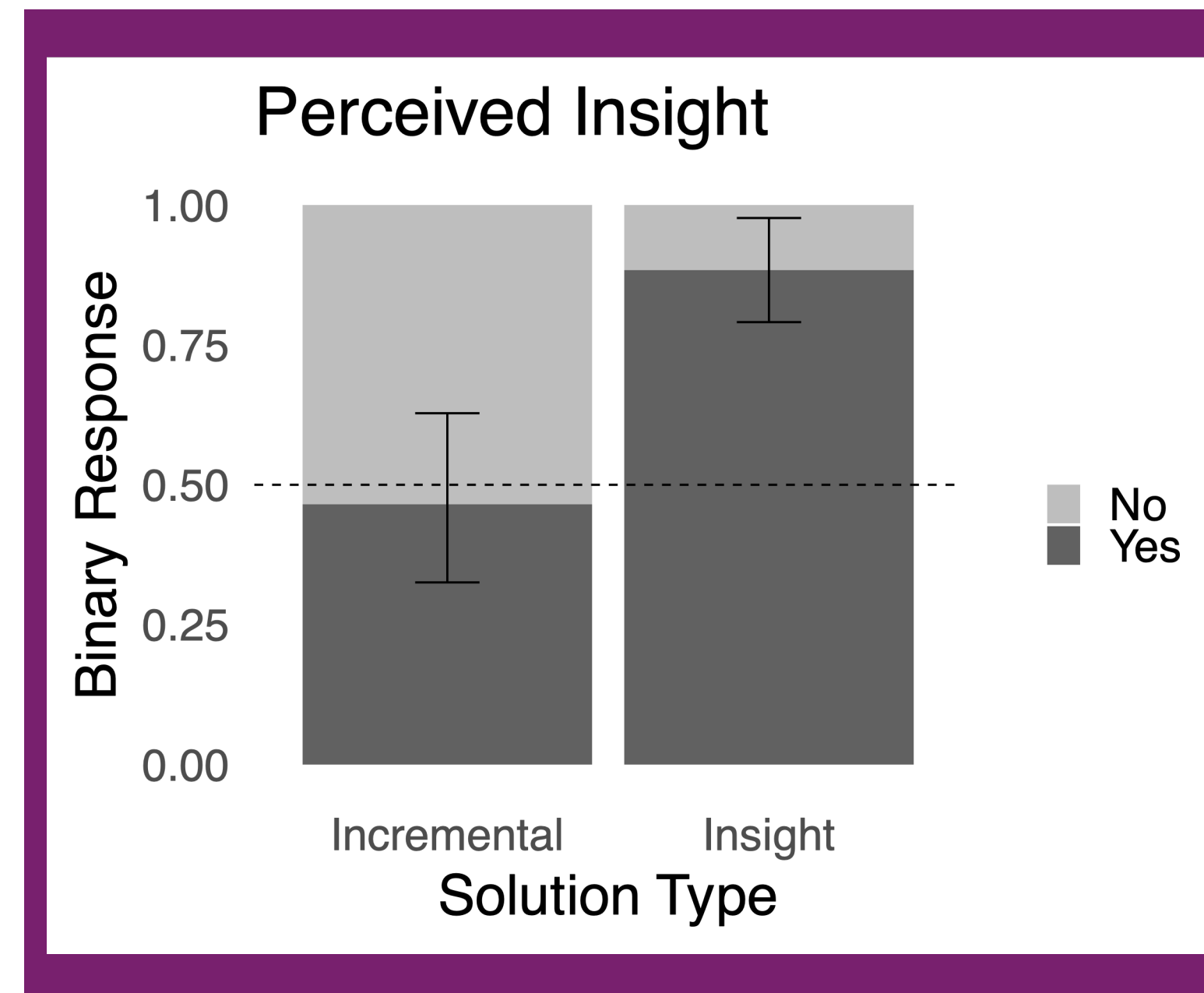


Segment 1:	Segment 2:	Segment 3:	Segment 4:	Segment 5:
The character decides to begin the puzzle in front of them and completes the first few steps	The character stops to think for a few seconds	The character finds out the solution	The character completes the last few steps of the puzzle	The character narrates how they solved the puzzle
Let's see what's going on here. That makes sense, I have to do this. Maybe I'll try this...and then that...	Wait --- Hmmm....	I've got it!	And then I'll do that... and then it's done!	The answer just popped into my head all at once.
Insight				
Wait --- Hmmm....	Let's see what's going on here. That makes sense, I have to do this. Maybe I'll try this...and then that...	And then I'll do that... and then it's done!	I solved it!	I figured out the answer one step at a time.
Incremental				

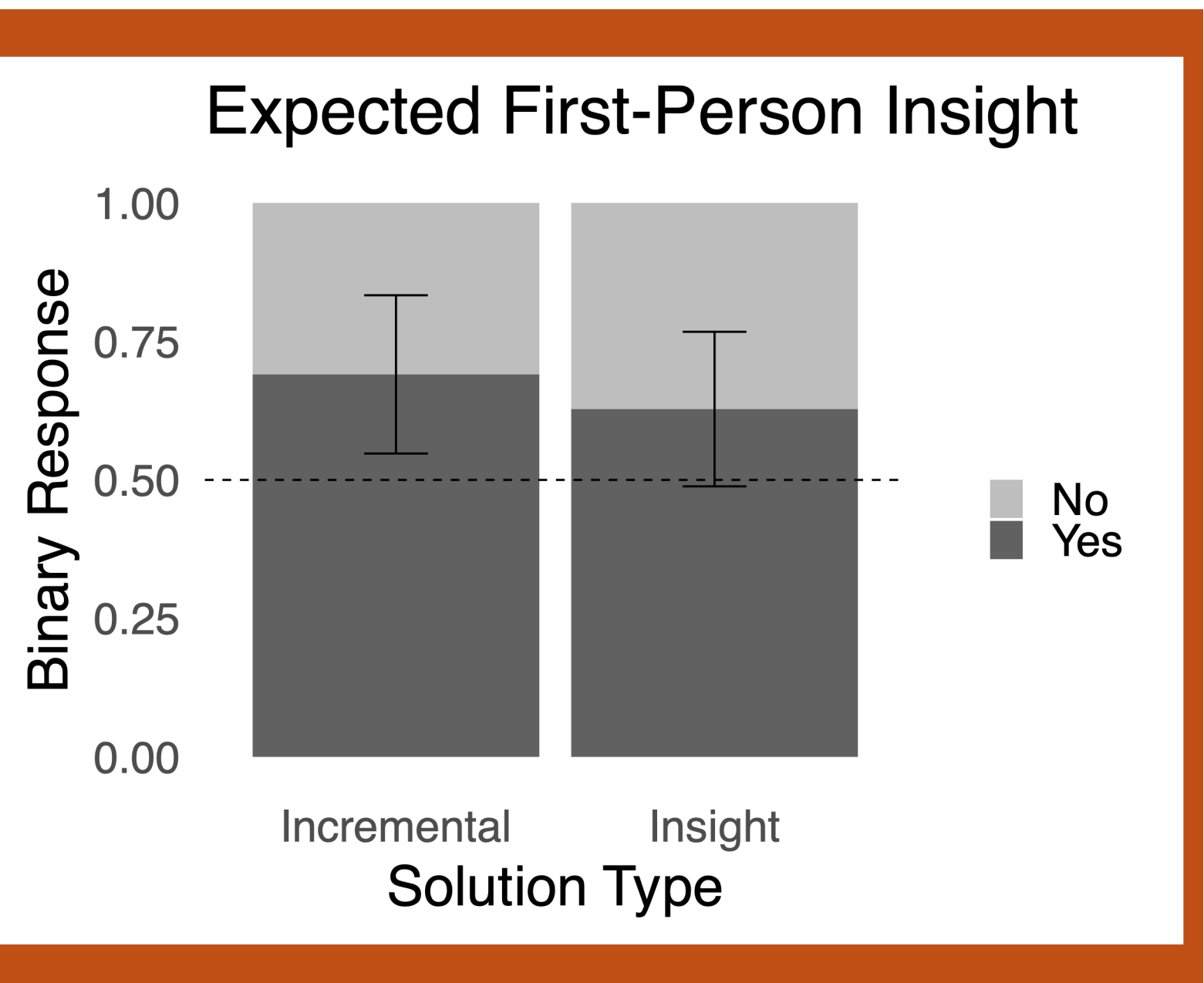
Validating Stimuli with Children and Adults

Children (N=43, 6-8 years old) reliably identify insight in others. However, they do not reliably generalize it to their own experience.

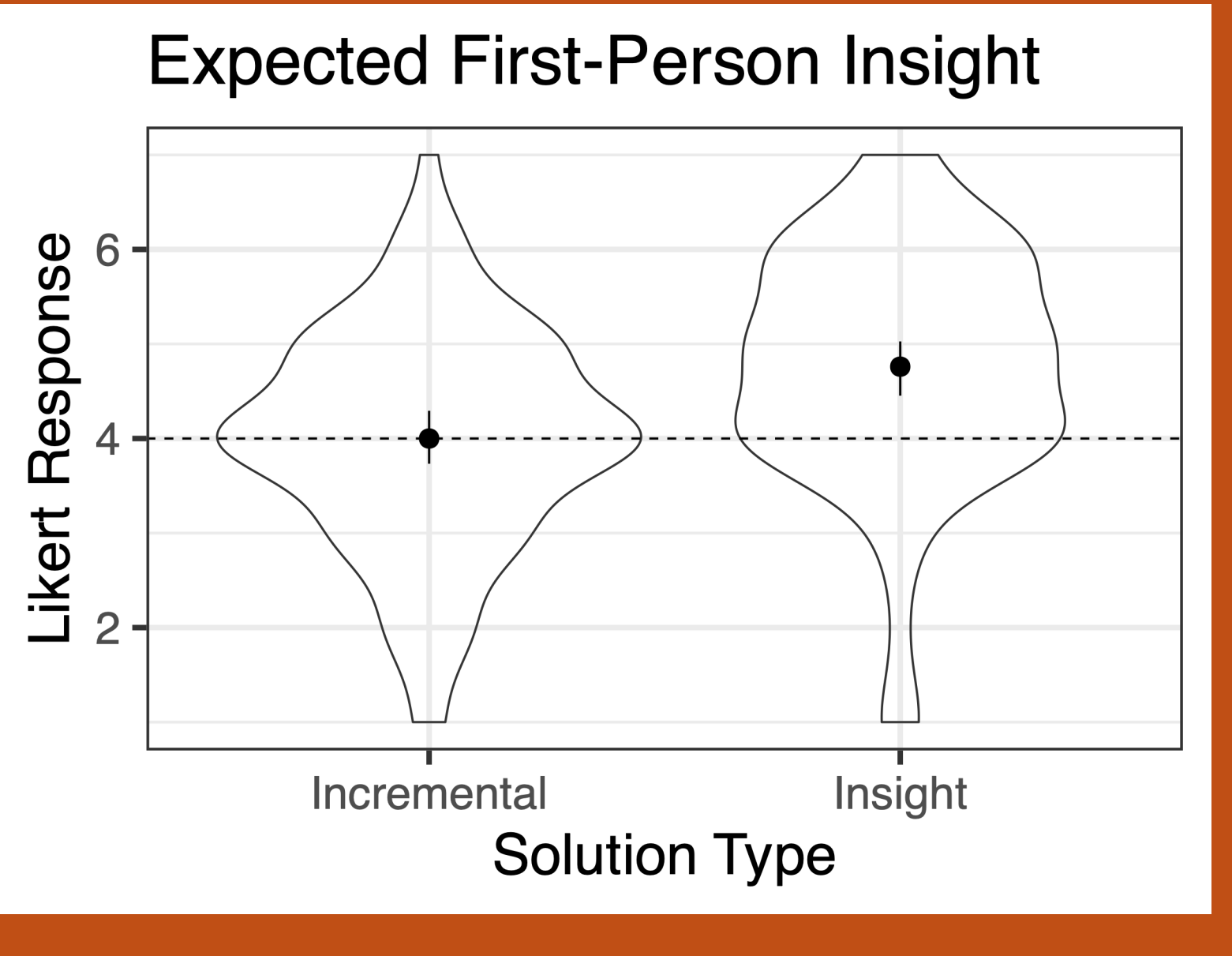
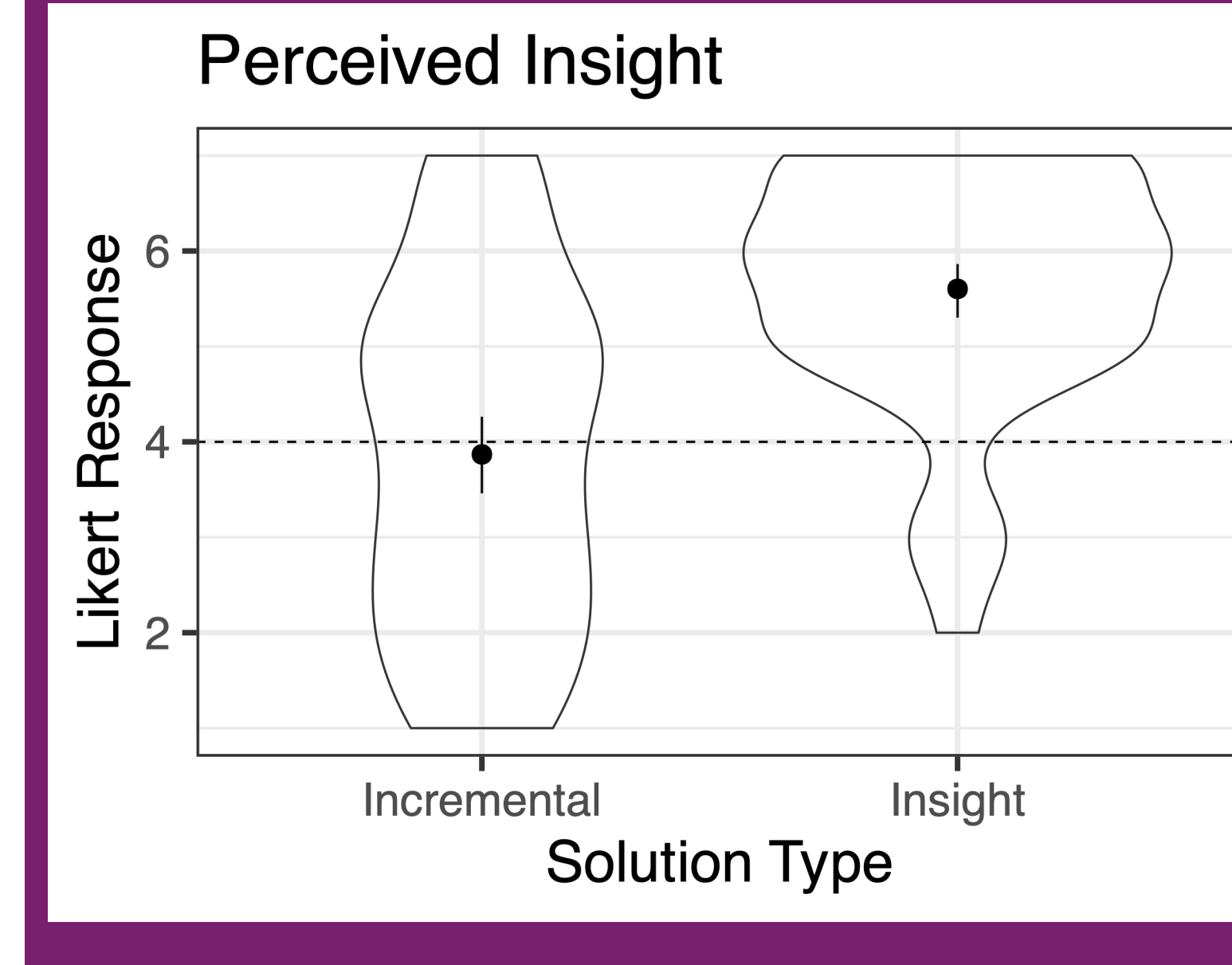
Perceived Insight: "Do you think this person had an Aha! experience?"



Expected First-Person Insight: "Do you think you would have an Aha! experience if you tried this puzzle?"



Adults (N=157) reliably identify insight in others AND generalize it to their own experience.



Main Study (data collection in progress)

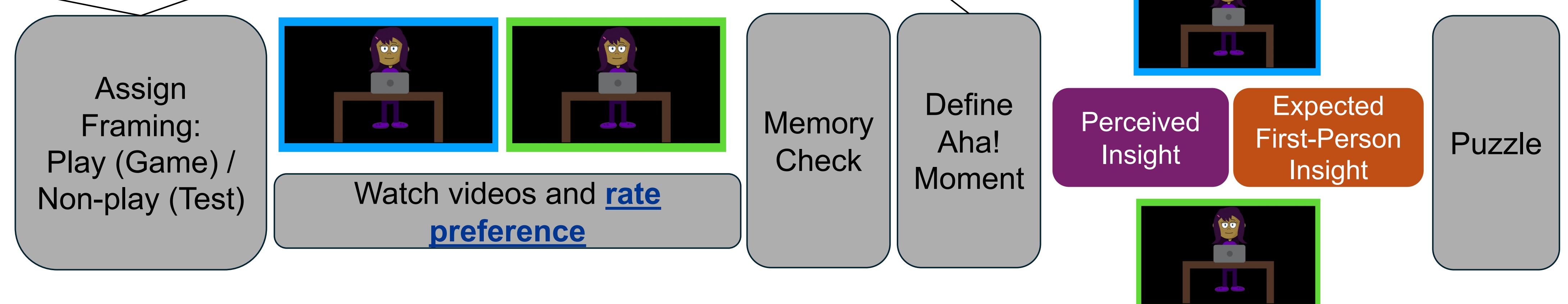
How do context and age influence preference for insight?

Participants: 120 children (6-11), Children Helping Science
120 adults (18+), Prolific

"You are going to watch someone play two games"

"You are going to watch someone take two tests"

An Aha! experience is when you have a new idea that comes to your mind out of nowhere, all of a sudden!



Summary

- Developed a novel stimulus set that isolates insight problem solving dynamics
- Children and adults can reliably identify the difference between the two videos
- Stimuli will be used in future studies to look at insight preference across contexts and development

References

Haugen, J., Prenevost, M. H., Nilsen, I. B. R., & Reber, R. (2024). First insights into infants' and children's aha-experiences: A parent report study. *Cognitive Development*, 69, 101397. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2023.101397>
Kounios, J., & Beeman, M. (2014). The Cognitive Neuroscience of Insight. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(Volume 65, 2014), 71–93. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115154>
Mercier, M., Garsmeur, A., & Mercier, H. (2025). The appeal of insight: Why riddles and whodunits captivate us. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000773>
Prenevost, M. H., Nilsen, I. B. R., Bølstad, E., Pons, F., Harris, P. L., & Reber, R. (2025). Young children's understanding and experience of insight. *Developmental Psychology*, 61(3), 556–571. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001807>