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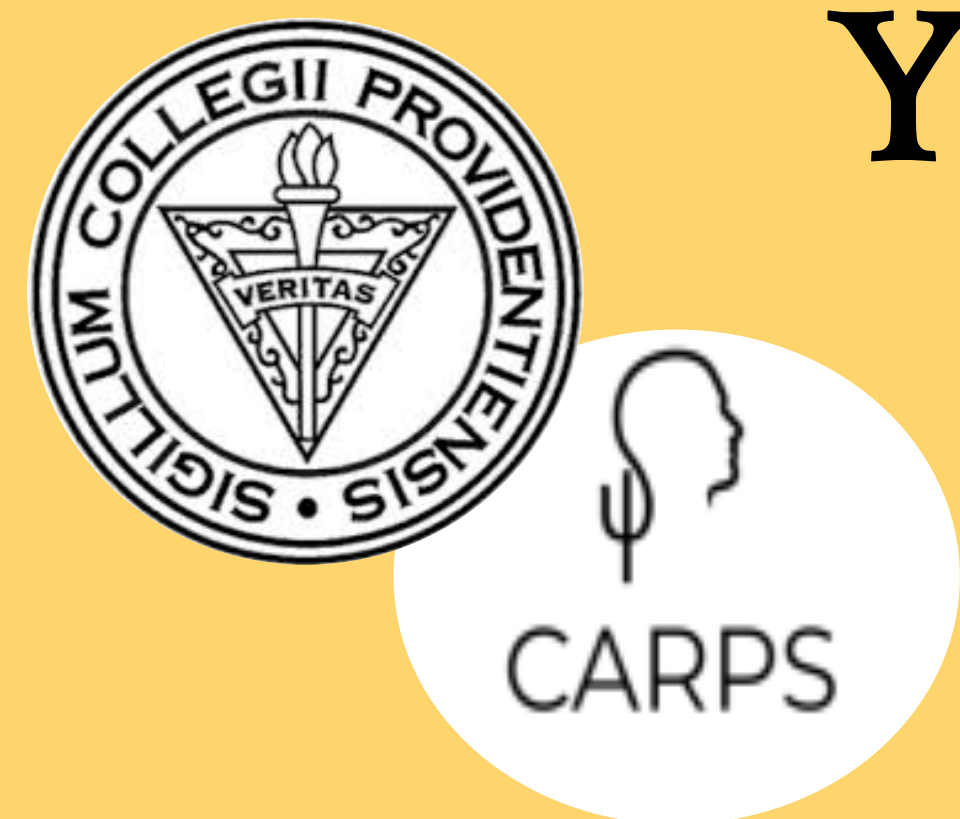
Young Children and Parents Do Not Prefer Magical Solutions to Magical Problems

Julia Culhane

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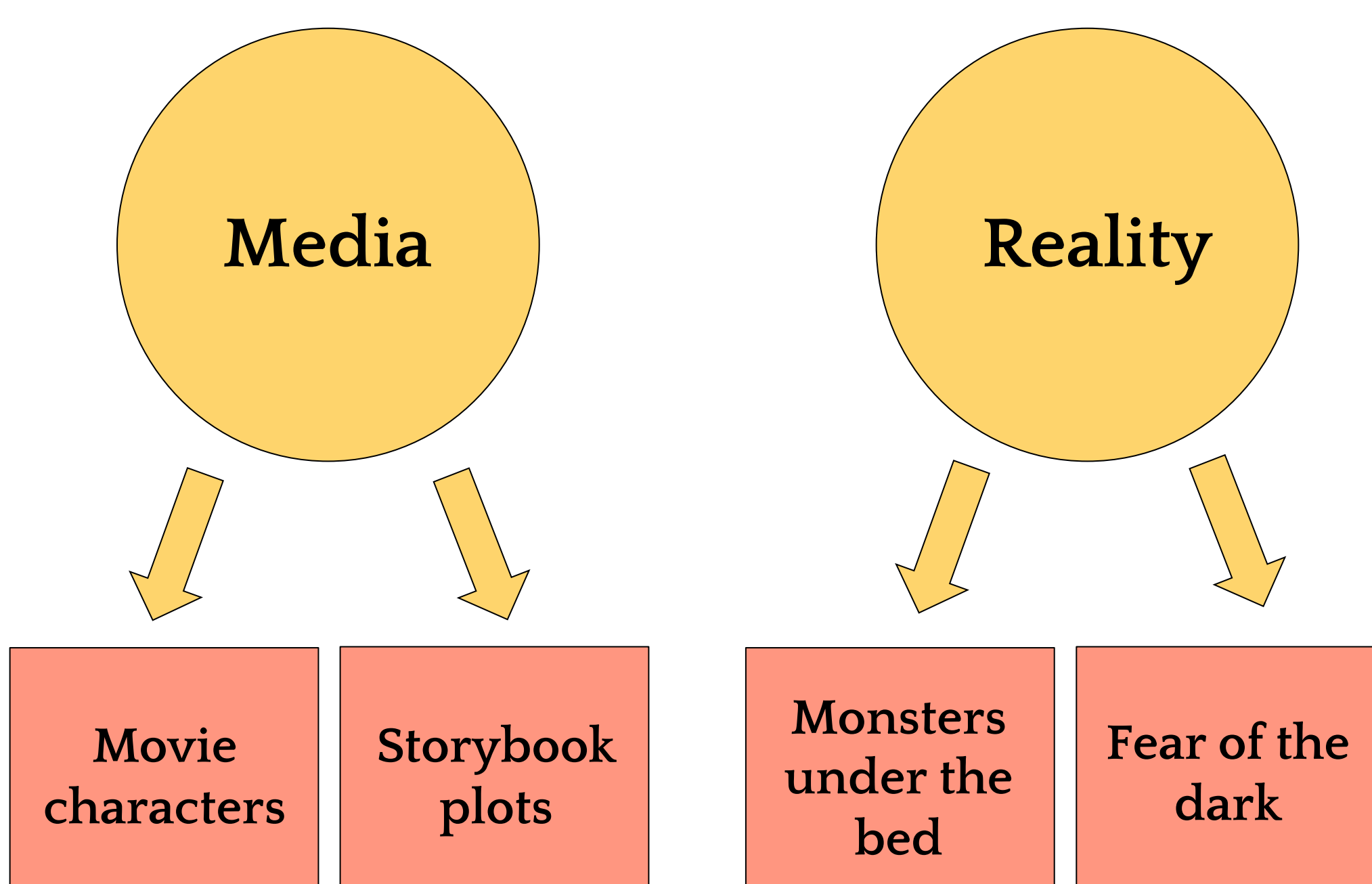
Young Children & Parents Do Not Prefer Magical Solutions to Magical Problems

Julia Culhane

Mentor: Dr. Jennifer Van Reet

Introduction

Children are exposed to magical problems in their everyday lives.



How do children think about the imaginary world they are exposed to?

Children's Cognitive Abilities

How do children cognitively view imaginary entities?

Parent-Child Interactions

How do parents influence their child's cognitive views?

Previous research shows that:

- Children can differentiate between fantasy and reality
- Children can transfer information to & from similar contexts
- Children can separate fictional genres from each other
- Fantastical elements can increase students' learning in school
- Children may have a reality bias based on faster response times

Our Research Questions:

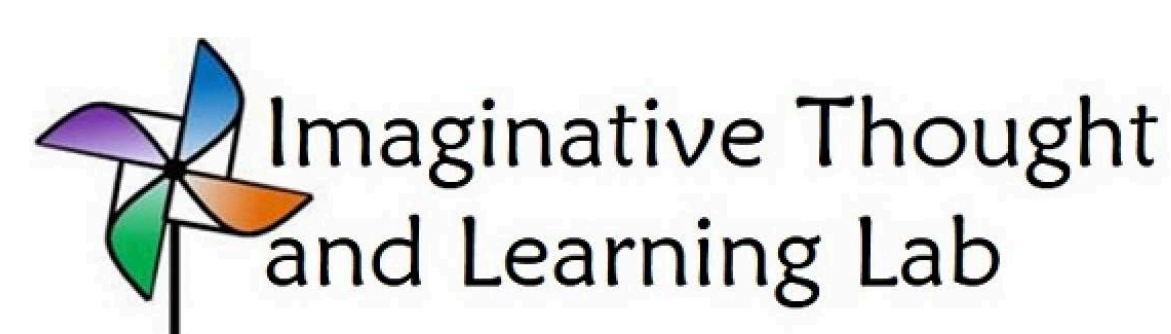
- When problem solving, do children prefer magical solutions to magical problems?
- How do parents influence their children's preferences for reality over fantasy?

Method & Materials

Recruitment: Children's Museum & Local Preschools

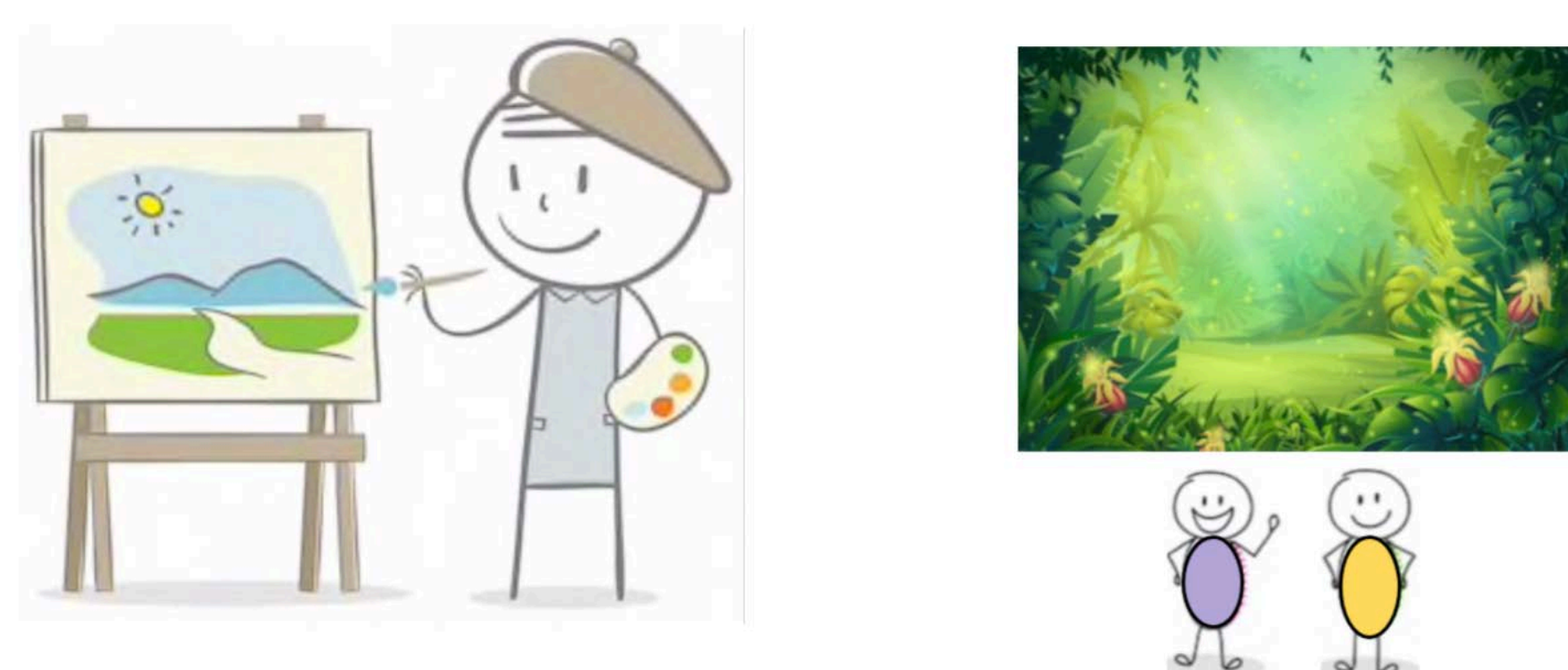


We recruited through PC's Imaginative Thought & Learning Lab led by Dr. Jennifer Van Reet



We had 55 children, 65% female between the ages of 3-6 years old

Materials: Two story books with real & magical plots



Casey's Painting The Enchanted Forest

In each story, the main character faced four problems that were either real or magical. The child was prompted with each problem and asked to pick a solution. We wanted to see if children had a preference for real or imaginary depending on the stories we told them.

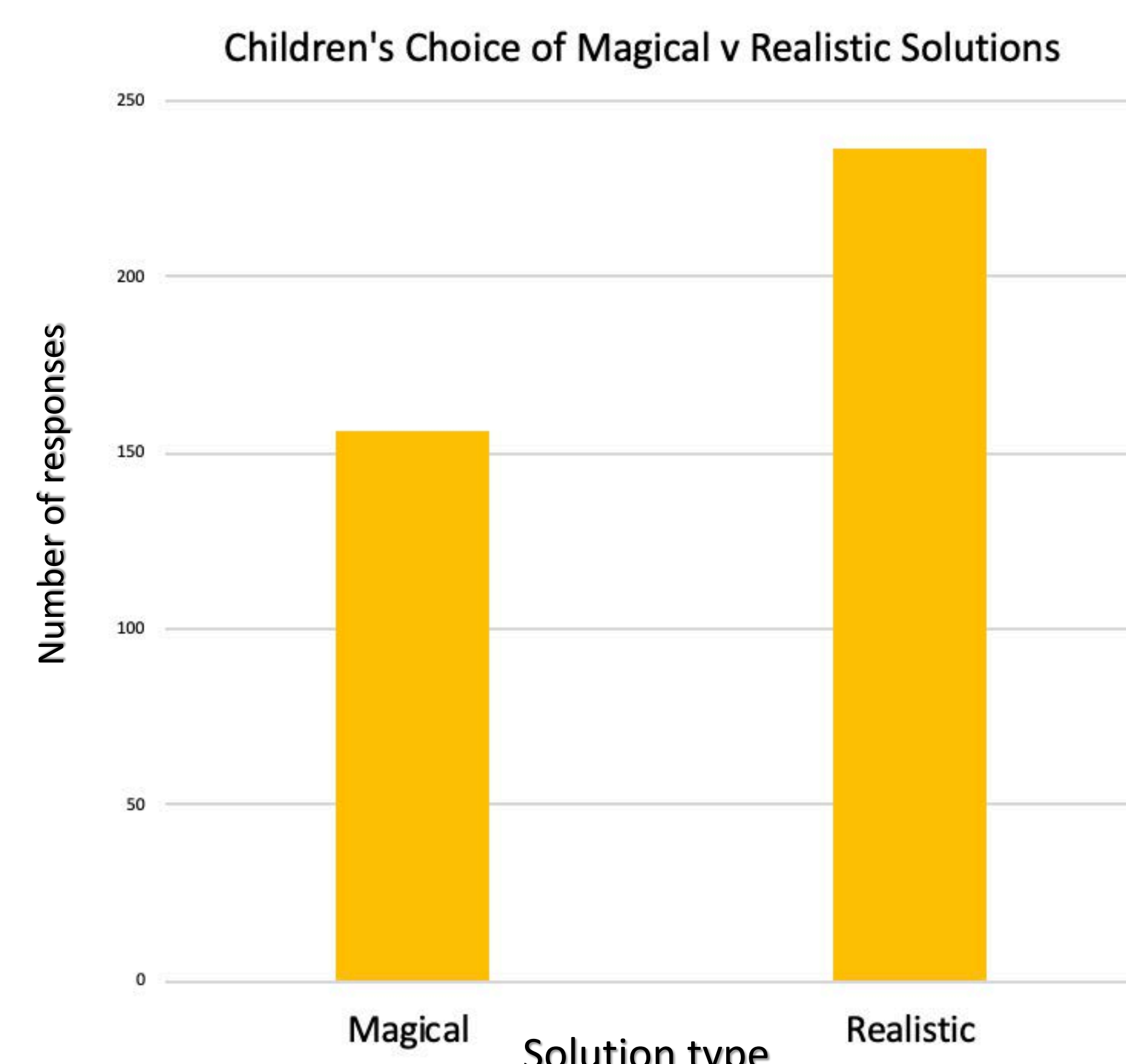
Materials: Online parent survey on Qualtrics

qualtrics^{XM} We sought to find the answers of two questions from parents:

- Has your child ever experienced a magical problem?
- What type of solution did you use to solve their magical problem?

Results

Do children prefer magical solutions to magical problems?



Children who chose magical solutions in one story often chose them in the other

Age was negatively correlated with magical solutions in the real book

Do parents influence their children's preferences for reality over fantasy?

Only 41% of parents could recall at least one magical problem

Parents who reported magical solutions were more likely to be magical thinkers themselves

Conclusions

We found that:

Preschoolers prefer realistic solutions to real problems

Parents that were more fantasy oriented were more likely to offer more magical solutions

Possible next steps:

Parents' accuracy in recalling past events should be validated

What would preschool-aged children prefer when they are literally living through a magical problem?

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