UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Can you help me? Using others to offload cognition

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0nq5n346

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 45(45)

Authors

Armitage, Kristy L
Redshaw, Jonathan

Publication Date

2023

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Can you help me? Using others to offload cognition

Kristy Armitage
The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Jonathan Redshaw
University of Queensland, St Lucia, Queensland, Australia

Abstract

One of the most ancient and universal forms of cognitive offloading is the outsourcing of cognitive operations onto other humans. We explored mechanisms underlying this ability by designing a novel computerised memory task where participants memorised target locations and recalled them after a brief delay. Next, they watched two virtual people compete in another memory game, where one demonstrated a reliable memory, and the other demonstrated an unreliable memory. Finally, participants completed the initial memory task again, with either the reliable-memory or unreliable-memory person being available to help with recall on each trial. Through observation and without direct instruction, participants acquired beliefs about the virtual people's cognitive proficiencies and could readily draw upon these beliefs to inform offloading decisions. Participants were more likely to seek help from the reliable-memory person, and this tendency interacted with factors known to drive cognitive offloading more generally, like task difficulty and unaided cognitive ability.

In M. Goldwater, F. K. Anggoro, B. K. Hayes, & D. C. Ong (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 45th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society.* ©2023 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).