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Individual Differences In Children's Cognitive Ability

And The Effect Of Differing Supportive Memory Interview

Techniques.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Dedicated in Loving memory of

My dear Brother-in-law

The Late Leonard Adams

Gone but never forgotten

Also to my sister Brigitte and her children, Belinda, Darren and Alicia.

Your courage, strength and enthusiasm for life, always have been,

and continue to be, my greatest inspiration.

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Abstract

The following study examined the way in which children's individual differences on two dimensions of cognitive ability were able to predict their performance in response to one of four supportive memory interviews. Sixty-eight children aged between five years and seven years eight months old took part in a fun science event at school. Children were subsequently assessed on two measures of cognitive ability: gestural representation and memory strategy use (recall and behaviour). Children were interviewed about the event 10 weeks after it had taken place with either, a standard memory interview, a photo interview (including a distractor photo prompt), an interview which initially involved them mentally reinstating the context in which the event took place, or one in which context was mentally reinstated while viewing context photos. Children that were interviewed with photos reported significantly more correct information than children that were interviewed with mental context reinstatement alone. Despite this, children interviewed in the mental context reinstatement interview condition were still equally as accurate in their reports as those interviewed with photographs. There was no difference between the interview conditions in the numbers of errors children reported, additionally an increase in errors was not found in children exposed to the distractor photo. Children's individual differences in gestural representation and memory strategy recall and behaviour were significantly related to the amount children reported at the memory interview, but were not predictive of which children were able to report more information in response to any one of the interview conditions.