

# Why Do Older Adults Think Forgotten Information is Less Important than Remembered Information?



## Introduction

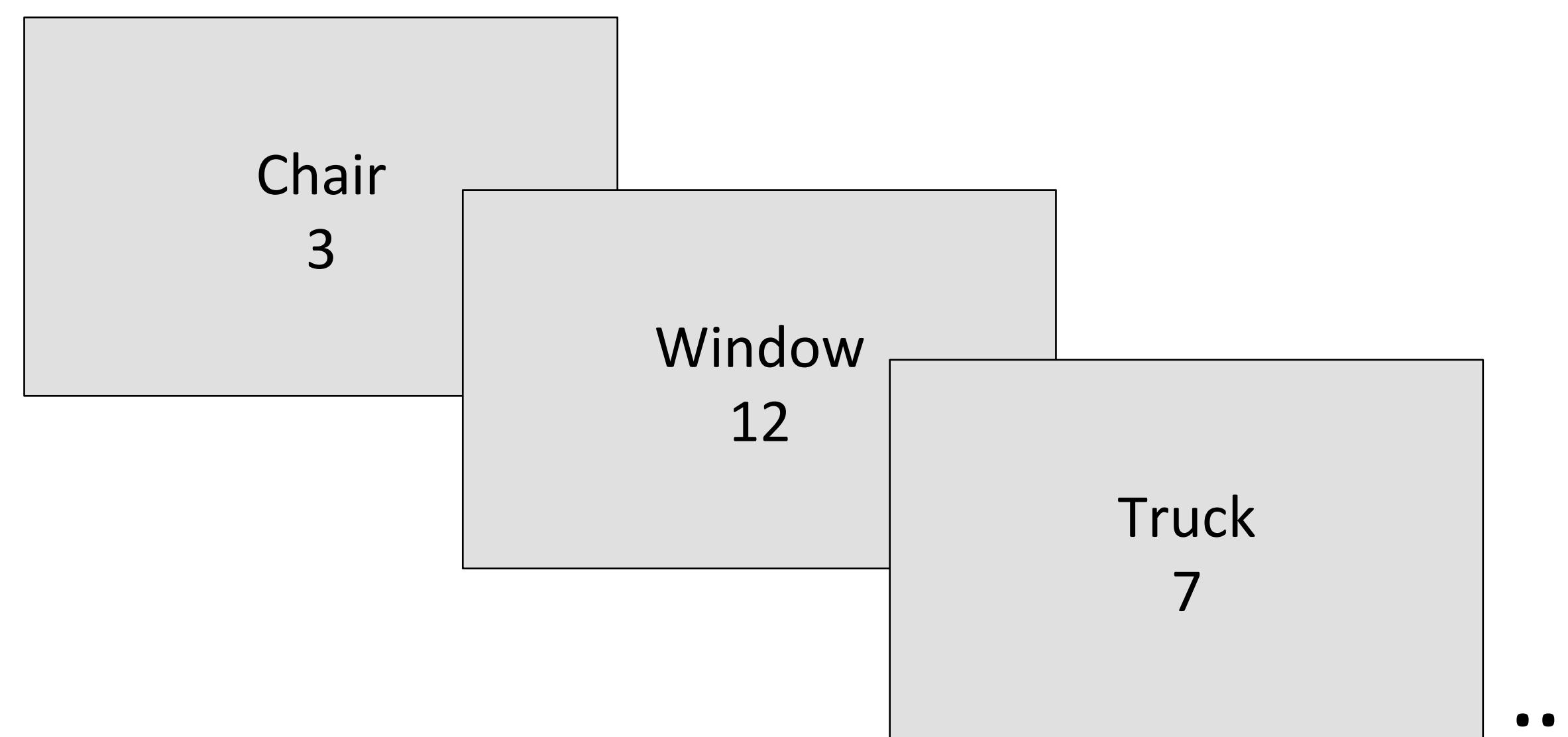
- Every day people are presented with a lot of information, some of which is important (e.g., remembering a doctor's appointment) and some of which is unimportant (e.g., what you ate for lunch).
  - Unfortunately, some of the information once deemed important will be forgotten.
  - Forgetting important information can be particularly problematic for older adults. For instance, if an older adult forgets to take his medication there can be very serious consequences for his health.
- Researchers have demonstrated that young adults show a bias such that they think that forgotten information is unimportant (dubbed the *forgetting bias*; Castel et al., 2012).
- Recent work from our lab has demonstrated that older adults also show the forgetting bias.
- We had two goals with the present research:
  - First, given that the forgetting bias has only been observed with older adults in one experiment, we wanted to replicate this effect to ensure that it is robust.
  - Second, we investigated a potential reason why older adults show the forgetting bias.

## Procedure

▪ **Participants:** 40 TCU students ( $M_{age} = 20.00$ ) and 40 older adults ( $M_{age} = 72.73$ ) from the community

▪ **Materials & Procedure:**

**1. Study:** Four lists. Each list contained 12 words and each word was paired with a value from 1 to 12. The value indicated how important it was to remember that word.



**2. Free-recall test:** After studying each list, participants recalled as many words as possible.

**3. Surprise test:**

Memory for past test (MPT) judgment

Did you recall this word earlier?

Chair

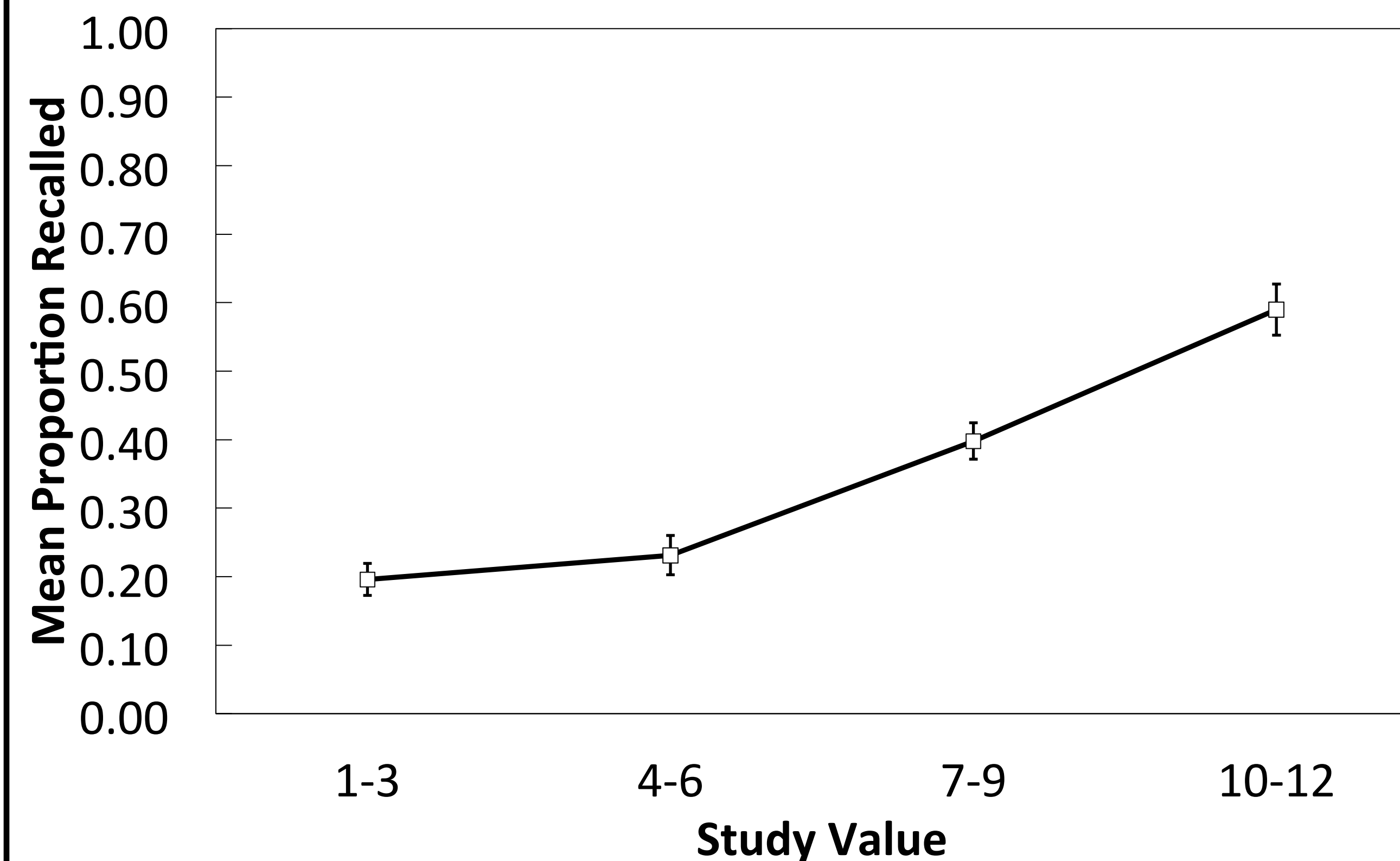
Value Recall

What value was associated with this word (1-12)?

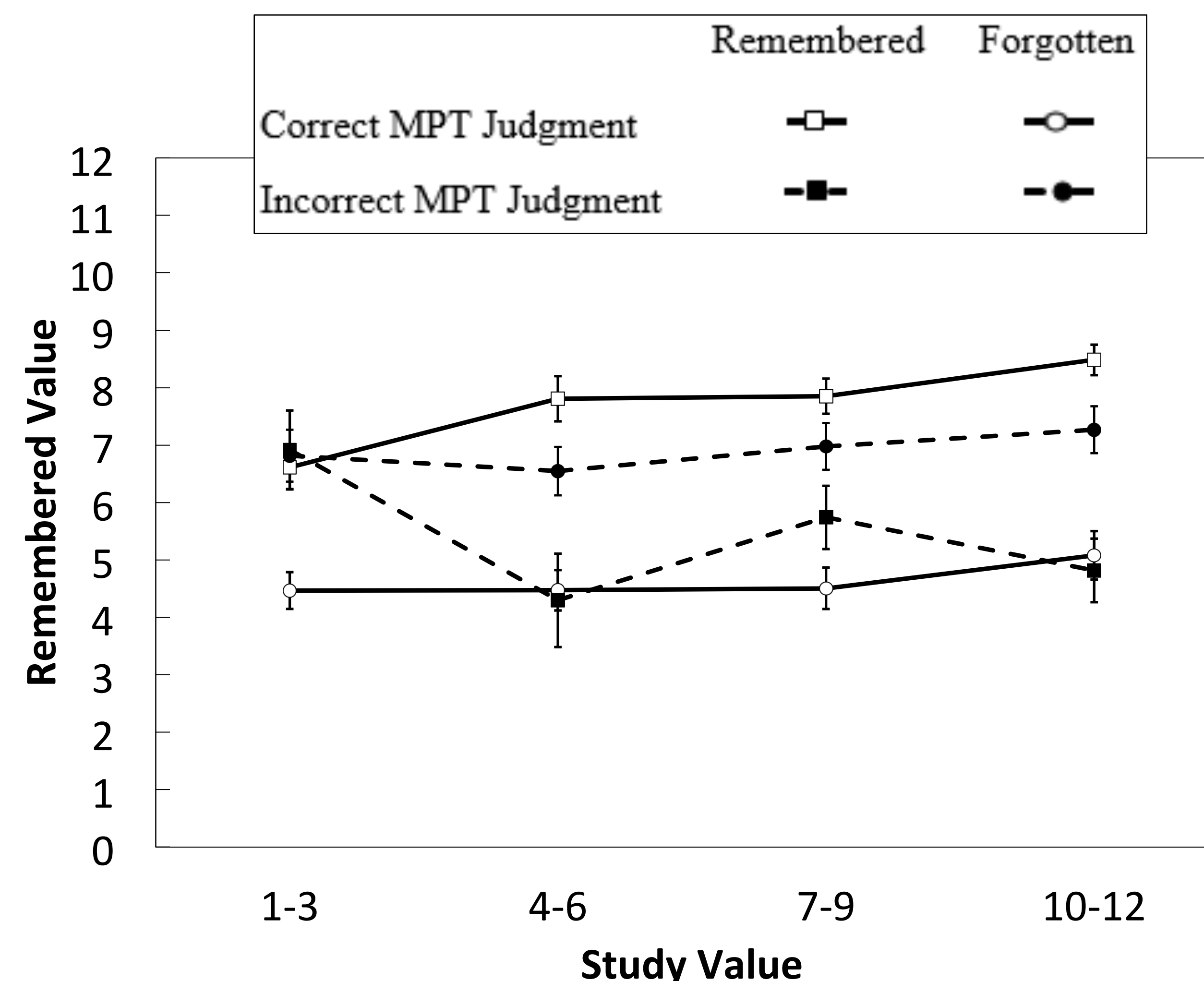
Chair

## Results: Older Adults

### Word Recall



### Value Recall



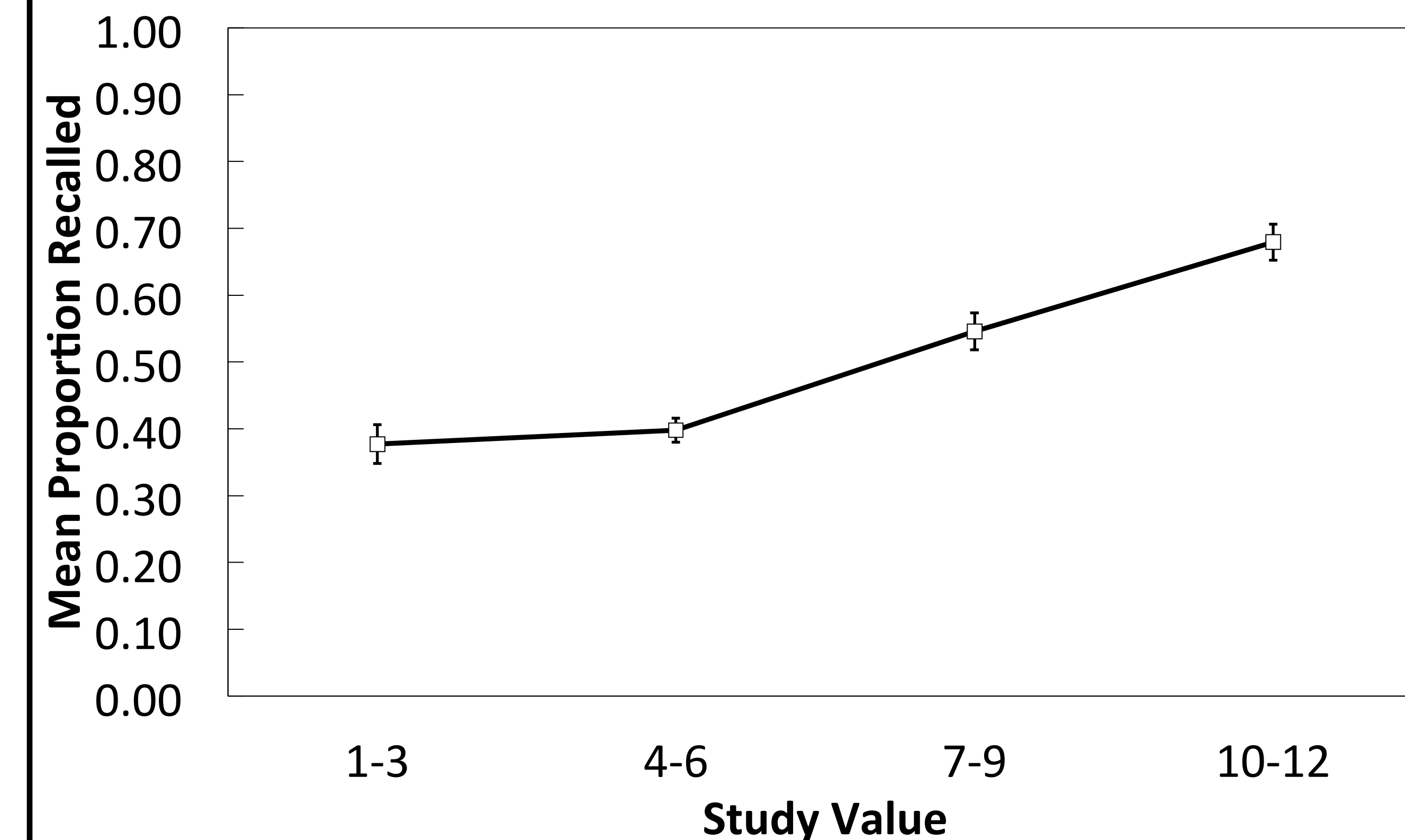
Cognitive Task Scores for Older and Younger Adults

	Older Adults	Younger Adults
Pattern Comparison	46.30% (1.27)	68.90% (1.82)
Letter Comparison	43.99% (1.60)	61.90% (1.76)
Vocabulary Test	55.76% (2.71)	40.6% (1.41)

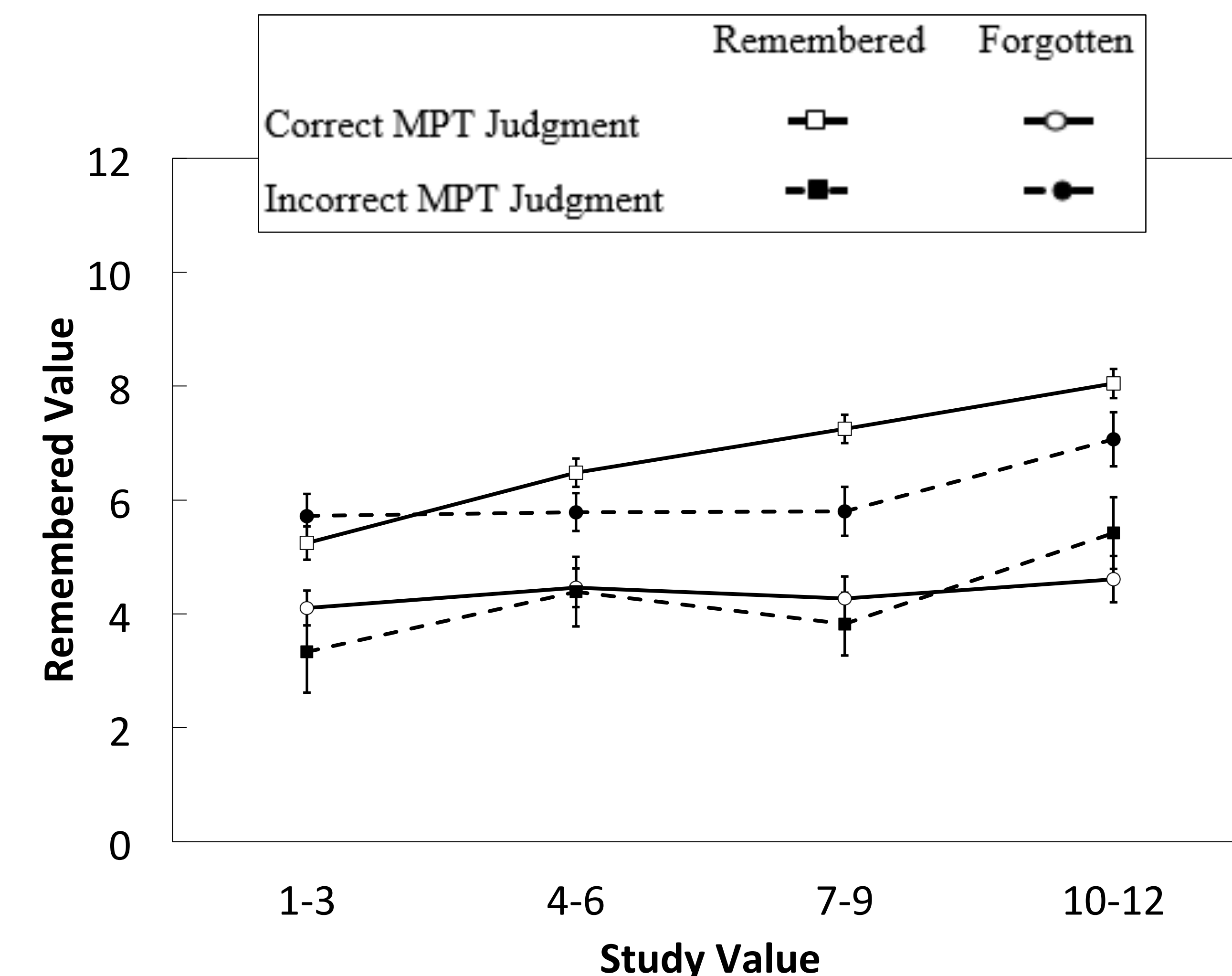
Note. Standard errors of the mean are in parentheses.

## Results: Younger Adults

### Word Recall



### Value Recall



## Conclusions

- We replicated the forgetting bias effect with older and younger adults.
- People's beliefs about their memory for prior recall tests contributed to why they showed the forgetting bias.
- Future research should investigate how this bias influences people's behavior as well as how it generalizes to more naturalistic materials.