

Parents protect languages from oversimplification by children during language evolution.

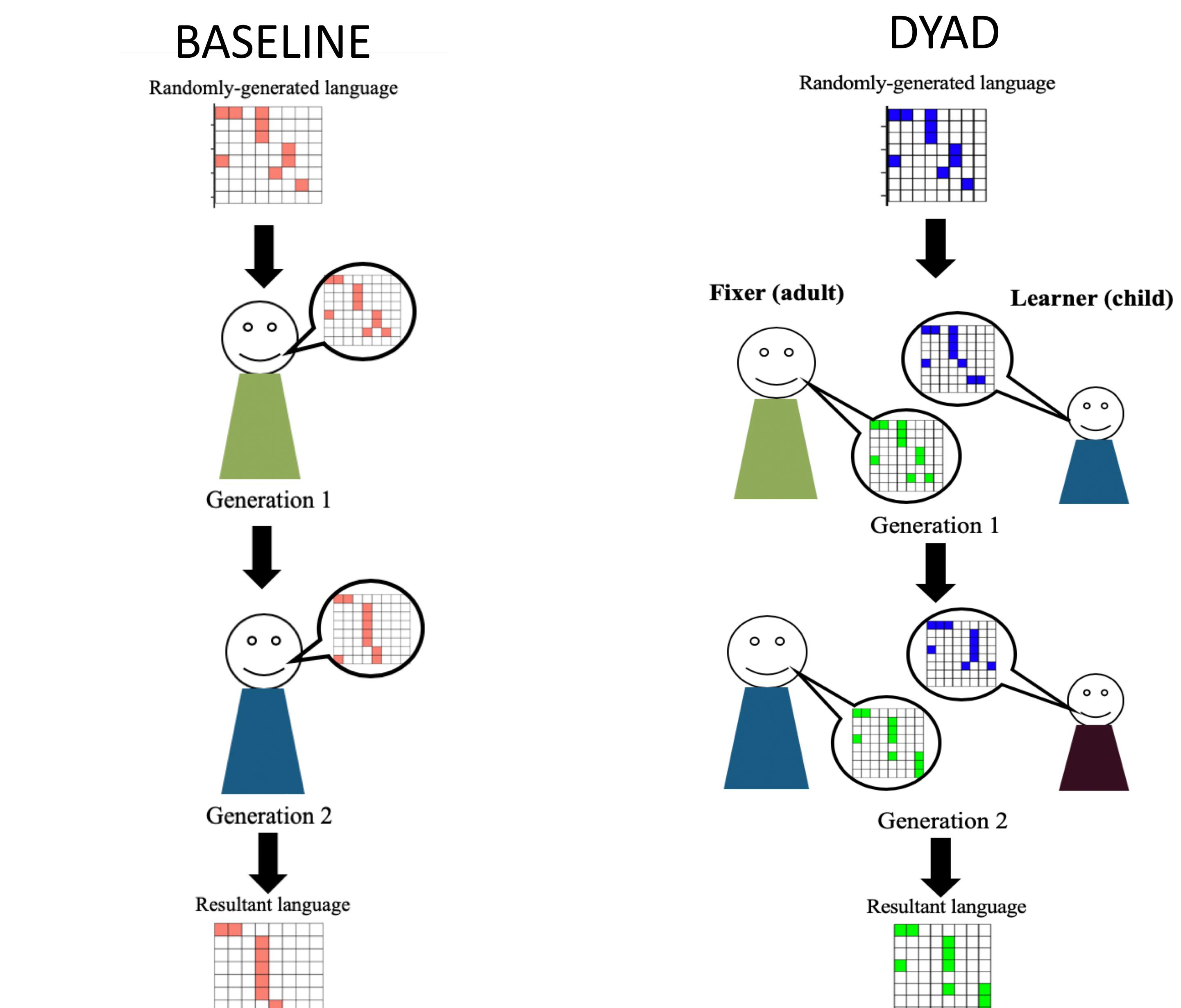
Interlocutors preserve complexity in language

 **Madeline Meyers, Dan Yurovsky**

INTRO

- Why do languages change, aside from acquiring new vocabulary?
- **Transmissibility** pressure: the language needs to be **learnable**, and therefore **simple**.
- Early language learners have greater **transmissibility** biases—what protects against oversimplification?
- Language learning is an active, social process: involving feedback from those who are more knowledgeable in the language (e.g., parents)
- Implicit and explicit feedback/correction have a significant effect on the language learning process, and may affect language transmission and evolution on a larger scale

METHODS



Adults:

- N= 480 mTurkers
- 40 chains, 12 generations

Children (in progress):

- N= 61 children (6;0-8;0) from MSI Chicago

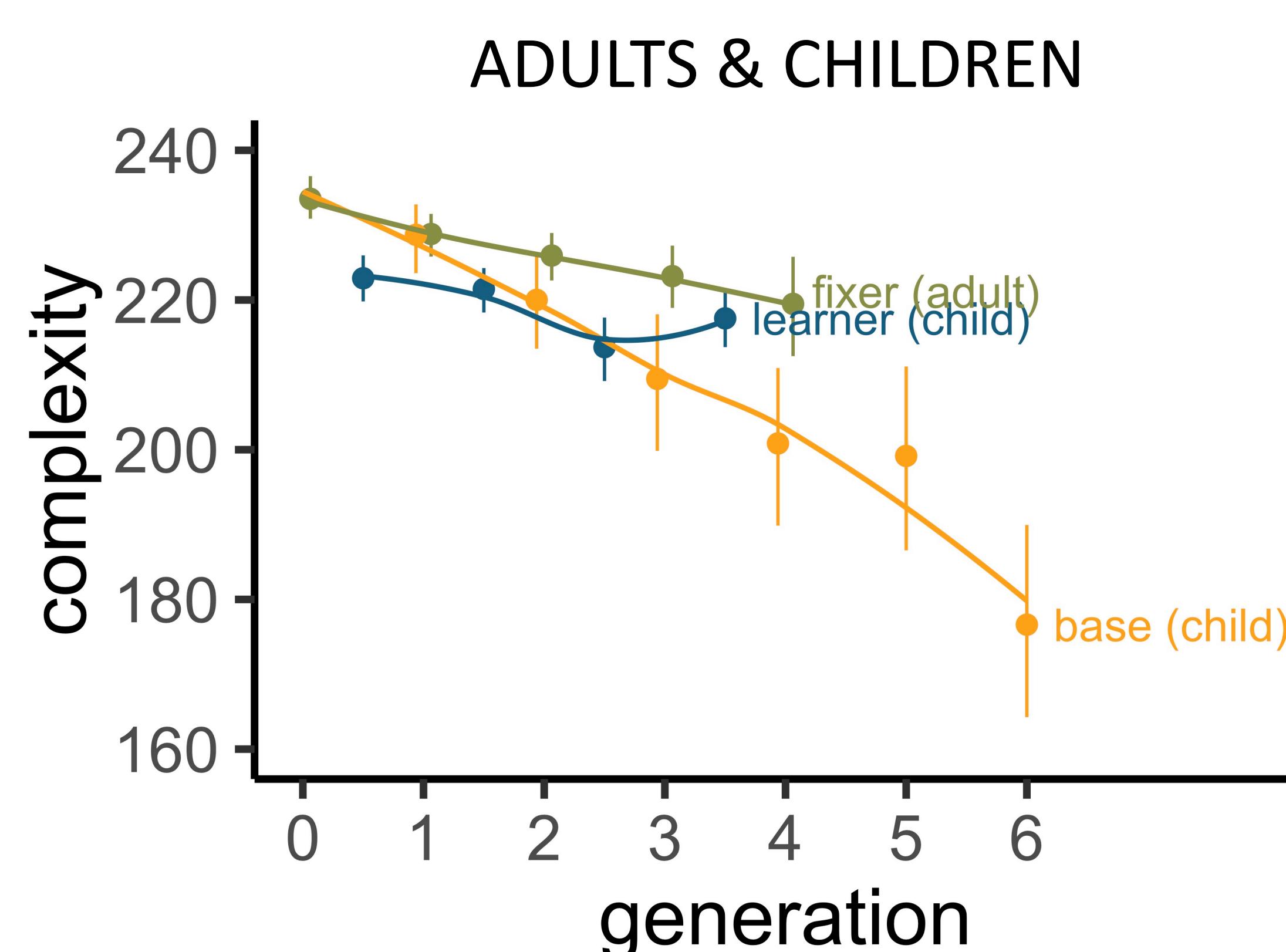
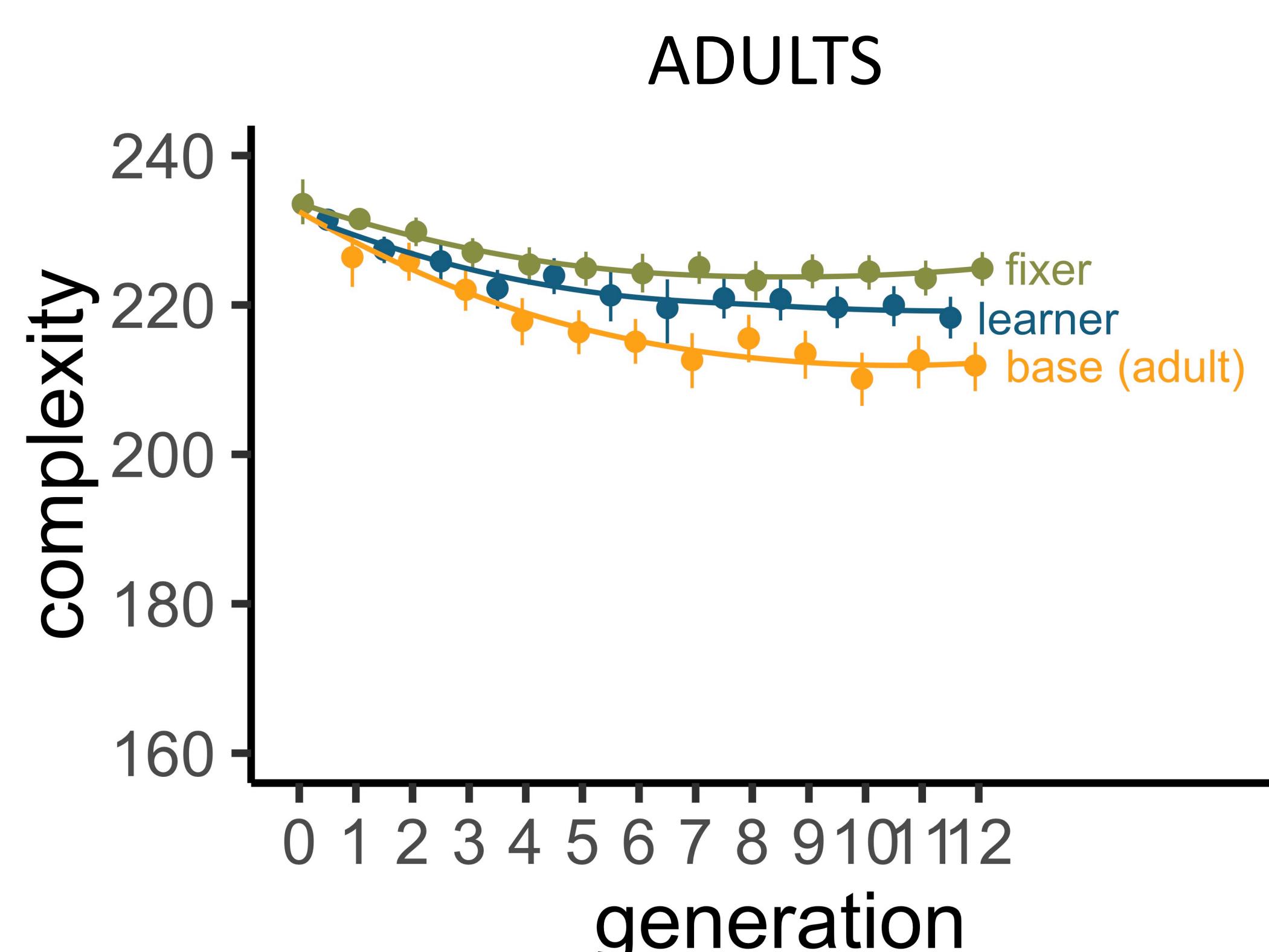
Adults:

- N= 960 mTurkers

Adults & Children (in progress):

- N= 82 children (6;0-8;0) from MSI Chicago
- N = 82 adults from mTurk

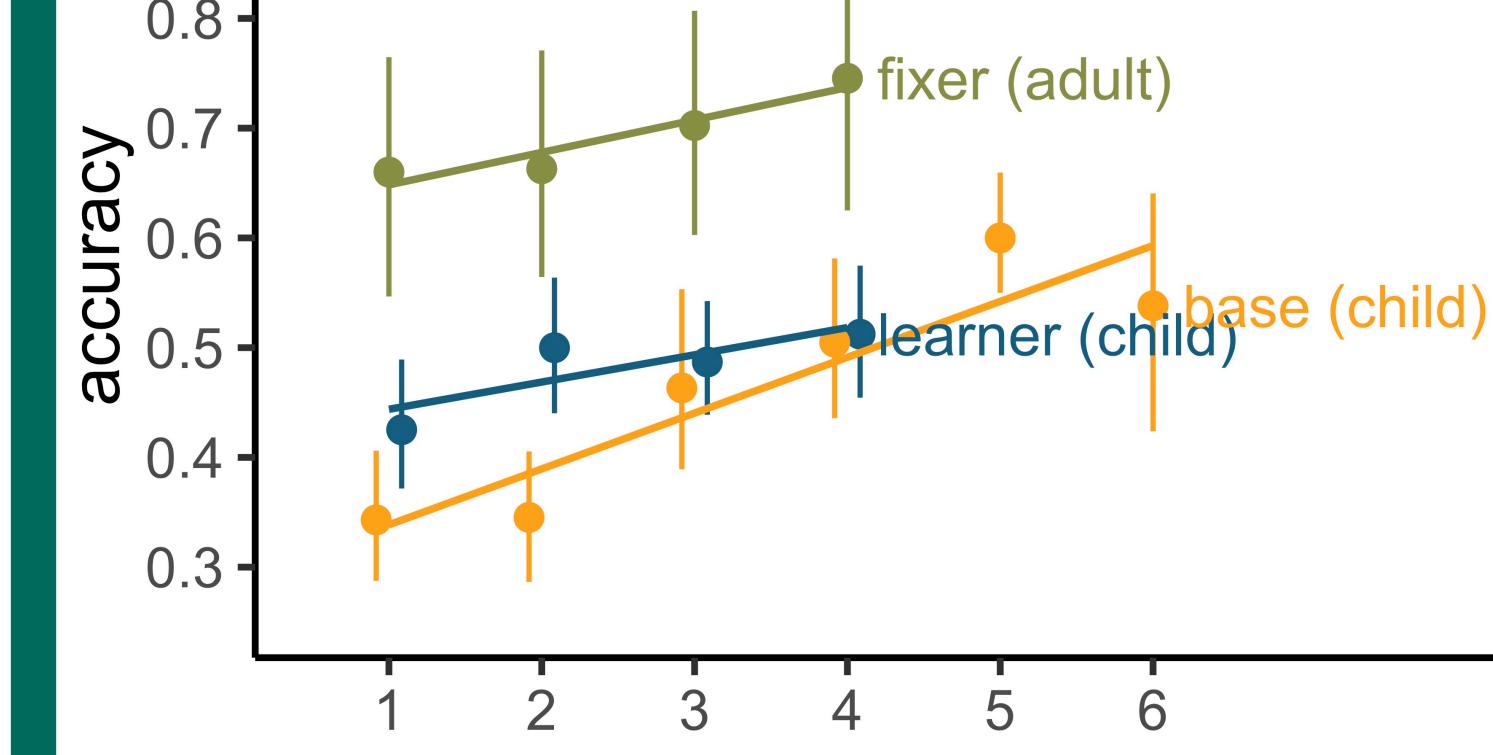
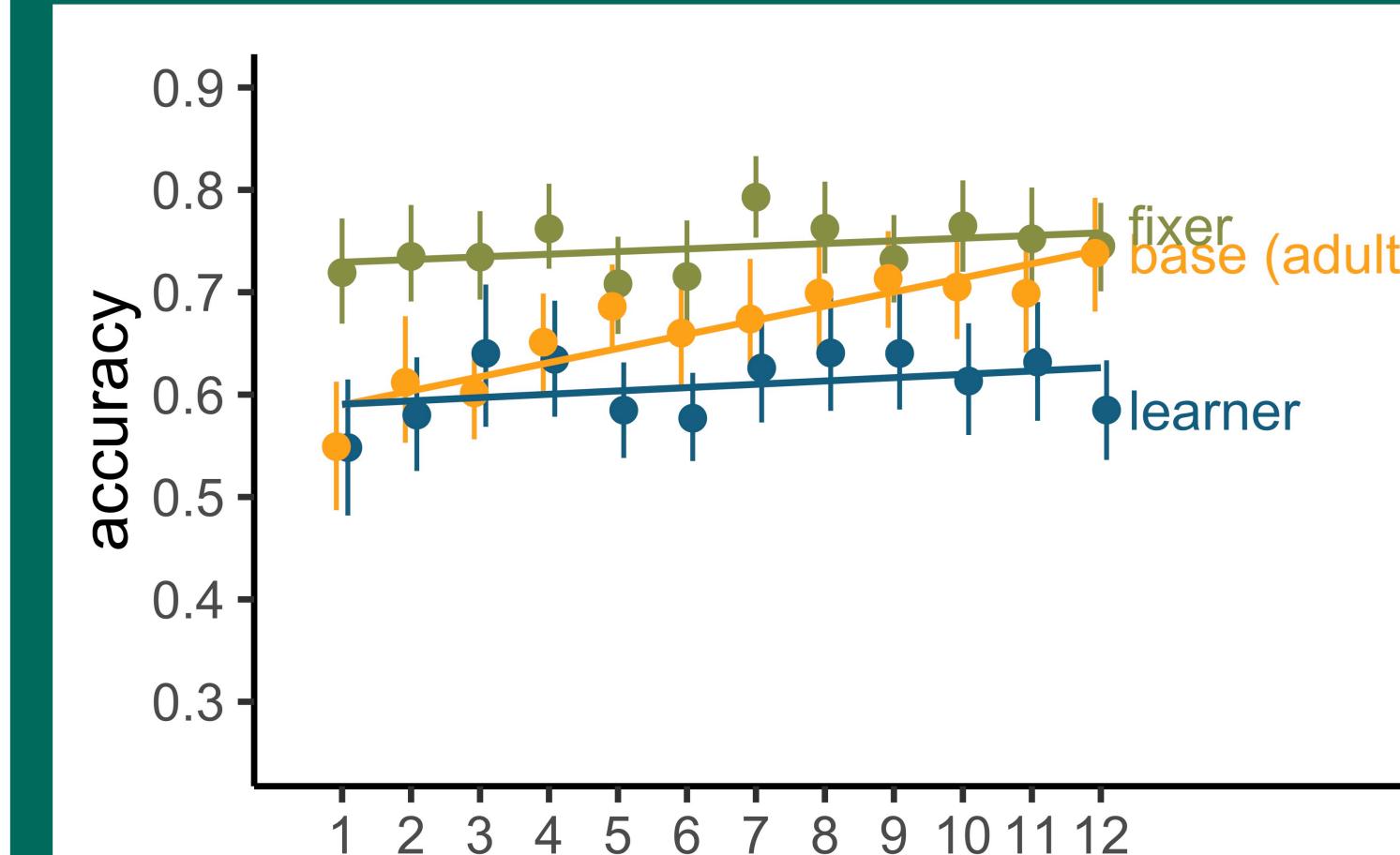
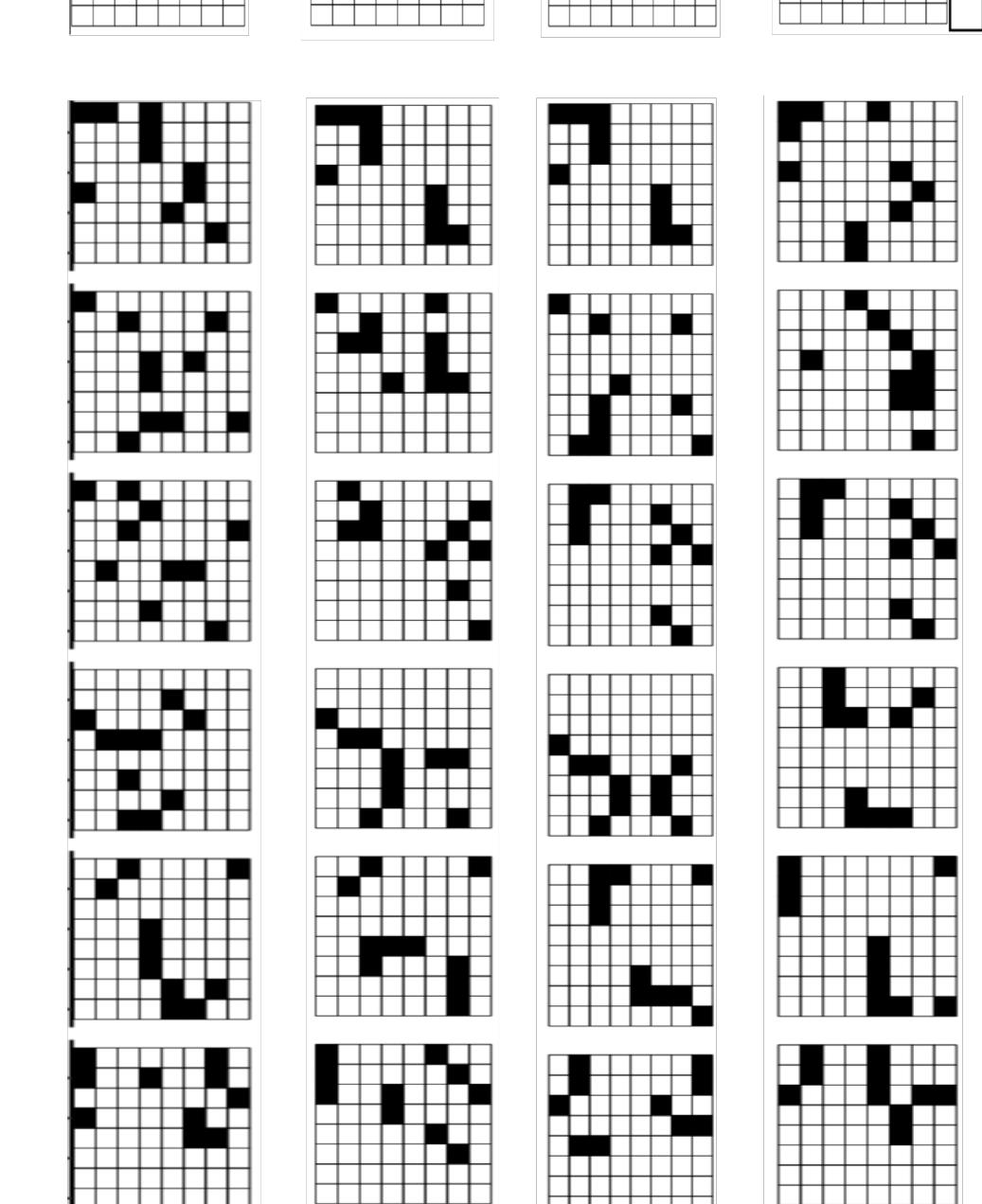
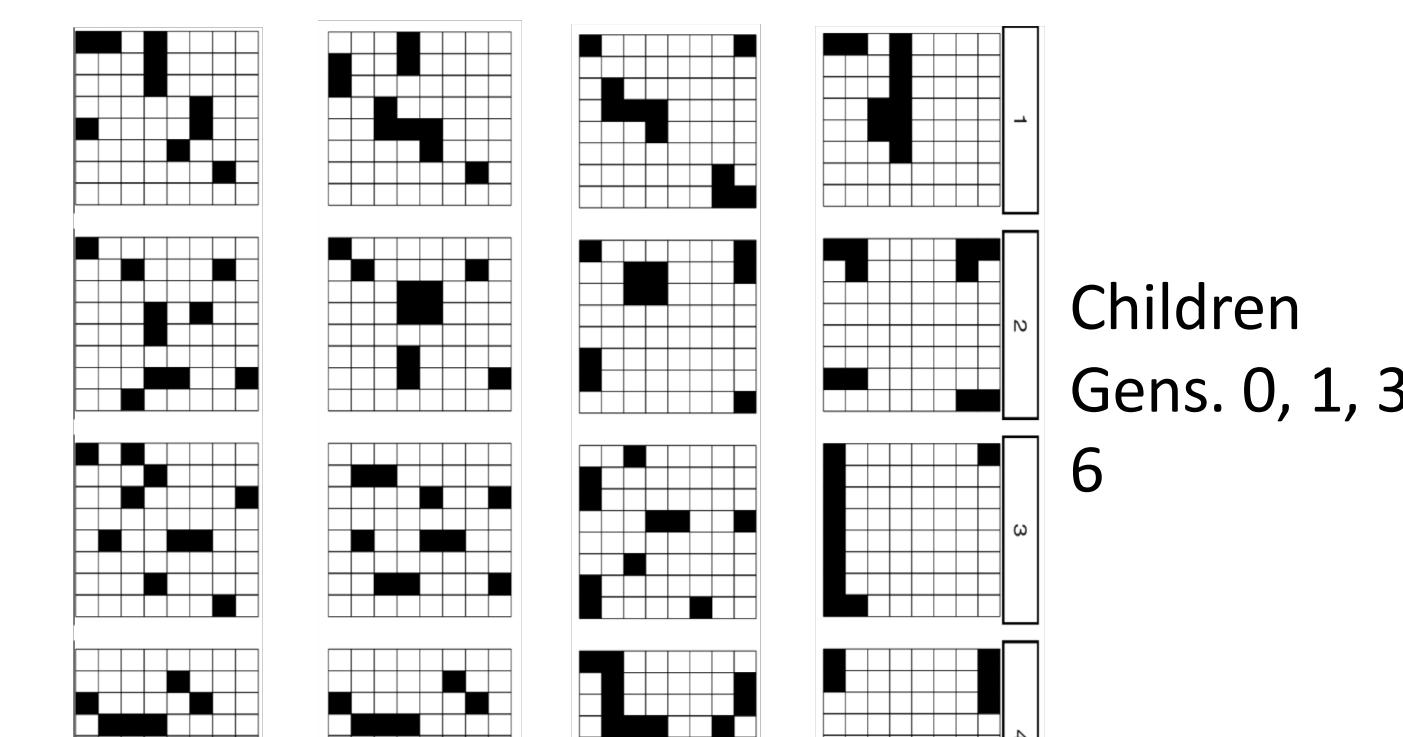
RESULTS



FUTURE WORK

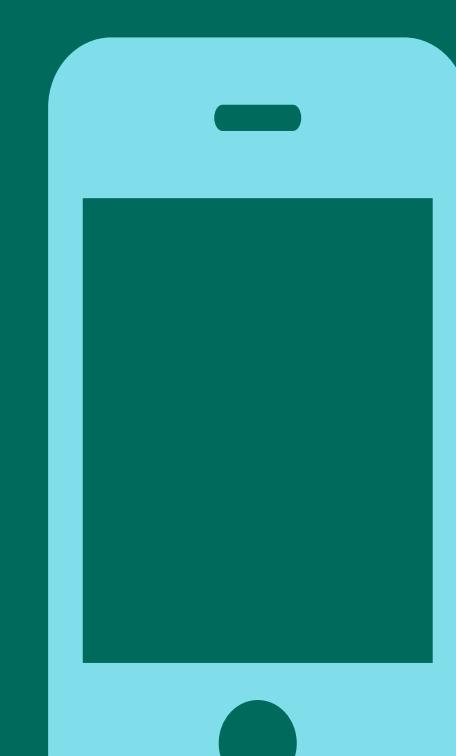
- Qualitative analysis: are the errors made by parents and children the same?
 - Structure task: are the languages produced more internally structured (similar) over time?
- DISCUSSION CTD.**
- This study replicated previous work by Kempe et al. (2015)
 - Complexity measures

GRID PATTERNS



DISCUSSION

- Adults protect languages from simplification by children, re-introducing levels of complexity which match adult baseline performance
- Adding in a corrective element to the language-learning process—like feedback from an editor or parent—allows a higher degree of complexity to be retained in the language
- Both horizontal and vertical transmission are necessary to retain languages which are both descriptive (complex) and transmissible (easy to learn)



Take a picture to see
preregistrations, GitHub,
poster and conference
paper

