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Authors

Luna, Michelle
Sandhofer, Catherine

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Contextual Separation Shifts Attentional Biases

Michelle Luna

University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, United States

Catherine Sandhofer

University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, United States

Abstract

The context you learn in influences how you recall information. When there are multiple competing sources of information to be recalled, context dependency may help activate information that is hard to retrieve. This study examines its effects on learning shape and texture categories signaled by redundant correlated contextual cues. Three-year-olds learned shape and texture in two conditions: a contextual separation condition and a contextual overlap condition. Children in the separation condition learned shape in one context and learned texture in a second context. Children in the overlap condition learned both shape and texture on both contexts. After training, children were asked to find a texture match to test if they could shift their attention away from shape. Children in the separation condition chose the texture match more often than children in the overlap condition, suggesting a benefit of using contextual cues to shift dominant biases.