

Sustaining Attention in the Hands

Natalie Phillips

University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Evan Risko

University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Abstract: Previous research has demonstrated that basic visual processing is enhanced when stimuli are presented near the hands. It has also been suggested that this preference for processing stimuli presented hand-proximal extends to higher-order cognitive processes, such as executive control (i.e., greater control for hand-proximal stimuli). Executive control, however, is associated with a number of different functions and as such we need a deeper understanding of which functions are and are not influenced. In the present study, we explored whether or not this preference for processing hand-proximal information influences the ability to sustain attention, a process closely associated with executive control. Participants completed a sustained attention task, with hands either near or at a distant from the stimulus. In a series of experiments, we found no evidence for preferential processing for hand-proximal information in a sustained attention task. Implications for a developing theory of the influence of hand-proximity will be discussed.