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Authors

Mason, Jasmine

Jordan, J. Scott

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Forming Action-Effect Contingencies through Observation of a Dot-Control Task

Jasmine Mason

Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, United States

J. Scott Jordan

Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, United States

Abstract

Previous research suggests the possibility that observers have access to action plans of others (Jordan & Hommel, 2008). To examine this we design three experiments. The first examines action-plan coding in participants performing the task (controllers) using a Hommel-like 'compatibility' test measuring reaction times (Hommel, 1996). We manipulated the inclusion of task irrelevant auditory tones during the dot-control game. The second experiment utilized the same design to examine observer's action-plans after watching the experimenter play the dot control game. Experiment 3 allows us to examine the additional effects of the controller's skill level and observer's level of access to the task. So far the results support the hypothesis that participants can learn action plans by observing the distal effects of another's actions. Further research will help unearth the factors mediating observer's action plan coding and the differences between how controllers and observer's encode actions and their different effects.