**Probing the properties of priority maps in visual working memory**

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With fMRI and EEG, evidence for an active representation of an unprioritized memory item (UMI) often drops to baseline levels, in a manner indistinguishable from that of an “irrelevant memory item” (IMI) presumably dropped from working memory. One theoretical model proposes that the difference between the UMI and IMI is that the binding between the content of the IMI and its trial-specific context has been removed (Lewis-Peacock, Kessler, and Oberauer, 2018). We explored this model with a task in which two samples (oriented gratings) were presented sequentially, followed by a retrocue designating the uncued item an IMI, followed by the presentation of a third sample that could appear at the location of the cued item, of the IMI, or a neutral location. Finally, a dial cued the recall of either sample with equal probability. For the third sample, precision was highest and guessing lowest for recall of the orientation when it had appeared at the initially cued location (i.e., at a “prioritized context”), and precision was lowest and guessing highest when it had appeared at the same location as the IMI. The absence of swap errors to the IMI suggested that it had indeed been dropped. These results suggest two properties of priority maps in visual working memory. First, binding multiple items to the same spatial context may, paradoxically, improve their retention. Second, there may be a refractory period after removing a content-to-context binding (i.e., after dropping an item) that disrupts binding new content to the same spatial location.