

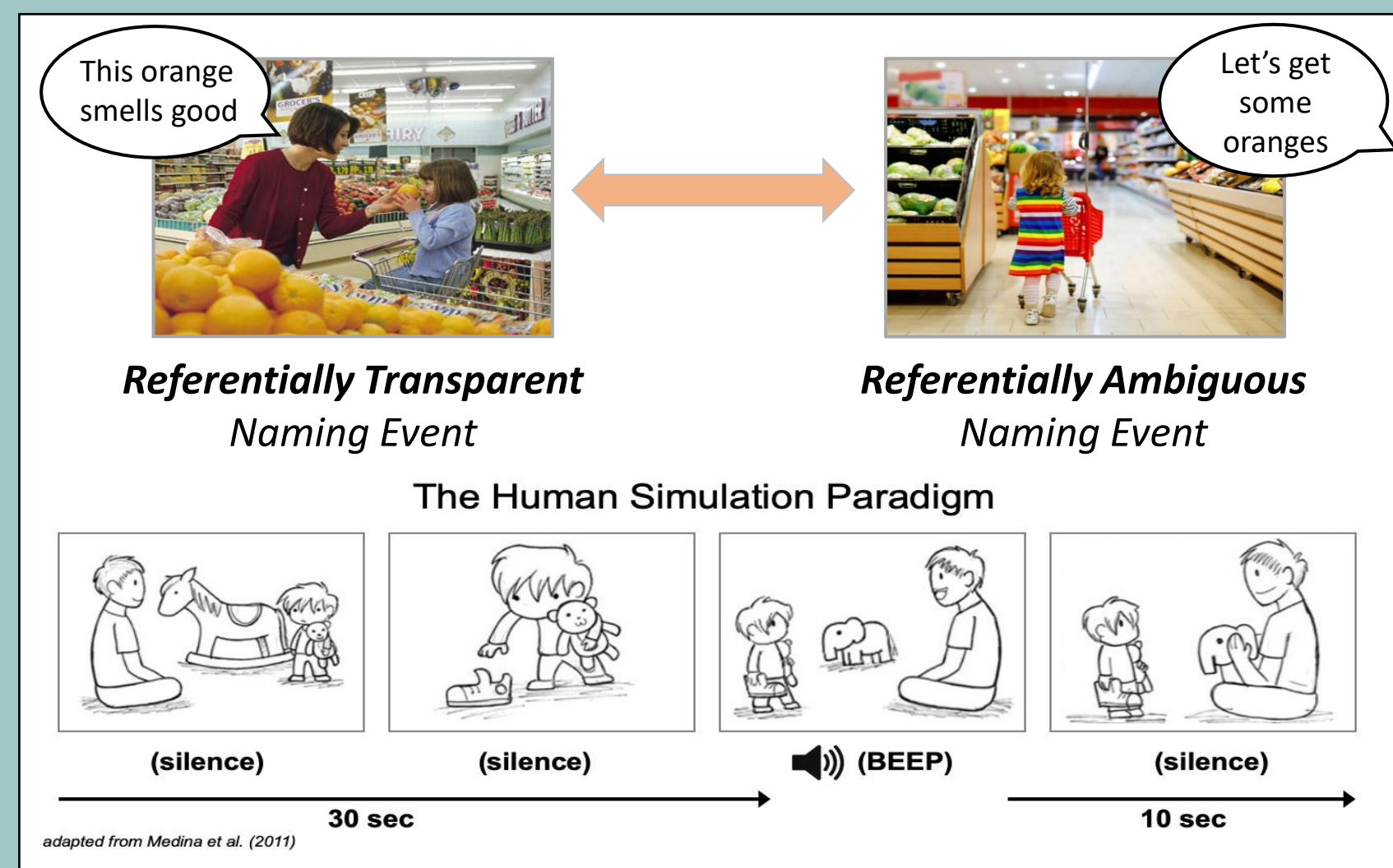
Environmental Context and Referential Ambiguity: a Human Simulation Paradigm Study

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INTRODUCTION



- The referential quality of naming events in children's input is a matter of debate
- Research employing the Human Simulation Paradigm (HSP) have highlighted the referentially ambiguous nature of naming events (Medina et al., 2011)
- Many observational studies of child-directed speech have underscored the referentially transparent nature of naming events (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2019)
- The current study examines whether one reason for the discrepancy across research traditions is that words in most HSP studies, unlike in child-directed speech, lack thematic coherence

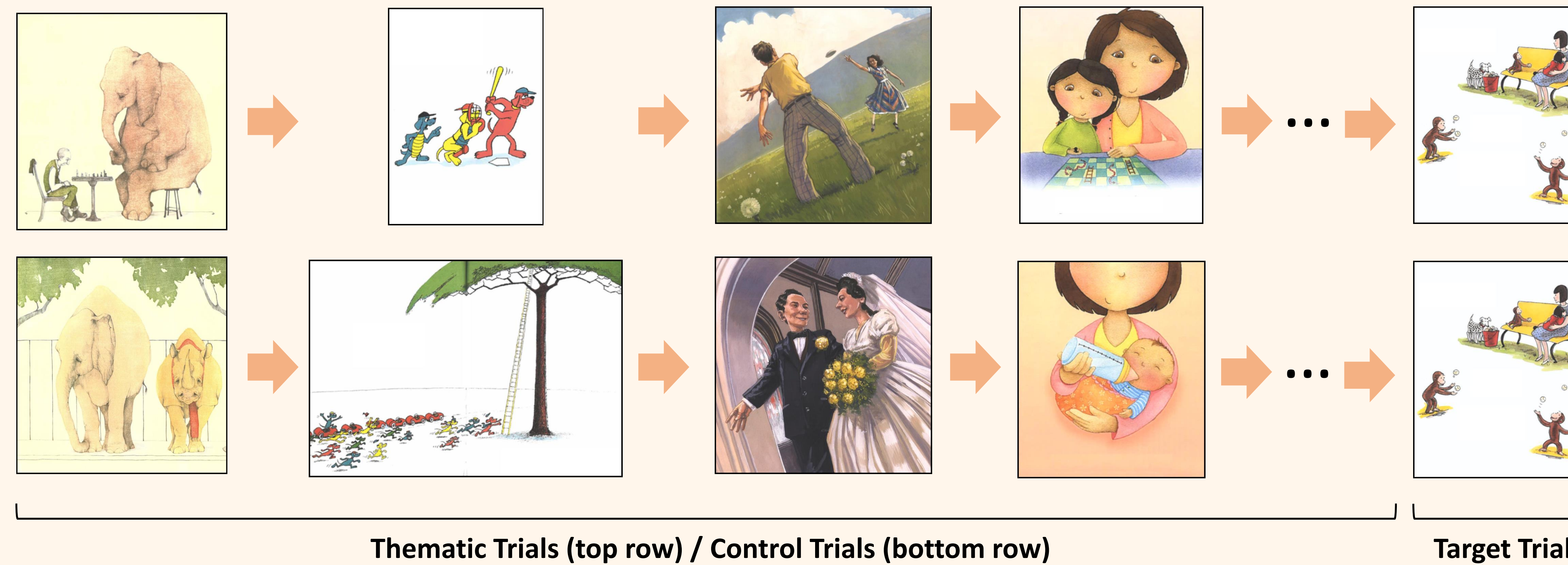
STUDY OVERVIEW

Norming Study Responses	
monkey	balls
monkey	play
monkey	playing
monkey	curious george
monkey	george
monkey	juggle
ball	playground
ball	bench

What noun best fits the page?

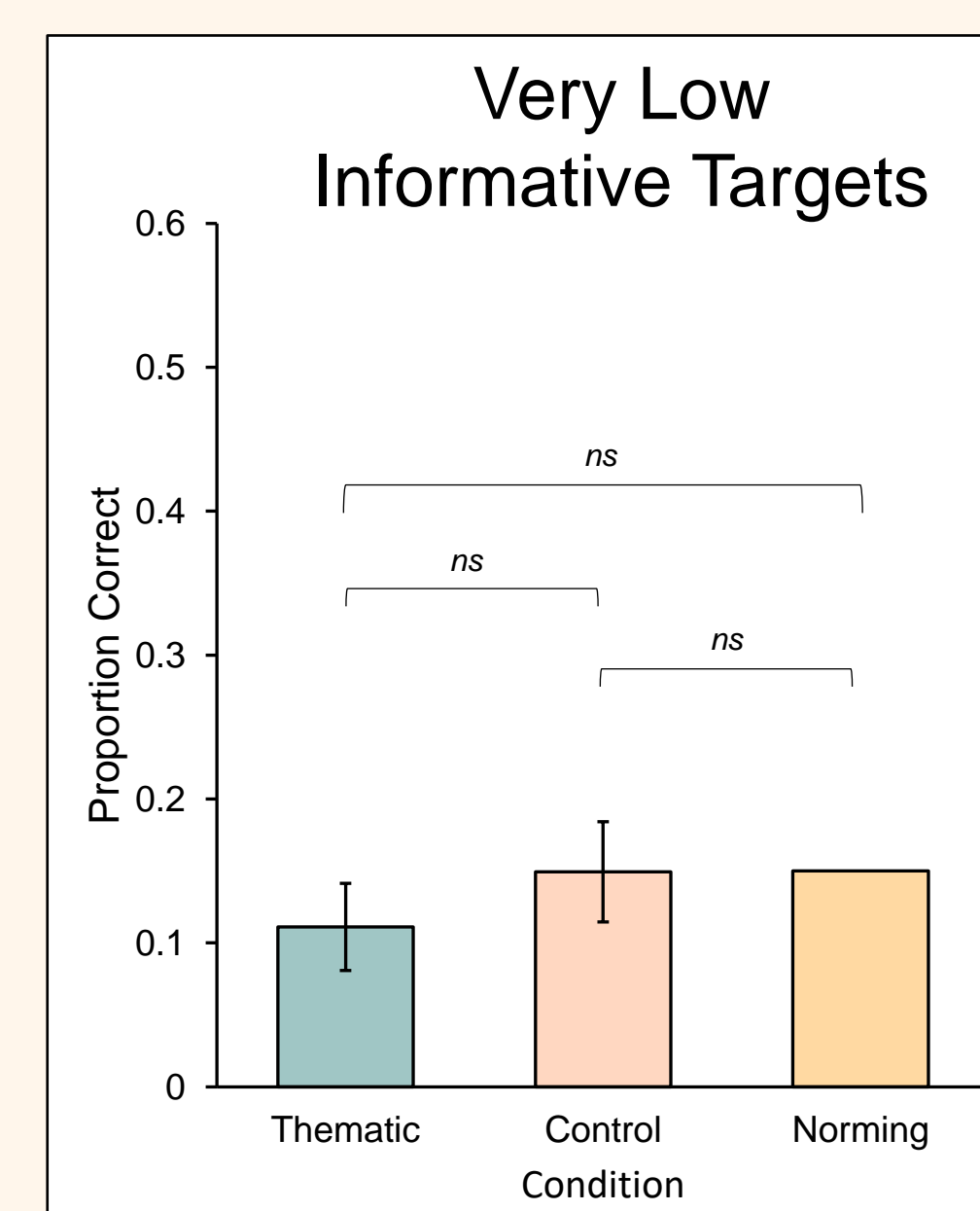
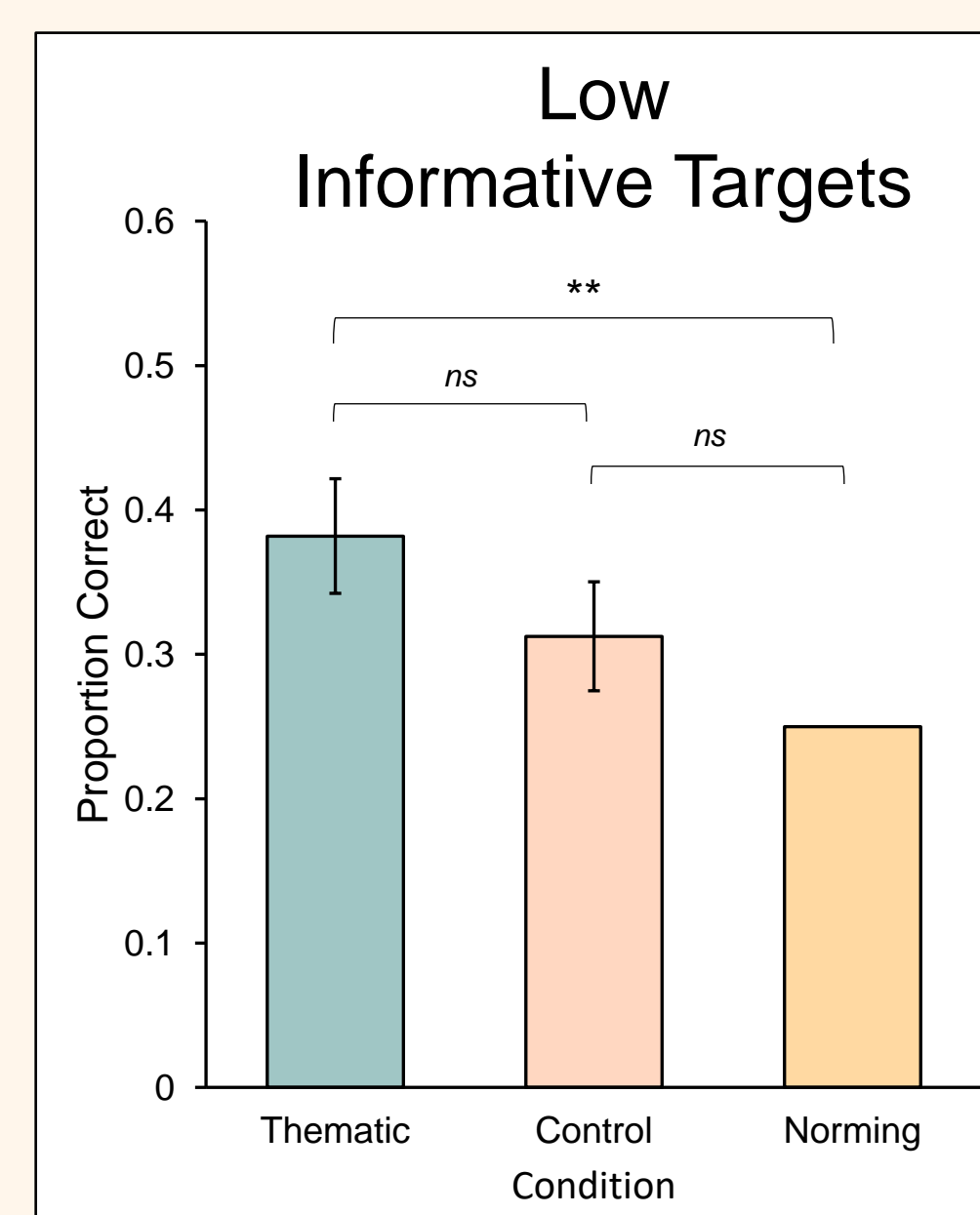
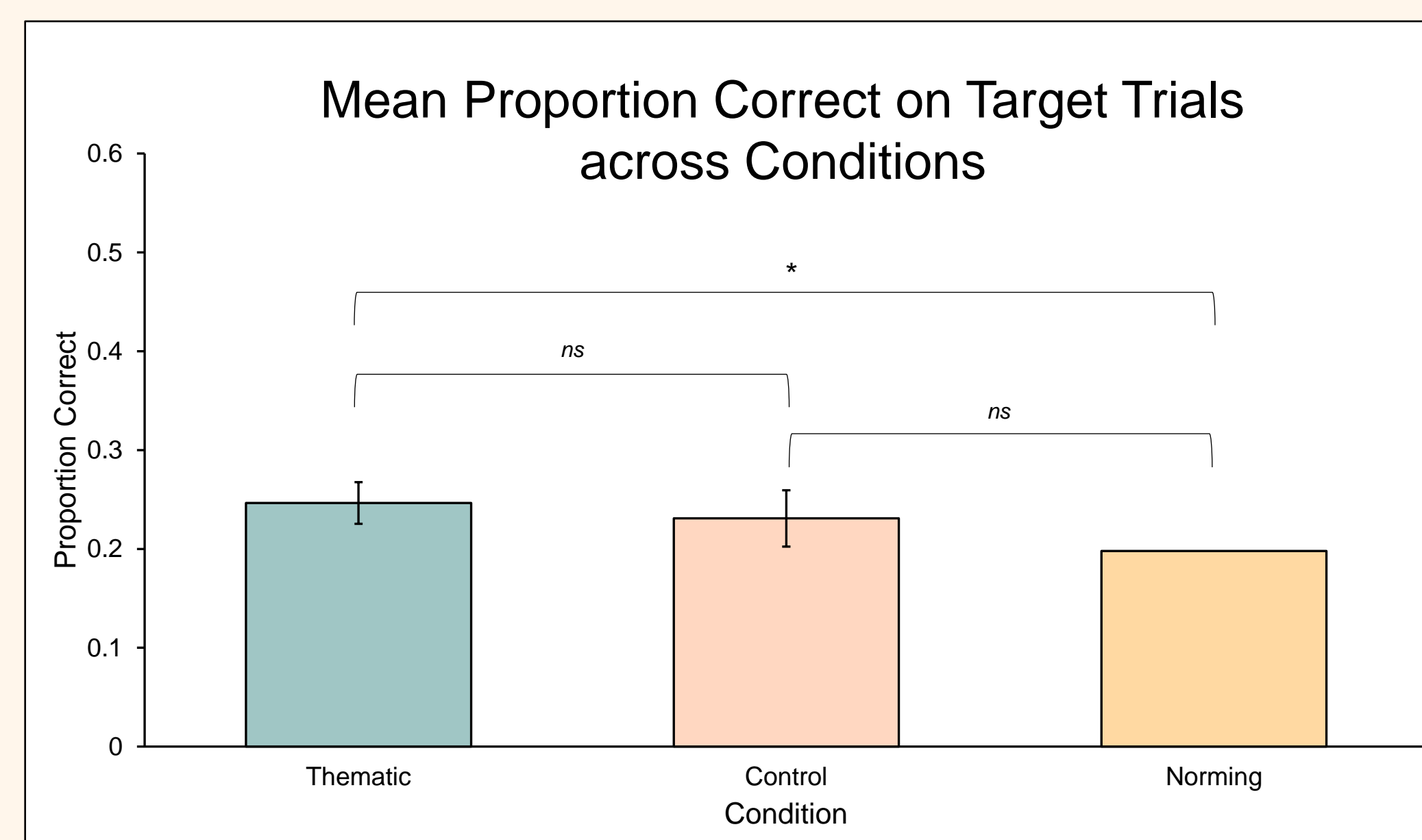
- Using a picture-book adaptation of the HSP, the current study asks whether organizing naming events by thematic context will lead to different estimates of referential quality of the same naming event

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

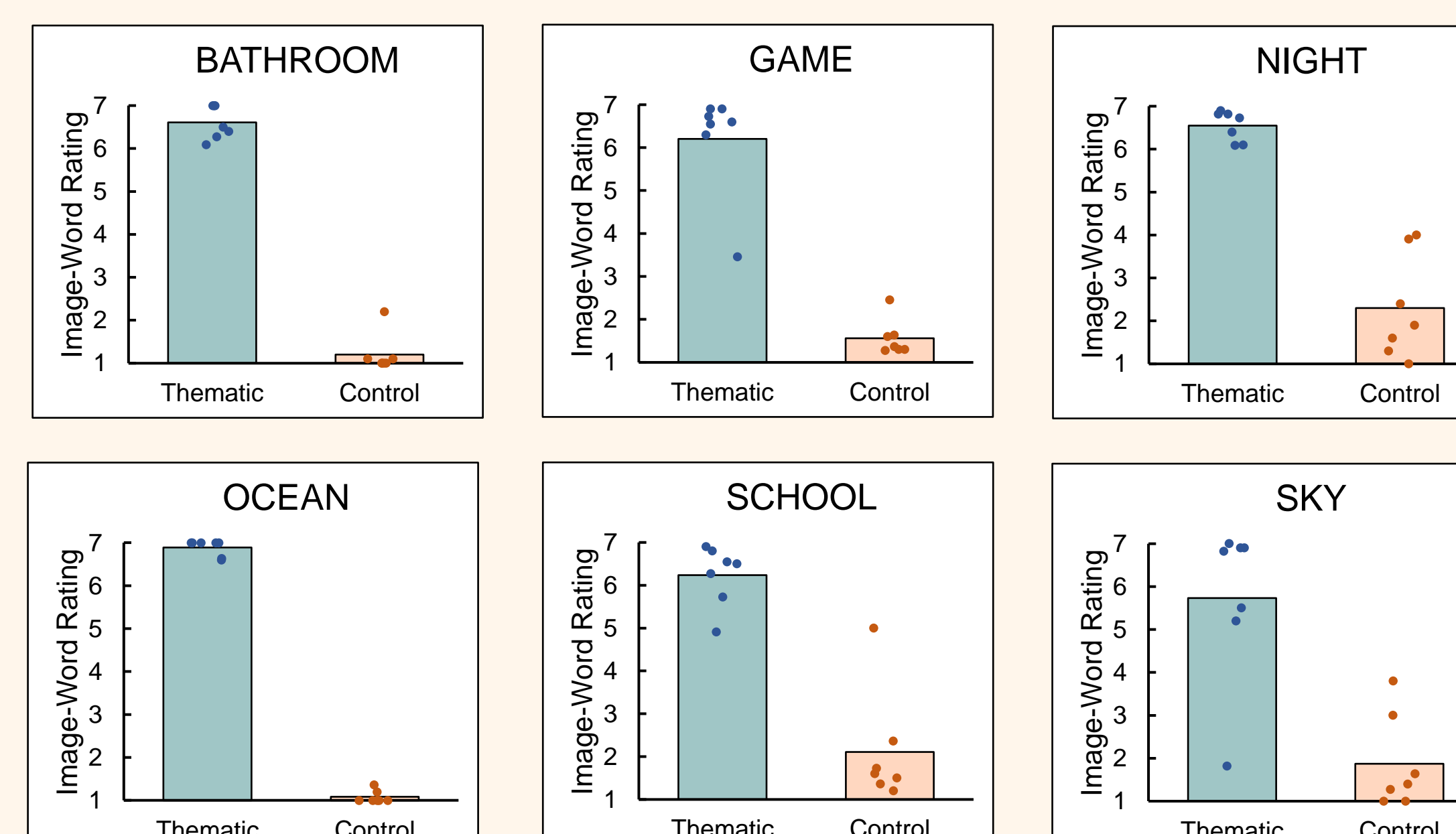
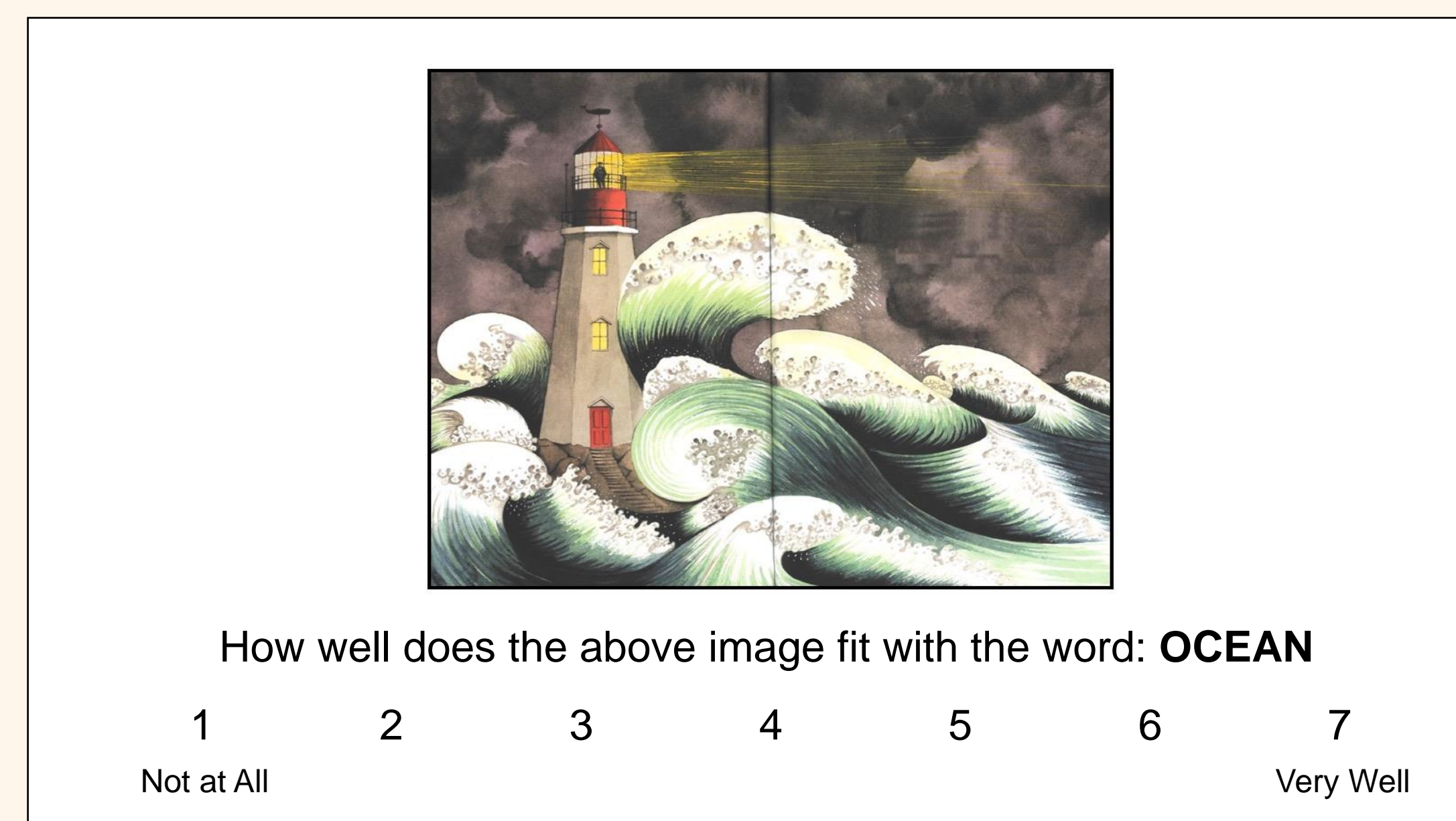


- 96 adult participants were randomly assigned to either the 'thematic context' or 'control' condition
- 48 trials were divided into six blocks of eight trials (seven 'context' or 'control' trials, one 'target' trials)
- The target trials were identical across context and control conditions, and were always presented last in each block
- The theme-pairs for the six blocks were: *game-ball*, *bathroom-bath*, *sky-bird*, *ocean-boat*, *school-bus*, and *night-moon*

EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS



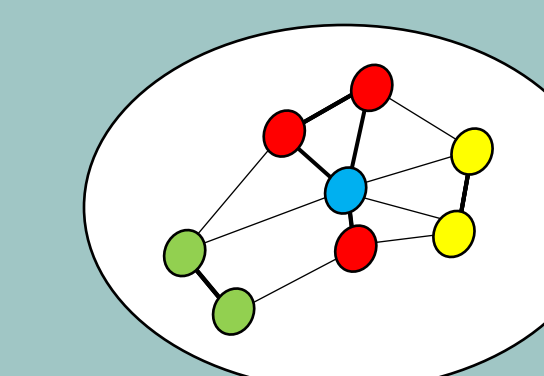
THEMATIC RATING STUDY



DISCUSSION

- Whether children's input is best characterized as referentially ambiguous or referentially transparent is a matter of debate (see Gleitman & Trueswell, 2020; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2014)
- The current results suggest that although embedding ambiguous naming events in a coherent thematic context may aid referent identification, the effects are fragile and limited
- Ongoing analyses of the current results and additional experiments seek to better understand these fragile and limited effects
- More broadly, these results suggest that how context affects referent identification and word learning may not be straight forward, and that there are likely many factors that moderate these effects

FUTURE DIRECTIONS



Go beyond accuracy to explore the nature of context effects on transparency

Test current effects with vignettes of child-directed speech



Test children's sensitivity to contextual effects

REFERENCES / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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