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Evidence of Self Referential Prioritization on the basis of Visual Features: Attributing Salience to Rule - Learning

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Abstract

Participants show faster and more accurate processing for arbitrary geometrical stimuli if they are paired with a self- relevant label (triangle = you). We ask whether participants only form self associations with specific exemplars (triangle, circle, square), or whether they analyse the stimuli in terms of visual features, (for e.g. no. of vertices = 3), and can generalise the learned associations with the entire category of the stimuli (say, all triangles). In our experiments, participants showed the self referential advantage not only to previously exposed exemplars of the same category, but also novel stimuli that could be categorised on the basis of similar visual features. Interestingly, they could generalise not only on the basis of a single rule, but also on the basis of a conjunction of more than one rule. These findings could be extended to explain social categorisation in the real world through group memberships.