

CHINESE INFANTS' FAMILIARITY AND NOVELTY PREFERENCE

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Familiarity preference and novelty preference co-exist in our daily decision making, and a systematic understanding of when these two seemingly-opposite preferences exhibit is desirable. Park, Shimojo, and Shimojo (2010) reported that object category matters for adults' preference formation: we prefer familiar faces while favor novel nature scenes. We explored whether this distinction was already present during infancy.

We recruited 8-10 months old Chinese infants and exposed them to four object categories: mountains, animals, female and male faces. In each trial, an old/familiar image was always the same and placed side-by-side to a new/novel image from the same category. Infants' gazes were monitored and recorded with a Tobii eye-tracker. For comparison, we recruited adults to rate their preference and record their free viewing eye gaze.

For the nature scene condition, infants looked significantly longer to novel images, consistent to the adults. For faces, we found that infants had no visual preference toward female faces but a novelty preference toward male faces. We did not observe gender effect in adults' rating: they prefer familiar faces similar to the study in Park et al (2010).

In summary, infants' novelty preference dominated across face and non-face categories except female faces, possibly the most significantly and frequently viewed objects in human early life. Further studies are called to examine this distinction and other factors modulating infants' preference formation. We did not find strong evidence for face- v.s. non-face categories that modulated 8-10 month-old infants' viewing preference, which suggests this categorical distinction comes later in life.