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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Permalink

Journal

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Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed

Transcultural mindreading: Building a new database of Facial Expressions with actors of diverse ethnicities to assess social cognition.

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Abstract

Theory of Mind (ToM)– the capacity to attribute mental states to others, plays a central role in social cognition and behaviour. Social categorization (SC) - the classification of people as within or outside of one's own group- also shapes our evaluation of others, often without our awareness. The features that give rise to social categorizations are often static and can be extracted by looking at human faces. However, little is known about the effect of SC in ToM judgements. The most widely-used instrument to assess ToM, Baron-Cohen's Reading the Mind in the Eyes (RmE), uses exclusively white faces. We created a new database of high-quality videos and stills of ethnically diverse actors depicting 93 different mental states, suitable to study cross-cultural ToM, to be validated using a) the classic RmE four-alternative forced-choice paradigm and b) a task where raters locate each face within a 2-D space of valence and arousal.