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The Social Side of The STEARC Effect: Spatial Representation of Face Age in Explicit and Implicit Tasks

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Time can be conceptualized in spatial dimensions, as evidenced by the STEARC effect (Bonato et al., 2012). In recent work by Dalmaso et al. (2023), Western participants categorized the age of a central target male face as either younger or older than a reference face. The findings revealed that the perceived age was mapped from left to right. In the present study, we further examined whether a spatial mapping of face age implicitly emerges when an irrelevant dimension (male vs. female) is judged. Experiment 1 is a conceptual replication of the original study, in which participants were asked to explicitly categorize face age (younger vs. older), using a new set of stimuli (male and female faces). The results further confirmed the spatial mapping of face age when using an explicit task, with younger faces associated to the left and older faces to the right. In Experiment 2, a new set of participants categorized the gender of faces (male vs. female). The results confirmed the same pattern as previous experiments, also when face age was an implicit dimension. Similar to other studies on spatial associations for magnitudes, in the implicit task the effect appears smaller (Macnamara et al. 2018). Overall, these results confirm that face age can be mapped from left to right, using both explicit and implicit tasks. Further results will be presented on the distance effect, as well as on the role of other variables (i.e. gender of the stimuli/participants and their congruency).

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No

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