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# Bilingual Exposure Affects Face Recognition in 9-Month-Old Infants Raised in a Multi-Ethnic City

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## Abstract

Young infants can discriminate a wide range of stimuli. Over the first year of life, this ability becomes restricted to frequently experienced stimuli through the process of perceptual narrowing. In face perception, this is reflected in the emergence of the Other-race-effect (ORE) at 9 months, a difficulty to recognise faces from unfamiliar racial groups. This can be avoided through other-race face exposure. Interestingly, wider language exposure has been suggested to have a similar – cross-domain – effect, as narrowing in bilinguals' speech perception is postponed and protracted. We tested 9-month-old monolingual and bilingual infants from London on a face recognition task with own- and other-race faces. Detailed information on infants' everyday language and face exposure were gathered. Neither group showed the classic ORE, indicating that growing up in a multi-ethnic city attenuates it. Importantly, bilinguals exhibited higher recognition scores than monolinguals, suggesting a general face recognition advantage in this population.