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Authors
Chater, Nick
Frith, Chris
Raafat, Ramsey

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Cool Cognition: Who classifies cool; the Individual or the Group?

Ramsey Raafat
Cognitive, Perceptual and Brain Sciences research department, UCL

Nick Chater
Cognitive, Perceptual and Brain Sciences research department, UCL

Chris Frith
Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging, UCL

Abstract: We explore a form of convergent social behaviour, termed herding, wherein individuals can move together, in a group (herd) without premeditated organization. Interest in this phenomenon has stimulated a growing body of research concerning both its mechanisms and evolution. We sought to investigate these aggregating patterns, by requiring participants to make an aesthetic judgment with a strong subjective component, i.e. "coolness". Specifically, we show the possibility that mere exposure to group feedback is sufficient to induce an alteration in an individuals judgment behaviour of social and consumer stimuli. This alteration is absent in a control, "pseudo-group" environment, yet amplified when individual judgments are made from a keynesian-group perspective, where participants rate images as they consider the group would.

These findings indicate how subjective classification can be distributed between individual and social cues and how convergent behaviour, even in the subjective judgment domain, can be induced in a social environment.