Self-reference effect for faces is mediated by attention

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Abstract

Self is a central construct for various phenomenon in the history of psychology, and the pattern of being biased towards the information related to self is known as self-reference effect. Ones own face presents a unique stimuli to look at the cognitive processing self-reference effect. With help of two experiments, we investigated self-referential effect for faces and its relationship with attention. The first experiment looked at processing advantage for self-face compared to friends face and a strangers face while participants performed orthogonal task of emotion perception. The second experiment involved manipulation of attention prior to emotion perception task used in experiment 1. Results indicate that RT for self-face were significantly shorter compared to friend face and stranger face. This processing advantage disappeared when cues were used prior to the attention task. We suggest that self-faces enhance processing by attentional capture.