

I know what you will do. Observers implicitly predict future actions from past behaviour patterns.

Kimberley Schenke, Patric Bach & Natalie Wyer

Plymouth University

Three studies investigated whether observers form implicit associations in the form of intentional relations between characters, situations, and their typical behavioural patterns, which drive predictions of their future actions and perceived preferences. The task was to report whether the characters interacted or turned away from each object. Trials were manipulated so that one actor typically interacted with one object and turned away from the other object e.g., John mostly kicked the ball and turned away from the computer whilst Claire did the reverse. Results demonstrated both faster reaction times for expected than unexpected actions towards objects and increased liking for these objects i.e., faster reaction times and increased liking for the object that the actor usually interacted with. This suggests that participants associated the characters with the object they tended to interact with, and used these associations in future encounters and for making judgments on attitudes towards the objects. Crucially, these participants were not aware of these associations even when asked to search for the pattern within the stimuli, pointing to a highly implicit mechanism. These studies provide the working paradigm for investigating whether this knowledge for preference of actions and objects becomes embodied.