**The Role of Similarity in the Emergence of Conventions**

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**Abstract**

Standard analyses of the evolution of conventions attribute no special role to strategy labels.  In reality, conventions often arise in *recurrently similar* coordination problems, in which labels vary between occurrences.  In such problems, more *replicable* labels – i.e., those that can be more easily recognised in successive occurrences – may form the basis for the emergence of conventions.  Once coordination is achieved, future coordination is enhanced by choosing strategies with labels *similar* to those that led to past success.  We report an experimental study of recurrently similar coordination games with strategies differentiated by randomly-generated images.  We manipulate the replicability of images and establish a direct link between perceived and objective measures of *image similarity*.  Our results are compatible with a model in which initial coordination is achieved using the *one-off salience* properties of images.  After coordination success, subsequent choices are driven by image similarity, leading to an increasing likelihood of further success. [150 words]

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