Speeded induction under uncertainty: influence of multiple categories and feature co-occurrence

Helen Paton
University of New South Wales

Ben Newell
University of New South Wales

Brett Hayes
University of New South Wales

Abstract: When people are uncertain about the category membership of an item (e.g., is it a dog or a dingo?) research shows that they tend to rely only on the dominant or most likely category when making inductions (e.g., how likely is it to befriend me?). An exception has been reported using speeded-judgments where participants appeared to use information from multiple categories to make inductions (Verde et al., 2005). In a modified replication we found that participants tended to rely on the frequency with which features co-occurred when making feature predictions, independent of category membership (Experiment 1). A follow up forced participants to make category membership judgments before feature predictions and found evidence for reliance on the dominant category in addition to the use of feature co-occurrence. The results question the extent to which multiple categories are used in speeded induction when the frequency of co-occurring features can be relied upon for induction.