



Emergence of perceptual Gestalts in the human visual cortex: The case of the configural superiority effect

Jonas Kubilius^{1,2}, Johan Wagemans², & Hans P. Op de Beeck¹

¹Laboratory of Biological Psychology, ²Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, University of Leuven (K.U.Leuven), Belgium



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Introduction

Where is **global structure** represented?

Higher visual areas

bottom-up emergence

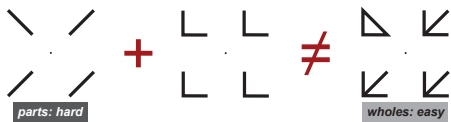
e.g., full shape selectivity observed in IT/LOC only

Lower and higher visual areas

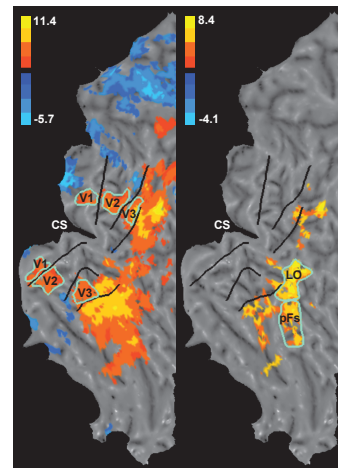
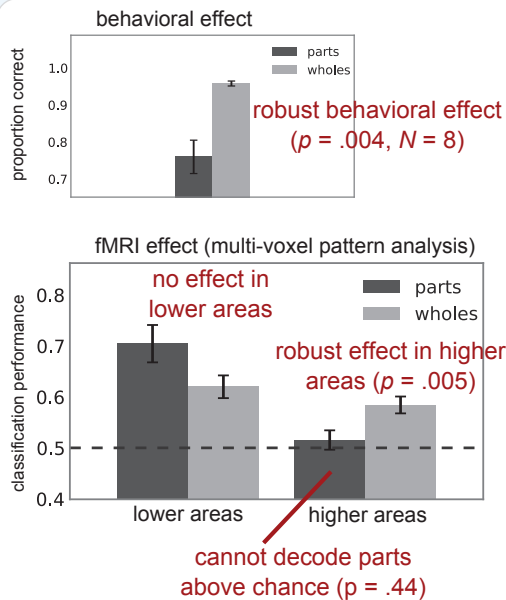
interplay between regions

e.g., computational models require feedback/lateral connections; some Gestalt effects reported in early visual areas; early regions have the capacity to contain high-level shape representations

Case study: Configural superiority effect (Pomerantz et al., 1977)



Results

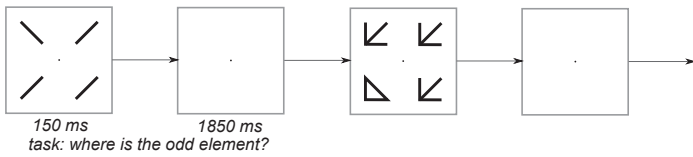


Results are averaged for lower-level visual areas (V1, V2, V3) and for higher-level shape-selective areas (LO and pFs).

Method

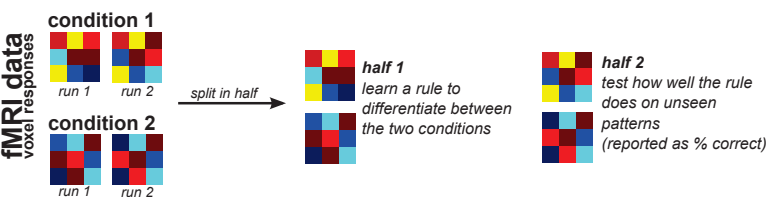
1. Localization of retinotopic (V1, V2, V3) and shape-selective regions (LO, pFs)

2. Event-related fMRI paradigm to obtain neural responses to 8 conditions: (parts, wholes) \times (4 quadrants where the odd element could be)

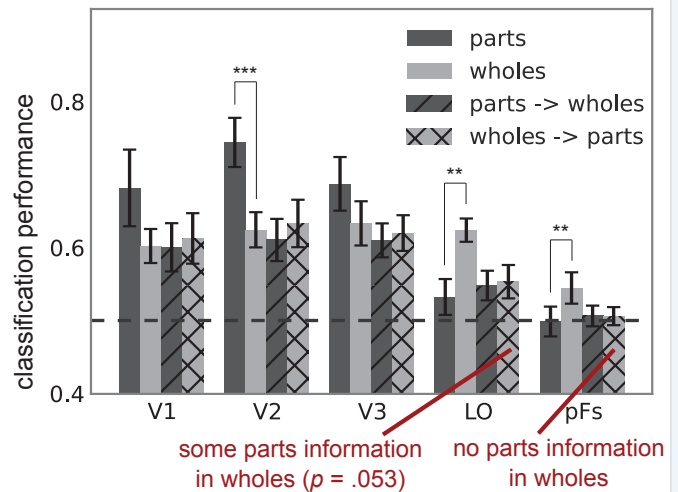


3. Multi-voxel pattern analysis (MVPA) using a support vector machine (SVM) to look for the neural configural superiority effect: a better discrimination between those conditions that are behaviorally easier

Multi-voxel pattern analysis



fMRI effect by area



Conclusion

Configural superiority effect **gradually emerges** throughout the visual hierarchy and is consistent with the **feed-forward** visual processing.

We propose that this method allows developing a taxonomy of Gestalt phenomena:

bottom-up – e.g., configural superiority effect
top-down – e.g., size-constancy illusion



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email: jonas.kubilius@psy.kuleuven.be website: neuromokslai.wordpress.com



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