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Cognition through Color (Issues in the Biology of Language and Cognition)

Jules Davidoff

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A century ago phrenologists described a "bump" for color located just over the eyebrow. Today's modular approach to the organization of the visual cortex is more sophisticated, yet it still holds that there are brain areas dedicated solely to particular aspects of perception. *Cognition through Color* reviews the current status of investigations of color cognition from the standpoint of modern neuropsychology. It provides clear evidence, based on a large body of empirical study that includes the author's own work on color perception and naming, that color appears to be one of the basic building blocks or modules from which perception is constructed and our memories organized. Davidoff systematically relates this evidence to an explicit model of color cognition from sensation through functional role to naming.

The original impetus for *Cognition through Color* came from the investigation of individuals with brain damage. There are, for example, patients who have difficulty in naming colors. More important, despite normal color vision, memory for colors can be "split off" from all aspects of memory for shapes and objects, providing a strong case for the notion of modularity in vision.

Davidoff shows that to understand how color is remembered, we must know how objects are recognized. He observes that the perception of what we call color is, in essence, the study of the surface properties of objects, and he develops a model in which the mental representations for color can be linked to the knowledge of objects. Throughout he emphasizes detailed critical analysis of experimental data in light of current theories of both perception and cognition.

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