

Does Gaze and Gender of Eyes Affect the Probability of Donating in a Museum Setting?

INTRODUCTION

- Research conducted in a supermarket found that the presence of eye images increased the amount donations to charity buckets¹.
- It is still inconclusive which eye features are most effective, but it has been found that people donated significantly more money when the money collector was looking in the eye of the donor when asking for money compared to when the collector was looking at the collecting tin².
- Opposite sex bias of the eyes could be attributable to the sexual selection hypothesis, stating that the cooperative behaviour is preferentially directed towards members of the opposite sex³.

OBJECTIVES

- Investigate the hypothesis that images of watching eyes will enhance people's pro-social behaviour compared to the control images, and further test the predictions that direct gaze and opposite gender eyes to the visitor will be more likely to increase the probability of donating compared to averted gaze and eyes of the same gender to the visitor.

METHOD

- The field experiment took place at the Great North Museum: Hancock.
- A one hour observation in the morning and one hour observation in the afternoon was conducted each week day over a period of 20 days from June 23rd to July 18th.
- Two observers recorded the number of visitors on their way out of the museum, whether the visitor was male or female and whether he/she made a donation or not. The visitors excluded from the observations were young children in prams or being carried.
- The 16 experimental stimuli included 4 direct eyes, 4 averted eyes, 4 female eyes and 4 male eyes. We used 4 flower images as control stimuli.
- All images were attached to five of the museum's donation boxes.
- The images used in observation days 1-10 were used again in the latter 11-20 observation days, so that each stimulus was presented twice.

References:

1. Powell, K. L., Roberts, G., & Nettle, D. (2012). Eye images increase charitable donations: Evidence from an opportunistic field experiment in a supermarket. *Ethology*, 118(11), 1096-1101.
2. Bull, R., & Gibson-Robinson, E. (1981). The influences of eye-gaze, style of dress, and locality on the amounts of money donated to a charity. *Human Relations*, 34(10), 895-905.
3. Farrelly, D., Lazarus, J., & Roberts, G. (2007). Altruists Attract. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 5(2).

RESULTS

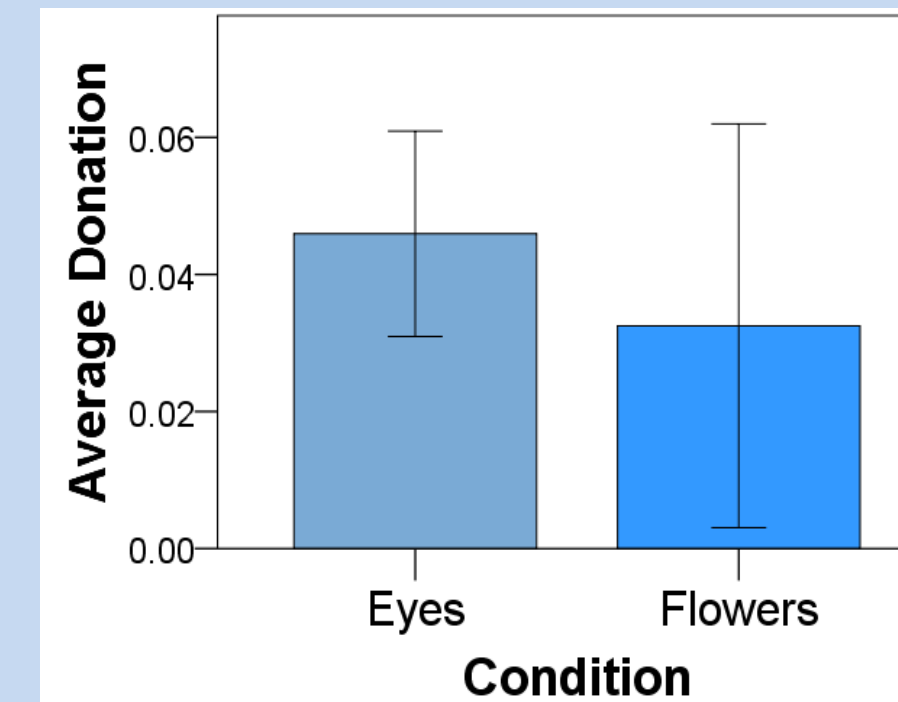


Figure 1. Bar chart showing the average donation across eye conditions (N=32) and flower conditions (N=8) with standard error bars.

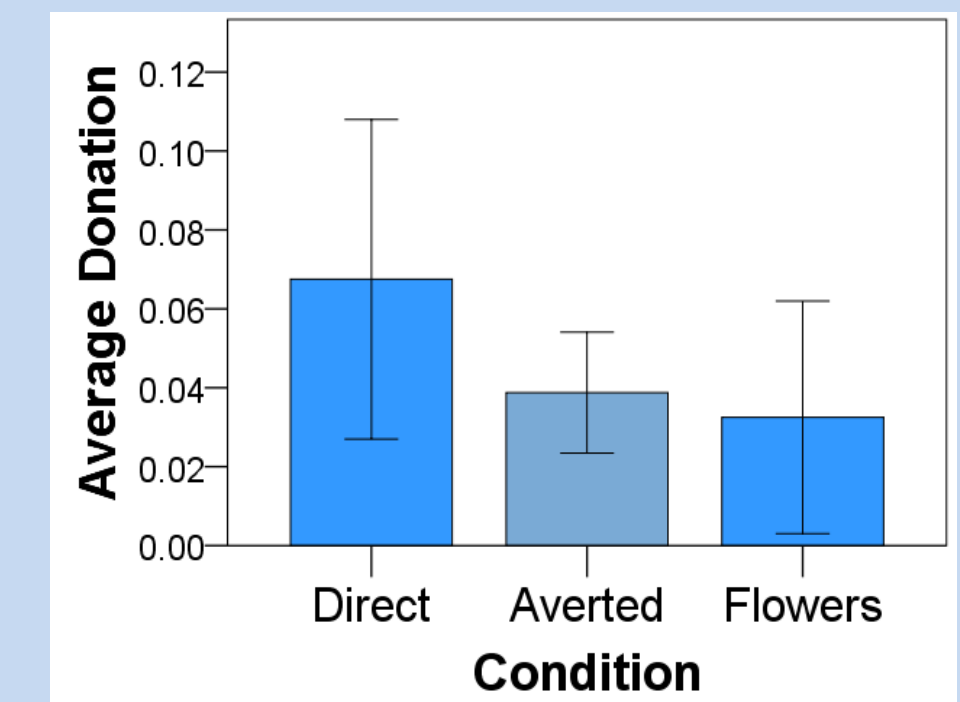


Figure 2. Bar chart showing the average donation across direct eye conditions (N=8), averted eye conditions (N=8) and flower conditions (N=8) with standard error bars.

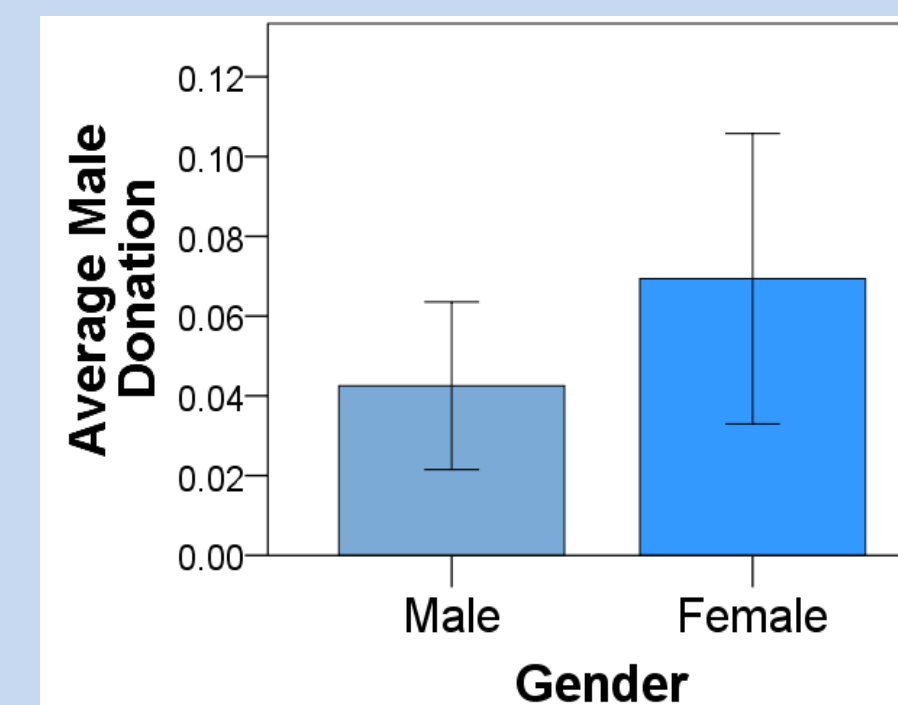


Figure 3. Bar chart showing the average male donation across male eye conditions (N=16) and female eye conditions (N=16) with standard error bars.

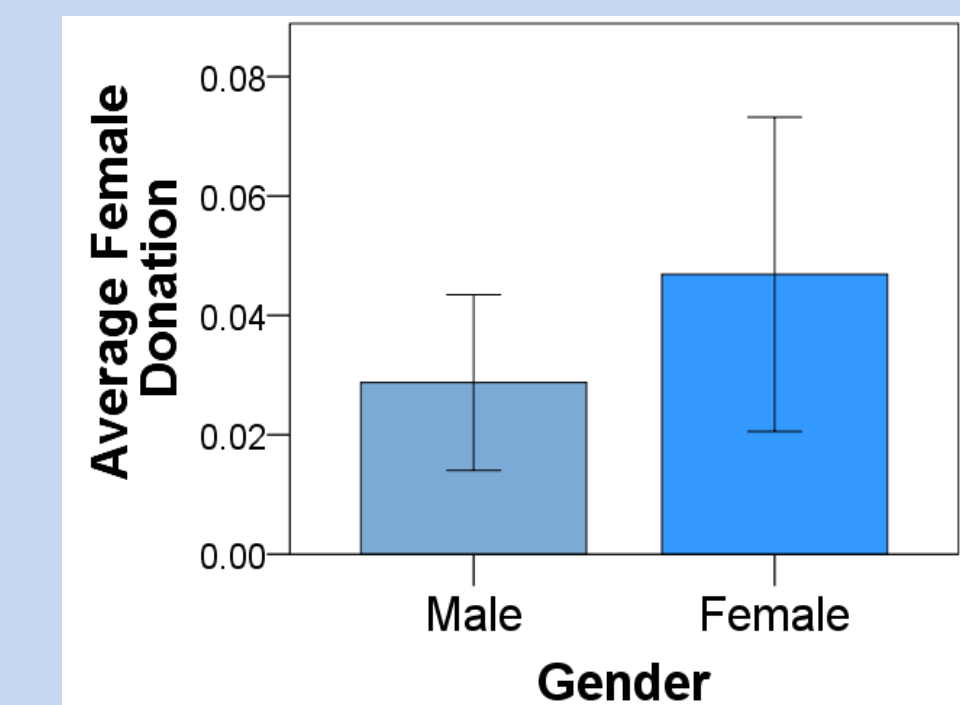


Figure 4. Bar chart showing the average female donation across male eye conditions (N=16) and female eye conditions (N=16) with standard error bars.

- There were no statistically significant differences (p-value was more than 0.05) between the conditions as measured by two way ANOVA.

DISCUSSION

- Although this study did not find a significant effect of the watching eyes on people's donation behaviour, it should not necessarily be concluded that the effect does not exist.
- Figures 1-3 show that the differences between the stimuli are in the hypothesised trend, suggesting that eye features could be an important component of the watching eyes effect.
- Further research should more carefully assess situational importance when investigating the effect of implicit cues on people's pro-social behaviour, as well as carry out additional replications of the stimuli.

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