



Introduction

Recent studies show the effect of priming by religious concepts (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007) and the effect of environmental cues on the honesty and prosocial behavior by human subjects (Haley and Fessler 2005, Bateson et al. 2006). More importantly, Xygalatas et al. (in press) show how religious material setting shapes humans cooperation and sense for prosociality. Religious environments are often populated by statues and material images of special religious agents and other anthropomorphic depictions. Scientists can speculate that these artifacts may, to certain extent, be responsible for the effect these environments have on our behavior. Marcel (1983: 7) argues that visual stimuli can activate structurally related and associated representations in their respective representational domains. Individuals with religious background may in the presence of religious artifacts represent the mental states of these supernatural beings and suggest on their special abilities operating within their sight.

Developmental psychologists suggest that depictions of faces with eyes are relatively more attention grabbing than other facial components (Maurer 1985). Eyes are important cues revealing potential intentions of the others. Vision is the main sensory component in what Baron-Cohen (1995: 38-40) calls the Eye Direction Detector (EDD). This mechanism allows to predict the behavior of others and to synchronize the collective activity of the group. This capacity develops early in the childhood to be a vital part of the joint-attention mechanism (Tomasello 1999). Also, according to Saxe (2006) the mechanisms responsible for detecting the presence of others are found at the neural level.

Predictions

General research question: Will participants contribute more money in an honesty box in the presence of a stimuli?

The second research question relates to the material quality of presented stimuli and asks: Will participants contribute more money to the honesty box in the presence of a 3-dimensional experimental stimuli than in the presence of a 2-dimensional stimuli presented as an image printed on a sheet of paper?

General hypothesis

Participants will contribute more money in the presence of a human face with eyes than in the presence of the control stimuli.

Specific hypothesis1

Participants will contribute more money in the presence of a face with eyes gazing on the participant than eyes looking elsewhere.

Specific hypothesis2

Participants will contribute more money in the presence of a 3-dimensional face rather than in the presence of a 2-dimensional face presented as an image printed on paper.

Subjects

Subjects are taken from a pool of library users, mostly students, with the turn over of roughly 90 000 per year. The majority of these visitors are university undergraduates with an even distribution of men and women.

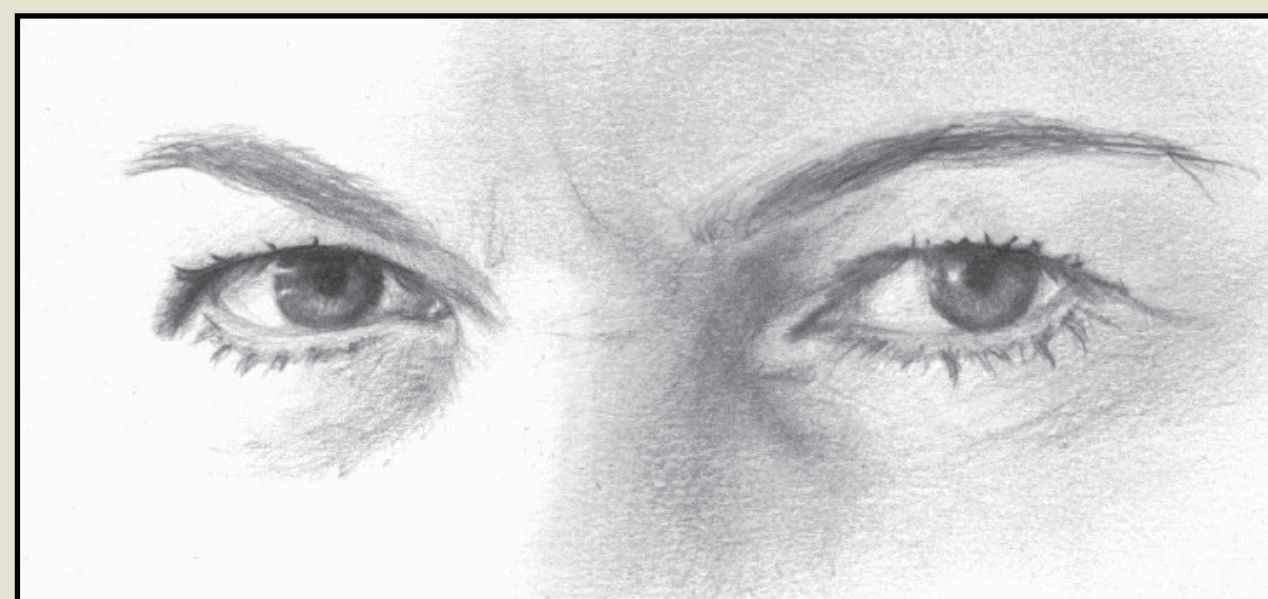
Stimuli and method

Quasi-experiment in real-world settings.

Factor1

Treatment condition1 (Face with a pair of eyes gazing on participant)

Treatment condition2 (Face with a pair of eyes gazing at random spot in the room)



Factor1, treatment condition1

Factor2

Stimuli will appear either as: a/ printed out horizontally on the blank sheet of paper of A3, or b/ presented as a 3-dimensional statue.



Factor2, treatment condition a) and b)

Control condition The control condition will use depictions of flowers and/or real flowers selected on a pseudo-random basis.

Throughout the course of experiment, research stimuli will appear in the following order:

- 1/ Treatment condition1 (2D)
- 2/ Control condition (3D)
- 3/ Treatment condition 2 (3D)
- 4/ Control condition (2D)
- 5/ Treatment condition 2 (2D)
- 6/ Control condition (3D)
- 7/ Treatment condition1 (3D)
- 8/ Control condition (3D)

Settings

The study will be situated in the foyer of the library. All the equipment needed for the course of study, namely the table and the notice board, are already at the location. In this natural setting we plan to add a platter with a pre-packet drink (e.g. energy drink or coffee), and visibly installed posters informing passersby with the instructions.

Dependent measures

1. amount of monetary contribution per person, per drink, time code
 2. gender
 3. questionnaire (among others controlling for a visibility features of stimuli)
- ...pseudo randomly assigned by a researcher

Mechanism of contribution

Participants will be asked to take one drink only, pack each monetary contribution into designated paper envelopes and drop it the money box. We also consider to control for gender (possibly by asking to use envelopes of a two different colors).

References

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