Emotional judgment depends on percieved gender

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Introduction

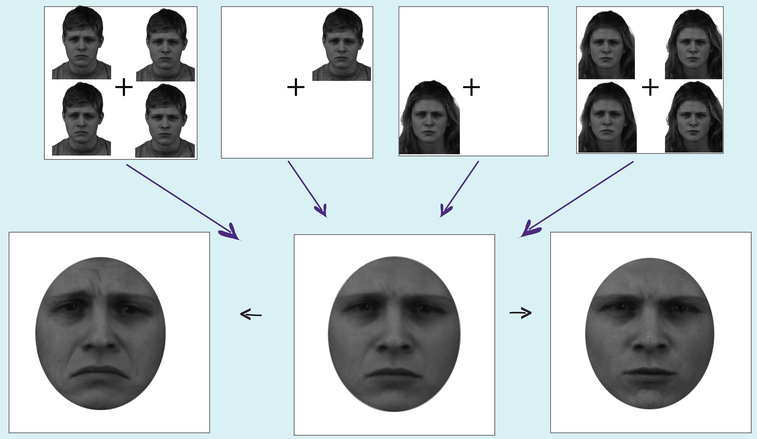
There is a prevailing stereotype in the perception of emotion: Females and males are often perceived as sadder and angrier, respectively, than they actually are. Exploration of this topic has been challenging, as the stimuli typically used differ across gender, so it is unclear whether differences in emotion perception arise due to differences in the perception of gender or differences in low-level features of the faces themselves. We resolve this by having observers judge androgynous faces that have either been masculinized or feminized using secondary cues (e.g., the length of the hair), while keeping facial content identical.

Question: Does perceived gender influence perceived emotionality, even when facial content is identical?

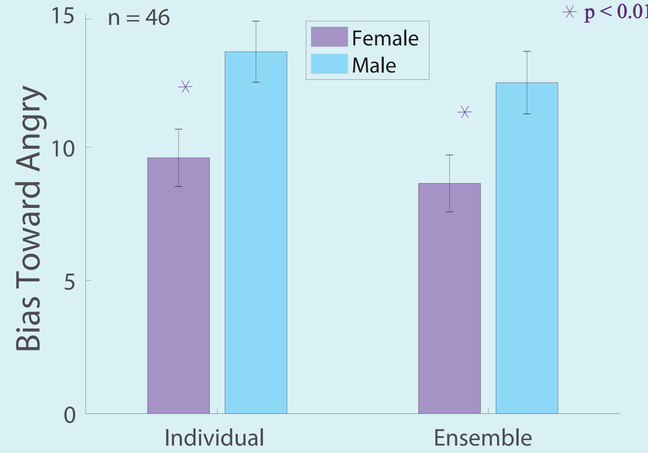
Stimuli



Experiment 1: Sad to Angry

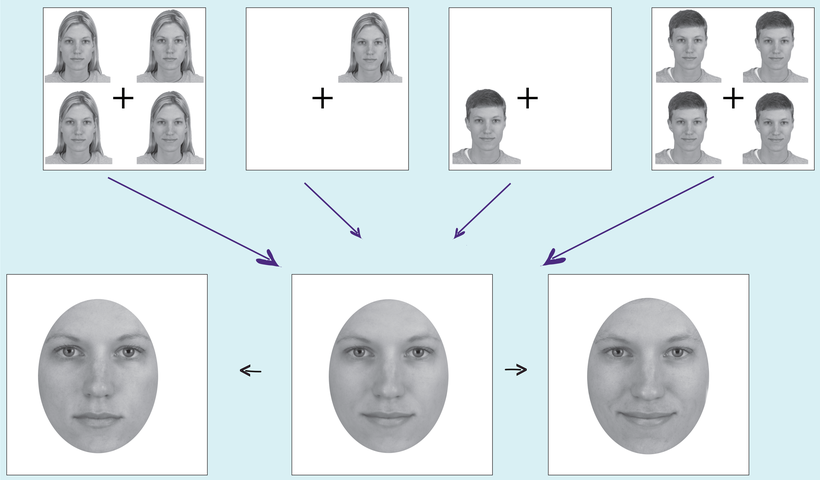


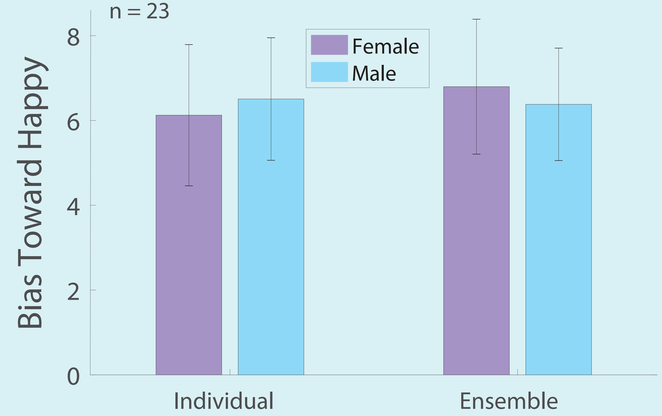
Observers matched the emotional intensity of the face from the previous set by dragging the mouse left or right.



Takeaway: There is a significant effect of gender, even given identical facial content. This is consistent with our prediction that perceived gender influences perceived emotional intensity in a gender-stereotypical fashion.

Experiment 2: Neutral to Happy





Takeaway: Unlike for sad and angry emotions, there was no effect of gender on the perception happiness. Happiness is not stereotyped by gender in the same way that sadness and anger are.

Conclusion

Our results resolve an ongoing debate about whether perceived gender influences perceived emotional intensity. It can, but the effect depends on the emotional expression.

References

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