

Do artificial surveillance cues increase generosity? Two meta-analyses

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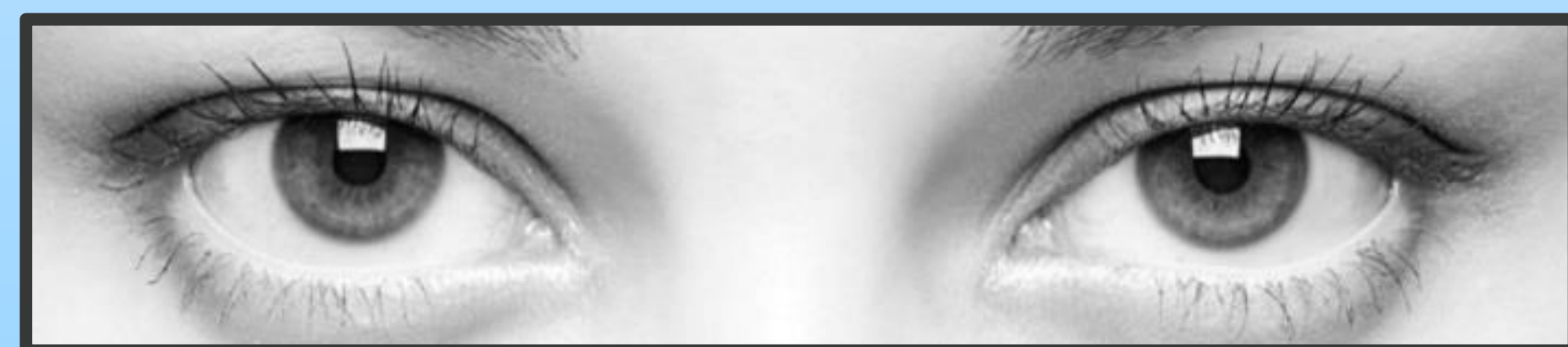
Introduction

When people know they are being watched, they are more generous (Kurzban, 2001).

Several papers seemingly show that even *artificial cues of being watched* impact behavior (e.g., Haley & Fessler, 2005).

However, some studies have failed to replicate this surveillance cue effect (e.g., Matsugasaki, Tsukamoto, & Ohtsubo, 2015).

In light of these mixed results, we conducted two meta-analyses investigating the effect of artificial surveillance cues on generosity.



Images of eyes, such as this one (Pedersen, 2016), have been used as surveillance cues by several studies.

Method

Meta-analysis procedures outlined by Lipsey and Wilson (2001)

Effect size calculated for each experiment
- generosity for the surveillance cue condition compared to the control condition

Effect sizes weighted using random effects model

Calculated overall effect size, SE, and 95% CI

Proportion who gave meta-analysis

- Measure: proportion of participants who gave something rather than nothing
- 19,512 participants
- 27 experiments

Amount given meta-analysis

- Measure: mean amount of resources (usually money) given by participants to others
- 2,732 participants
- 26 experiments

Results:

Proportion who gave

Logged odds-ratio: 0.16 (SE = 0.10)

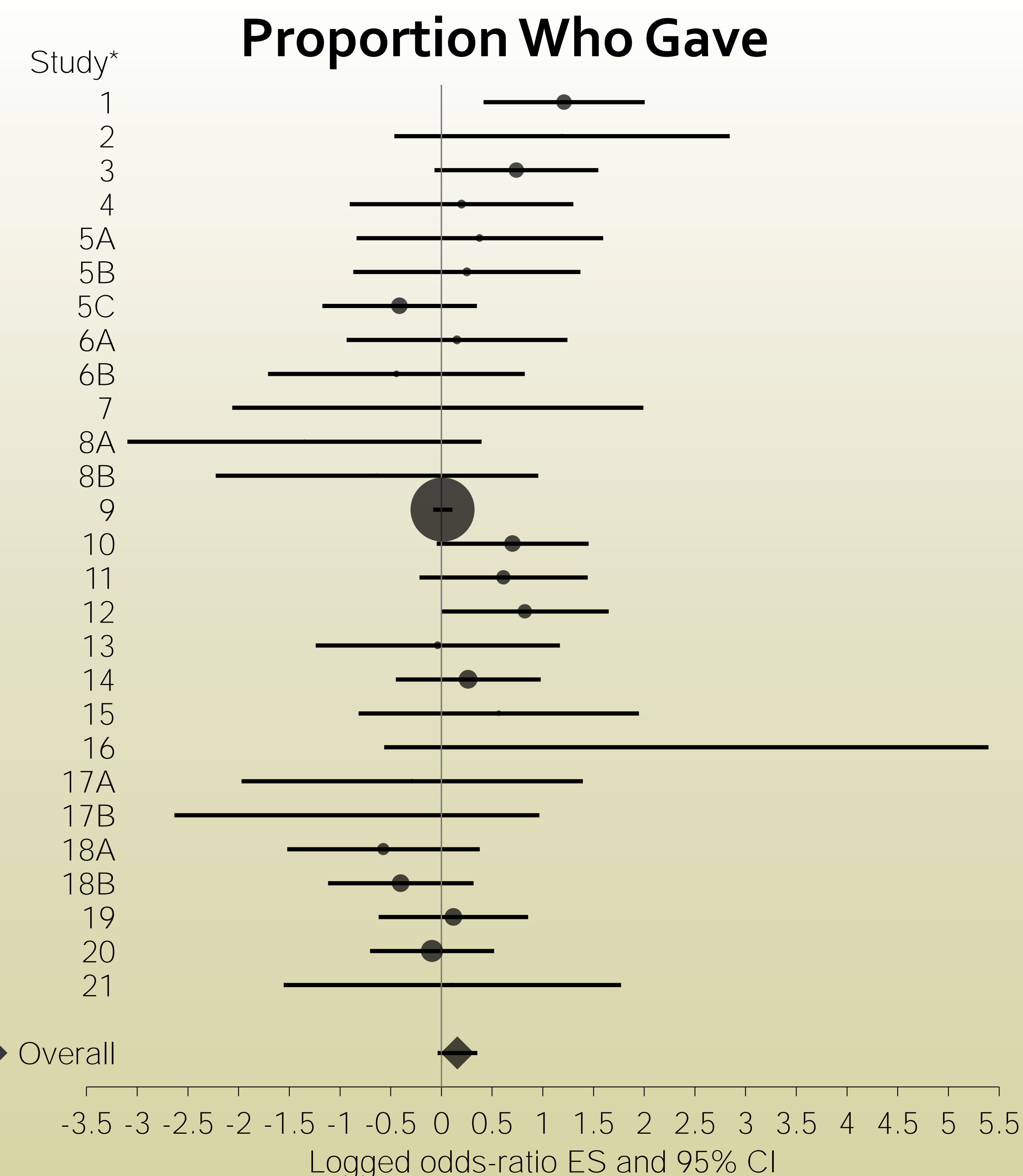
Participants in the surveillance cue conditions were 1.17 times more likely to give than participants in the control conditions.

95% CI: -0.04 to 0.35

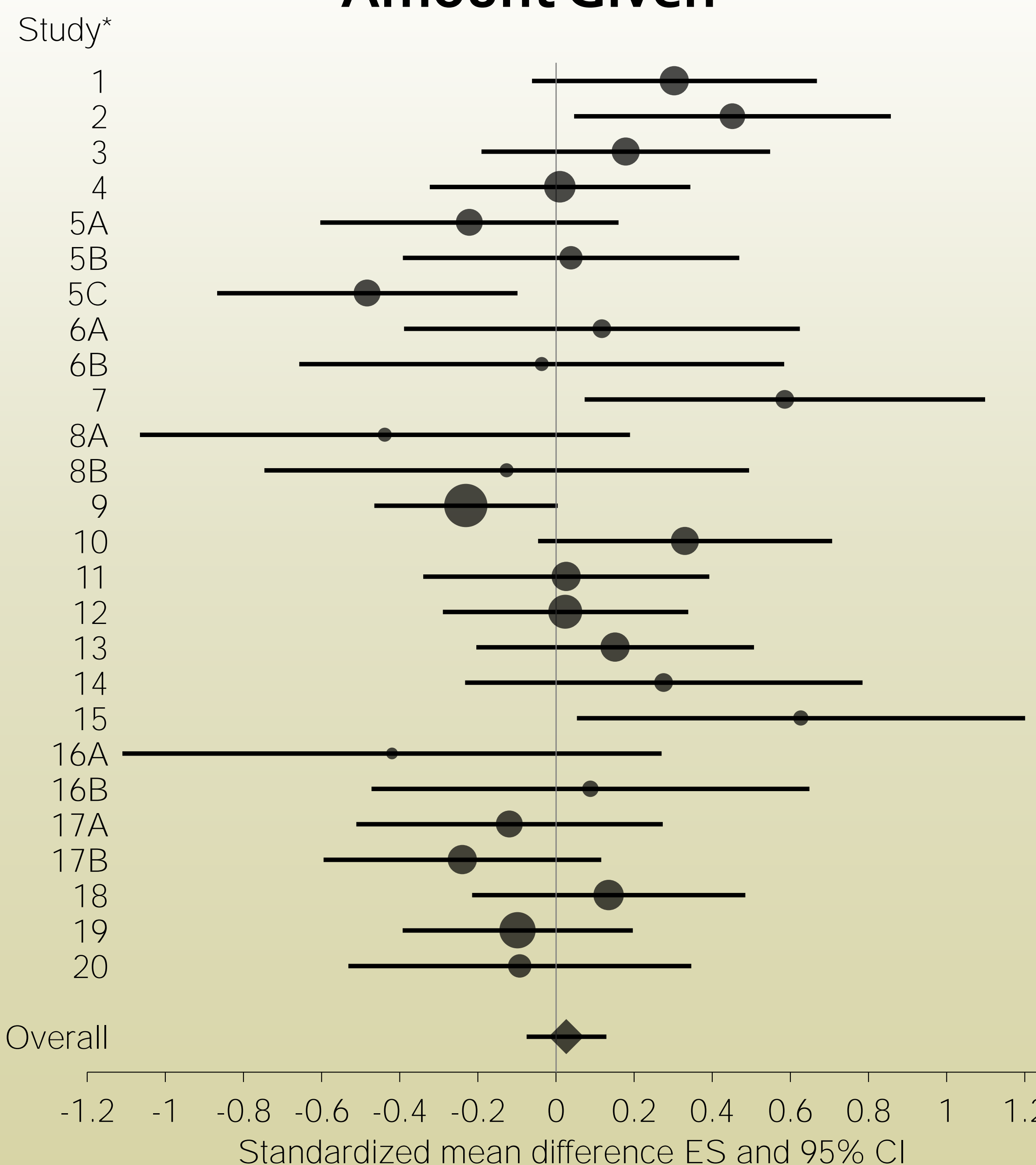
The effect size is not significantly different from zero.

No effect

When effect sizes were positive, proportion of Ss who gave was greater in the surveillance cue condition.



Amount Given



Results:

Amount given

Mean difference: 0.03 (SE = 0.05)

Participants in the surveillance cue conditions were slightly more generous than participants in the control conditions.

95% CI: -0.08 to 0.13

The effect size is not significantly different from zero.

No effect

When effect sizes were positive, amount given by Ss was greater in the surveillance cue condition.

Conclusion

No evidence that artificial cues of being watched increase generosity

Two meta-analyses found no evidence that artificial surveillance cues increase generosity, either by increasing how generous individuals are or by increasing the probability that individuals will show any generosity at all.

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References

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Further information

Northover, S. B., Pedersen, W. C., Cohen, A. B., & Andrews, P. W. (2016). Artificial surveillance cues do not increase generosity: Two meta-analyses. *Evolution and Human Behavior*. doi:10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.07.001

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*Studies cited in manuscript

