

HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Using Attitude and Eyetracking to Predict Behavior Toward Street Canvassing

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Street canvassers set up booths with hopes of catching the attention of passersby; however, many people put their head down and hurry past. Despite the prevalence of street canvassers, minimal evidence exists supporting their efficacy. Strong attitudes have been long assumed to impact visual processing and may predict this approach/avoidance behavior. A limitation of past work is that attitude-guided attention has traditionally been measured through memory biases due to limits in technology, which is itself prone to attitude bias. The current work seeks to shed light on street canvassing efficacy while also replicating attitude-guided attention work with the use of eye-tracking as a measure of attention as opposed to memory. The variable being manipulated in this study is perceived cost. Participants first complete a questionnaire that measures attitude accessibility and extremity toward street canvassers. Next, the participant puts on eye-

tracking glasses and is told a cover story (which includes directions to navigate campus), but in reality, he or she is directed on a path containing a confederate acting as a street canvasser. By random assignment, the confederate stands or sits while actively soliciting donations. It is hypothesized that those with strong attitudes toward street canvassers will find the confederate quickly in their visual field regardless of valence. Those with strong positive attitudes are expected to pass the confederate more closely than those with strong negative attitudes. Implications from this study include empirical understanding of street canvassing as well as providing theoretical support for attitude-guided visual search.

Research advisor Meghan Norris writes, "Attitudes can bias information processing. Seminal work exploring attitude-biased attention uses memory as an index of attention due to limitations in technology. However, memory can also show attitude biases. The current work explores attitude-biased attention with eye tracking in an understudied applied context, contributing theoretical and practical benefits to the field."