Dogs' ability to project their own experience onto others

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Introduction

Dogs have shown to follow human gaze to and around barriers, into distant space, and shown visual perspective taking abilities.

The aim is to investigate whether pet dogs' can use their own experience with novel barriers to infer if someone else can or cannot see through the same barriers.

Method

- Dogs were familiarized with the properties of two tunnels, one opaque and one transparent inside.
- During the test, the dogs could not see inside the tunnel, only the outside.
- We measured dogs' gaze-following response when the experimenter looked at a bucket either through the tunnel containing the opaque screen or through the tunnel containing the transparent screen.

Results

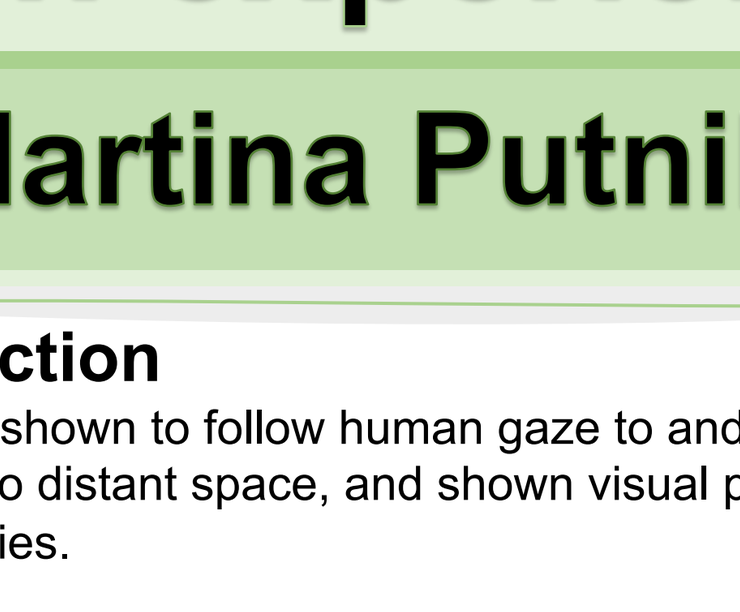

Figure: Dogs gaze congruent looking times were not significantly modulated by the looking condition (p=0.12).

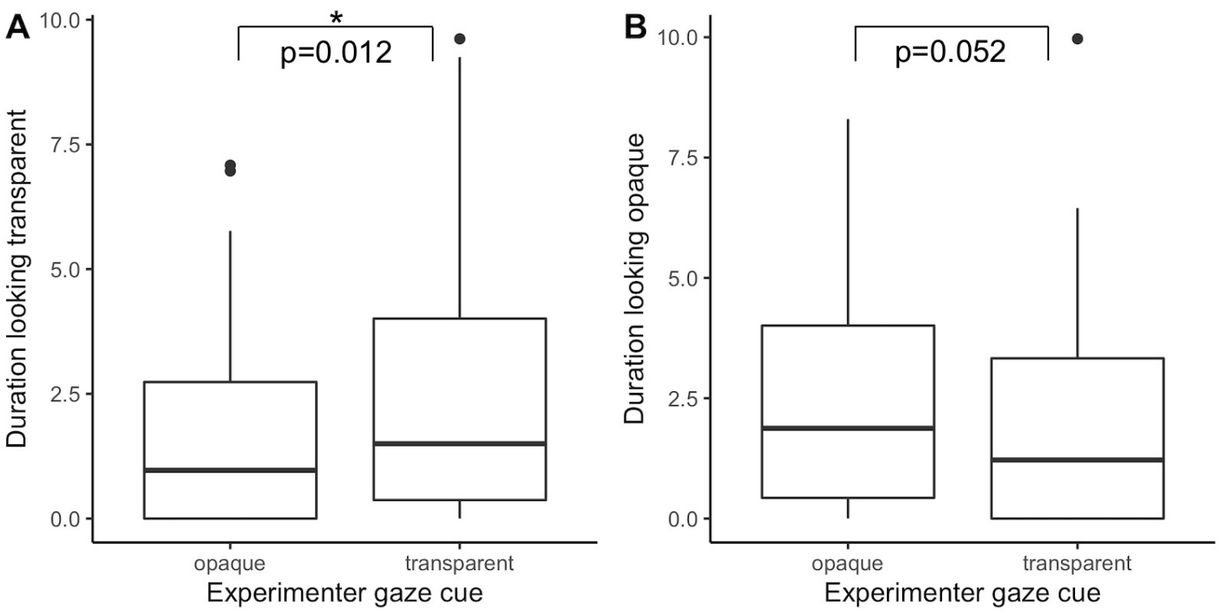

Figure A: When the experimenter looked at transparent screen, dogs looked significantly longer at the bucket behind the transparent screen than when the experimenter looked at the opaque screen.

Figure B: Dogs' looking times to the bucket behind the tunnel with the opaque screen were not significantly modulated by the experimenter's direction of looking.

Conclusion

- Dogs do not follow the experimenters gaze more than chance irrespective of condition.
- Dogs look longer and look more often first towards the bucket behind the transparent tunnel when the transparent screen is cued compared to when the opaque one is.
- Do not provide clear support if pet dogs can use their own experience with novel barriers to infer if someone else can or cannot see through the same barriers.

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