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The Role of Gender and Emotions on Moral Hypocrisy

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Background

- ❖ Moral hypocrisy is judging your actions to be more acceptable than when another person performs the same actions in similar circumstances.
- ❖ Recent studies have shown that the emotions of anger and guilt have interesting effects on an individual's moral hypocrisy. Anger increasing the likelihood that one will be hypocritical and guilt effectively neutralizes any hypocritical tendencies. (Polman & Ruttan, 2012)
- ❖ We were keenly interested to see if we could duplicate these results at Ouachita and were also curious as to whether or not gender plays a role in how hypocritical a person will be.
- ❖ We wanted to know if emotion or gender could negatively impact logical reasoning because if they do, we could keep this in mind while making judgments in the future.
- ❖ We hypothesized that anger would show a significant effect for moral hypocrisy and that guilt would neutralize any tendencies towards moral hypocrisy. We also hypothesized that anger would affect men more than women.

Method

- ❖ Our participants were 29 men and 63 women from a small private university in the southern United States and were asked to recall a personal story related to either anger or guilt.
- ❖ They immediately completed PANAS (S) (Watson and Clark, 1988 which measures emotions such as happy, distressed, and calm on a scale rating how they currently felt from 1 (meaning very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely).
- ❖ The participants also responded to surveys about the acceptability of other people's actions and then the acceptability of their own actions.
- ❖ The surveys included five items including "cutting in line" and "breaking a law for a loved one." The participants responded on a scale of 1 (being not at all acceptable) to 5 (being completely acceptable) for someone else and then again for themselves. We subtracted their answer for others from their answers for themselves and if it was positive, that indicated hypocrisy.
- ❖ The participants then were given a hypothetical twenty dollars which they were told to divide between keeping for themselves, donating to a charity, and/or giving to a homeless person. This activity was just meant as a distractor but the participants were meant to believe it was the main task in order to prevent them from guessing our hypothesis.

Results

- ❖ Unfortunately we did not find as many significant results for either anger or guilt like the studies before us found.
- ❖ There were no significant differences for men or women, except for one hypocritical scenario. An interaction formed between emotion and gender due to the fact that angry males were more okay with others keeping the item $F(1) = 5.725, p < .05$.
- ❖ We found a significant main effect of gender on the cashier scenario $F(1, 90) = 8.13, p < .05$ and a significant main effect of emotion on the cashier scenario $F(1, 90) = 8.019, p < .05$.
- ❖ Our distraction task also found a significant difference in how much money a person kept based on their gender. Men were much more likely to keep the money ($p = .015$) as opposed to giving it away ($p = .001$).

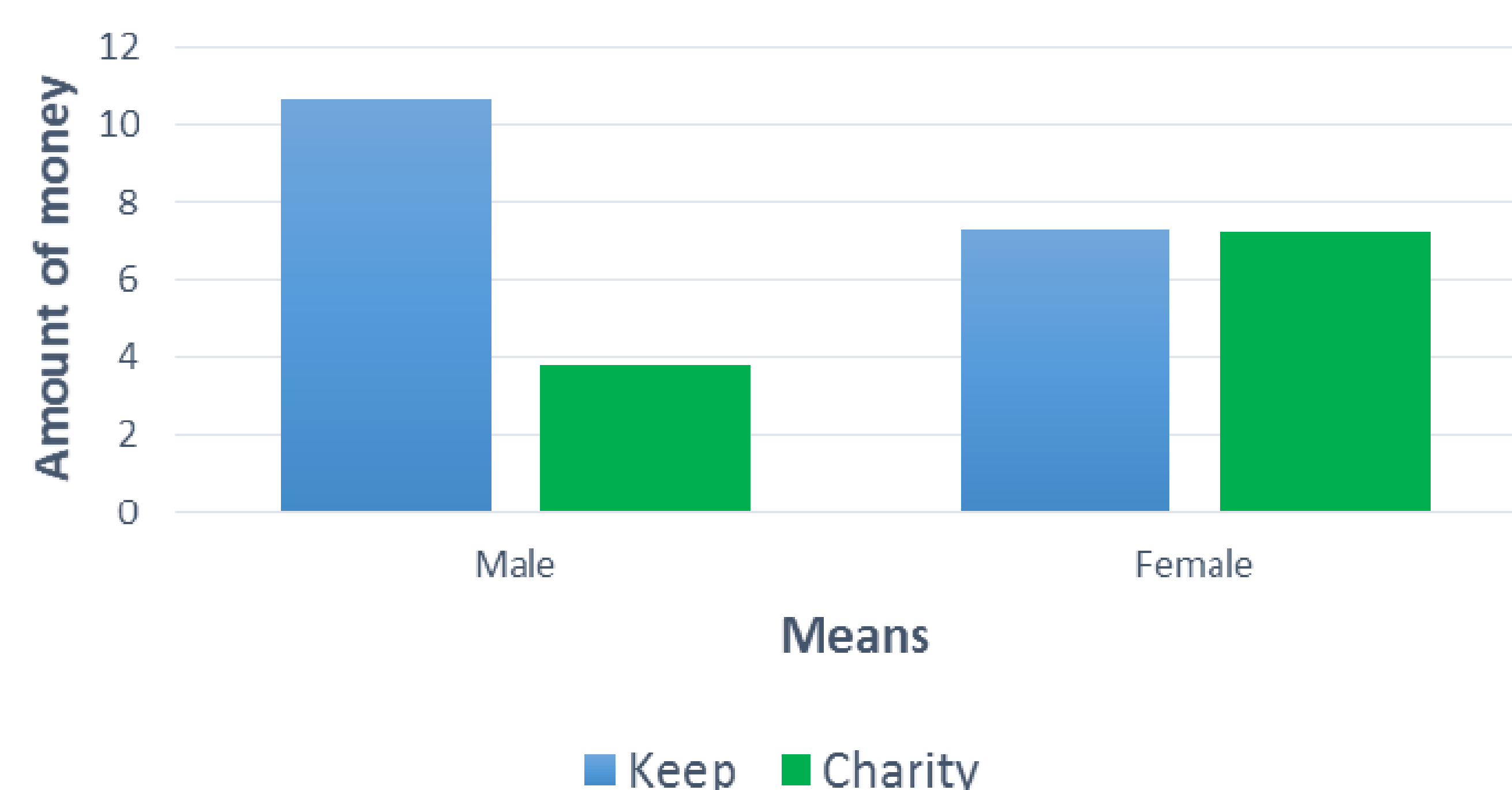
Conclusions

- ❖ Even though our research did not provide the fruits we were interested in, we still came across some interesting results that are worth discussing.
- ❖ Finding a significant difference in how much money men and women keep for themselves is intriguing because it suggests that men are more selfish than women.
- ❖ Our inability to find a significant result for moral hypocrisy may be attributed to the population we drew our sample from. OBU is a Christian university and many of the students here may have succumbed to the idea of social desirability and tried to answer our questions in a way that would be socially acceptable.
- ❖ Since there was a significant difference in the cashier situation, it is puzzling to try and determine what was causing the discrepancy between the sexes since it was not the emotions that we primed. Conducting further studies to try and determine the cause of this rift between genders would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Acceptability to keep an item a cashier fails to scan



Distribution of \$20



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