

Biological Roots of Giving

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Abstract

This paper explores whether generosity may be partially determined biologically. We analyze the relationship between donations in two Dictator Games and the digit ratio, a marker of prenatal exposure to testosterone. We find a non-monotonic concave relation. Subjects with both high and low digit ratios give less than individuals with intermediate digit ratios. In addition, the way people update their behavior from one game to the other is also related to the digit ratio. These results indicate that biology (i) may be an important mechanism for the transmission of social norms and thus (ii) constitutes a relevant source of variation of human preferences.