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Pauline Rasset, Benoit Montalan, Jessica Mange

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# "Please catch my eyes": Perceptions and reactions to facial visible difference

Project VISHU

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/VISage-et-HUMANITE-comprendre-et-prevenir-les-difficultes-dintegration-sociale-des-personnes-atteintes-de-defiguration-faciale>



Pauline Rasset<sup>1</sup>,



Benoit Montalan<sup>2</sup>,



Jessica Mange<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Unicaen; Laboratoire de Psychologie Caen Normandie (LPCN, EA7452), Caen, France

<sup>2</sup>Université de Rouen Normandie; Centre de Recherche sur les Fonctionnements et Dysfonctionnements Psychologiques (CRFDP, EA7475), Rouen, France

## Backgrounds

People living with a visible difference may experience stigma [1].



Affective reactions of other people can be especially difficult to deal with [2].

Little is known about the impact of visual attention on these reactions [3].

### Aim

To investigate the relationship between visual attention and affective reactions.

## Methods

### Participants

N = 89, Age: M = 19.20, SD = 1.82

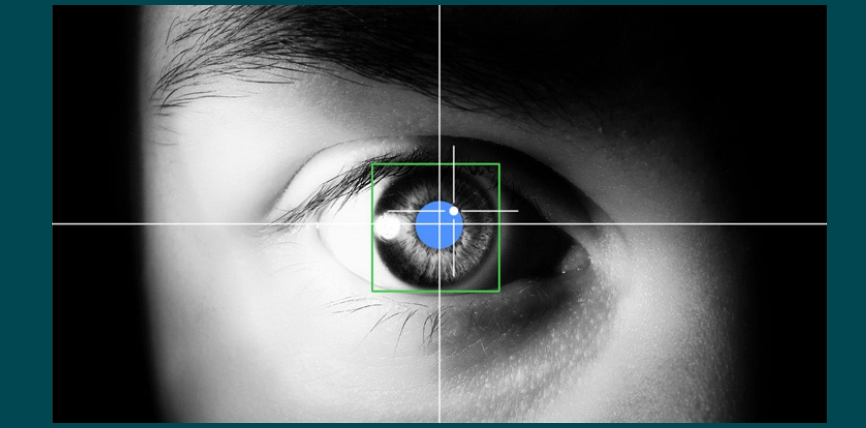
### Stimuli

Portraits with and without a burn-like scar on a cheek.



### Measures

Eye-tracking technology



This device enables researchers to investigate visual attention.

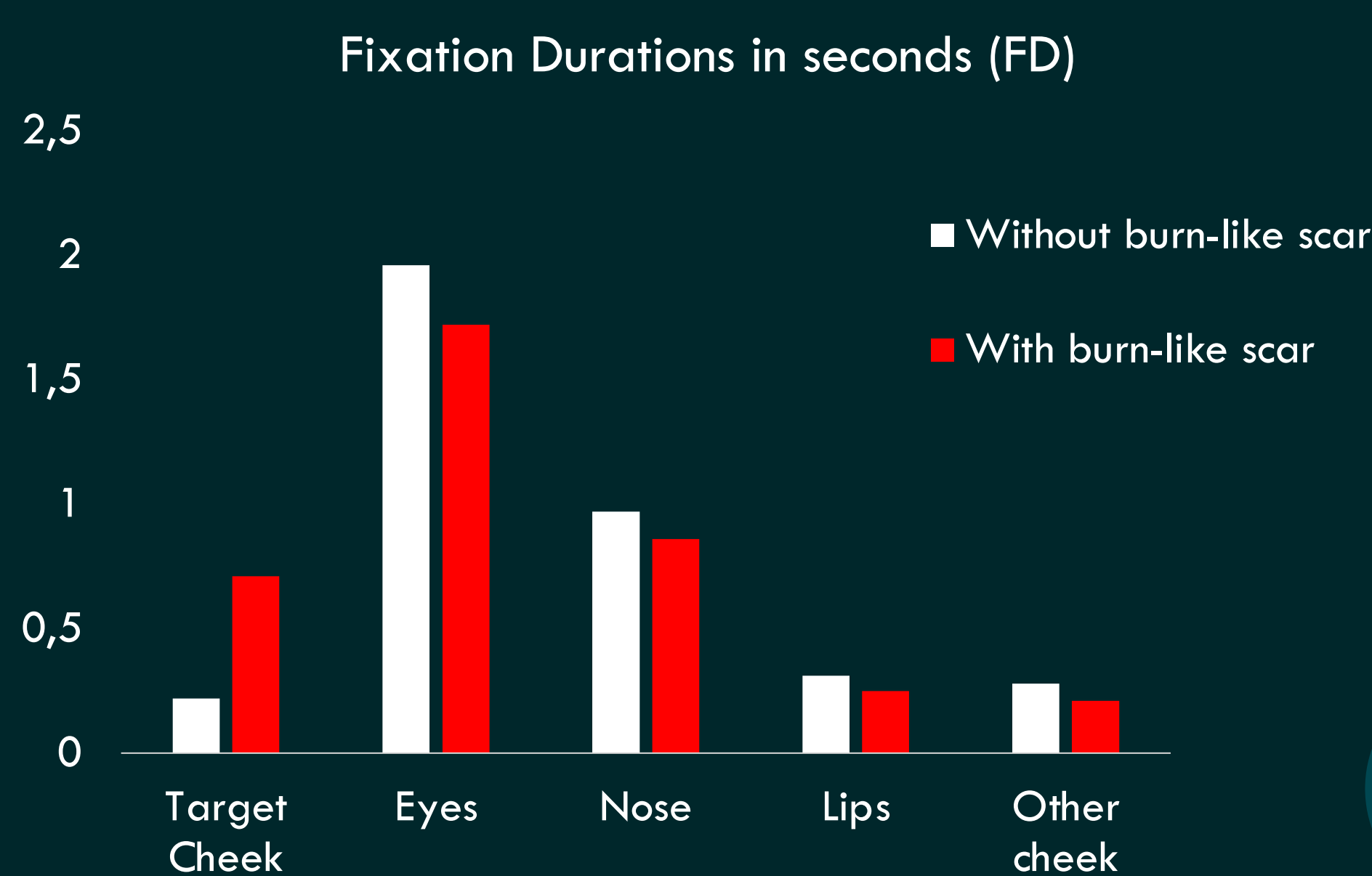
Questionnaires of affective reactions



- Task**
- 1) To look at the portraits,
  - 2) To rate the affective states elicited.

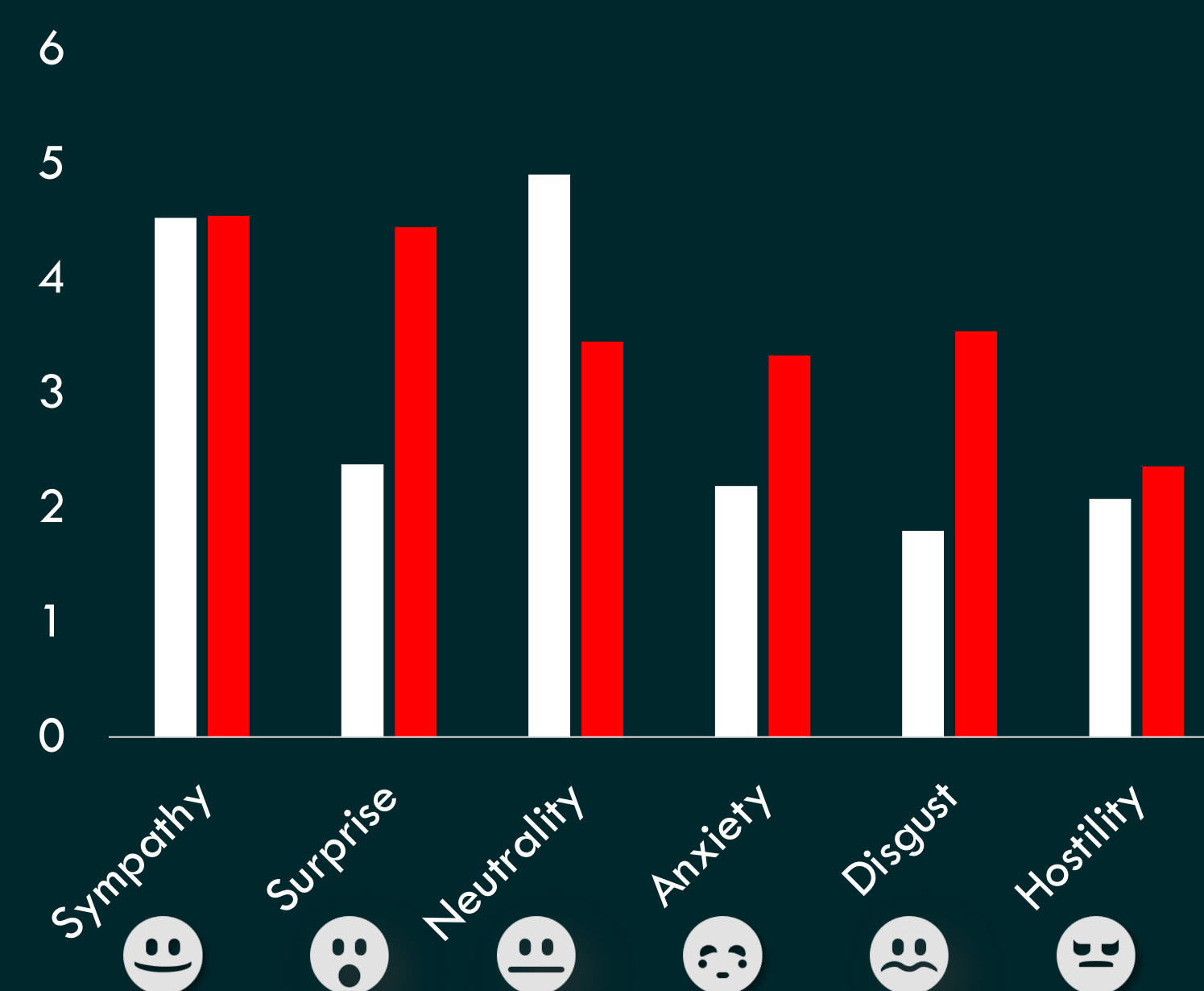
1

More time is spent looking at the facial difference and less looking at the central features of the face.



## Findings

Affective reactions

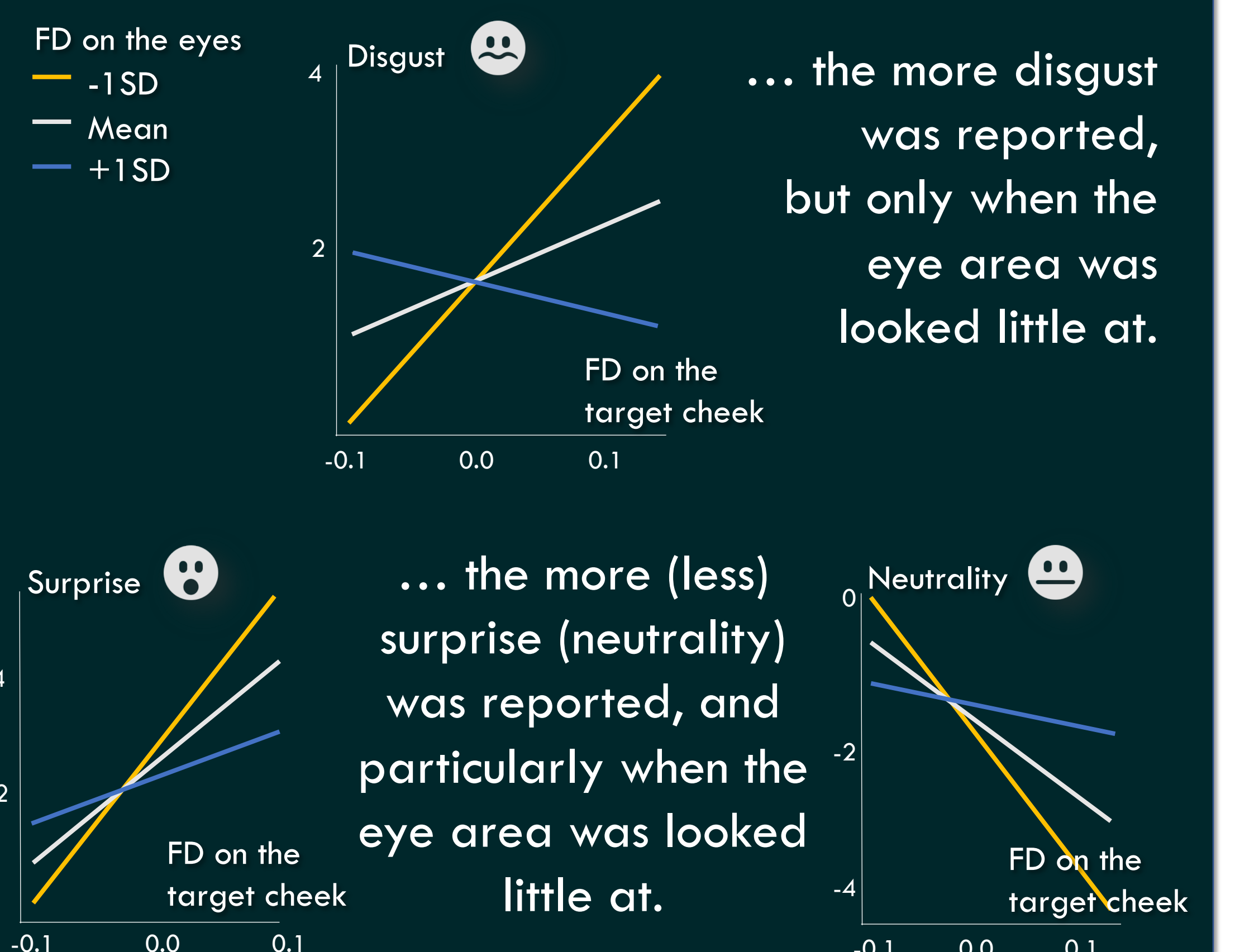


2

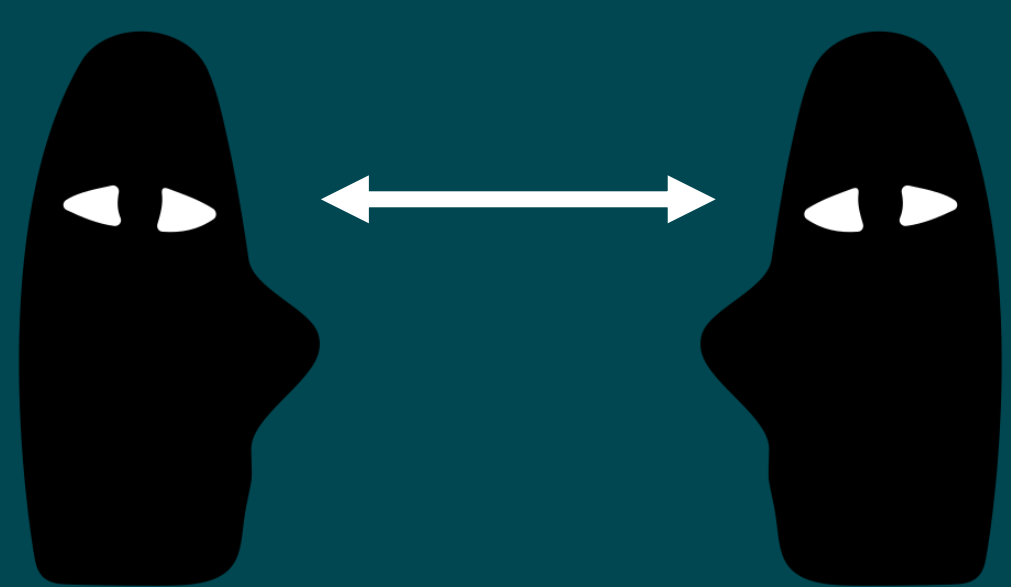
Visible differences elicit ambivalent reactions.

3

The more the facial difference was explored, ...



## Discussion



### Take-home message

Eye focus seems to limit stigmatizing reactions to a visible difference.

### Implications

**For research**  
Why do people make eye contact (or not)?  
Does it affect behavior?



**For practice**  
Can strategies fostering eye focus reduce stigma?

## References

- [1] Rumsey, N., & Harcourt, D. (2004). Body image and disfigurement: issues and interventions. *Body Image*, 1(1), 83–97. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1740-1445\(03\)00005-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1740-1445(03)00005-6)
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- [3] Stone, A., & Potton, A. (2019). Emotional responses to disfigured faces and Disgust Sensitivity: An eye-tracking study. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 24(9), 1191–1200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105317692856>

### Contact

pauline.rasset@unicaen.fr  
Laboratoire de Psychologie Caen Normandie,  
Unicaen, Esplanade de la paix, 14000 Caen, France

