

# Filtering out Empathy: The Impact of Other-Alteration through AI-Filters on Prosocial Behavior

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## Abstract

Facial expressions are essential to human interaction, providing emotional cues that influence how we perceive and respond to others. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) now enable real-time manipulation of these expressions, raising ethical concerns about AI-mediated communication (AI-MC). This project investigates the effects of AI-based facial expression alterations on prosocial behavior and empathy using a choice-exposure counterfactual paradigm. It addresses two key questions: (1) Do facial AI filters influence empathy and prosocial behavior? (2) Do individuals strategically use AI filters to justify self-serving actions? Participants chose between authentic and AI-filtered videos before making donation decisions after exposure. In an initial study, neutralizing AI filters showed no significant effects on empathy or donations. Building on these findings, we will explore stronger filters and more emotionally expressive portrayals to better understand their impact. This research aims to advance knowledge of the psychological and ethical implications of AI-MC.