

Hey, I'm over here: Men and women see things differently

July 31 2012

USC researchers show that men and women focus on different things when paying attention and are drawn away by different types of distractions.

In a new study published in the journal *Vision Research*, researchers at the University of Southern California show that the eyes and attention of men and women meander in distinctly different ways.

The article, authored by Dr. Laurent Itti and [doctoral student](#) John Shen, challenges the way scientists generally conceive of attention, or how sensory information is prioritized. While previous study of vision and attention had disregarded individual factors such as sex, race and age, Itti and Shen demonstrated that men and women pay [visual attention](#) in different ways.

Dr. Itti's lab studied 34 participants as they watched videos of people being interviewed. Behind the interview subjects, within the video frame, [pedestrians](#), bicycles and cars passed by – [distractions](#) included to pull attention away from the filmed conversation.

While participants watched and listened to the interview, another camera was pointed at participants' eyes, recording the movement of their pupils as they glanced across the screen.

Researchers discovered the following:

- Men, when focused on the person being interviewed, parked their eyes on the speaker's mouth. They tended to be most distracted by distinctive movement behind the interview subjects
- By contrast, women shift their focus between the interview subject's eyes and body. When they were distracted, it was typically by other people entering the video frame.

Dr. Laurent Itti, an associate professor of computer science at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, runs USC's iLab, a research lab dedicated to gaining insight into biological brain function through the use of computational modeling. John Shen, also with iLab, is a Ph.D. student in the USC Neuroscience Graduate Program at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and conducted this research as part of his doctoral thesis and USC Provost Neuroscience Fellowship.

Funding for the project came from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Army Research Office, the U.S. Army.

Provided by University of Southern California

Citation: Hey, I'm over here: Men and women see things differently (2012, July 31) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-hey-im-men-women-differently.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.