Sex Difference in Attentional Orienting to Informative Central and Peripheral Cues

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Abstract: Previous literature has reported a weak but robust sex difference in the orienting of spatial attention toward uninformative eye-gaze cues, which was not found for the orienting toward uninformative peripheral cues. However, whether the sex difference in attentional orienting was due to differential top-down control or simply reflected strategic difference in following experimental instructions remains to be clarified. In this study, informative cues (eye-gaze, arrow, and peripheral flashes) were adopted to examine whether females and males have differential strength of top-down attentional control. The results indicate that, counterpredictive peripheral flashes and arrows elicited greater validity effects in females than in males but eye-gaze cues did not. The current findings will be discussed in the context of the interaction between the top-down attentional control and social cognition.