

Now You See It, Now You Dont: Social Attention in a Magic Trick, Live and On Video

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Abstract: Research in social attention assumes that the way individuals attend to images of people accurately reflects how individuals attend to real live people. We examined whether this assumption is valid by studying how verbal cues affect where people look. In previous work using a live performance of a magic trick, verbal cues by the magician were shown to affect shifts in gaze. We extended this work by recording a similar trick in HD video and having observers watch the video while wearing an eye-tracker in order to investigate the effects of presentation medium (live vs. video) on social attention. While we discovered several key similarities across presentation mediums (e.g., verbal cues affected social attention), there were also some remarkable differences as well (e.g., the strength and frequency of the attention effect). The implication of these data for past and present theories of social attention, and future research approaches are discussed.