



Máster Universitario en
Neurociencia Cognitiva
y del Comportamiento

Seminario "Why is gaze special?: Common and specific attentional mechanisms"

18/04/2022

Why is gaze special?: Common and specific attentional mechanisms triggered by social and non-social

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Date and time: April 20st at 16:30

Place: <https://unipd.zoom.us/j/83857192432>

Gaze seems to be special for human beings as it acts, from early ages, as a cue to orient attention and infer the interests, intentions, thoughts, and emotions of our social partners. This led to the attribution to gaze of unique capabilities regarding the spatial orienting of attention with typical laboratory procedures such as spatial cueing. However, a recent metanalytic evaluation of the evidence gathered with these procedures shows that non-social directional stimuli, such as arrows, produce an effect identical to gaze, which leads to the potential conclusion that attentional orienting triggered by social cues reflects a domain-general orienting mechanism rather than a specialized social cognition mechanism. Alternatively, gaze might share with non-social directional stimuli this domain-general orienting mechanism but also induce extra higher-order processes, which could only be tapped with more sophisticated experimental procedures aiming at analyzing qualitative rather than quantitative differences between gaze and arrows. We will present data from some of these paradigms (e.g., spatial interference, spatial working memory, object-based orienting, inhibition of return), which support the existence of common and specific attentional mechanisms triggered by social cues; and will end with some conclusions regarding the nature of the extra social cognition processes specifically triggered by gaze.

