

RUNNING HEAD: EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

It's all in the eye of the beholder: The effects of personality on the social orienting of
attention

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*This thesis is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts (Honours).*

Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, 2013

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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Abstract

We tend to shift our attention to wherever other people are looking, a phenomenon known as gaze-driven attentional orienting (Driver et al., 1999; Friesen & Kingstone, 1998). Gaze triggers attentional orienting primarily due to its social importance, and the reflexive shift of attention in the direction of another person's gaze is widely documented (Friesen, Ristic, & Kingstone, 2004). Although much research has investigated the facial stimulus used to trigger orienting and how features of the face affect gaze cueing, few studies have examined the characteristics of the *observer* and how this might impact gaze driven attention. The present research used the gaze-cueing paradigm (Posner, 1980) to investigate whether the personality of the observer would influence reflexive orienting to gaze cues, and whether the observer's personality characteristics would interact with stimulus characteristics such as perceived social dominance (experiment 1 and 2) and emotional expression (experiment 2) to impact the magnitude of the gaze cueing effect. Both reaction time and accuracy to a briefly presented target letter were measured to assess the magnitude of gaze cueing. The results showed that observer personality did not impact the magnitude of gaze cueing, although the effect of extroversion approached significance. Interestingly, the results also indicated that while dominance affects reaction time it does not affect accuracy. The effect of social dominance on gaze cueing was modulated by extroversion. Experiment 2 showed that emotional expressions did not influence gaze cueing magnitude, nor did emotional expression interact with either personality or perceived social dominance. The results provides some very preliminary suggestions that certain personality characteristics are associated with stronger gaze cueing and the effects of observer personality on gaze cueing magnitude should be further explored.

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