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Covert Attention Shifts and Microsaccades

We present the hypothesis that microsaccades are indicators of covert attention shifts. This hypothesis is based on the "Pre-Motor" model of attention, which holds that every shift of covert attention creates a plan for a movement whose target is the new locus of attention. The motor command produced by this plan is usually suppressed, for example by the fixation cells in the superior colliculus. We propose that this suppression is often incomplete, leading to subliminal motor activity associated with the attention shift. We present the results of a set of psychophysical experiments which establish a correlation between covert attention shifts and the generation of microsaccades.

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