

Improving Observation Skills, Page 3

Video: Clown on a Unicycle Experiment

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysbk_28F068

Duration: 3 minutes, 30 seconds

NARRATOR: If you were talking on your cell phone, would you see this clown? According to a Western Washington University study, most students surveyed did not. The study conducted by Dr. Ira Hyman and his senior seminar psychology class was an attempt to study the effect of inattention blindness. The results of this study shows that while only a quarter of cellphone users noticed the unicycling clown in red square, half the individuals not using their cellphones, and a contrasting 75 percent of students walking in pairs did take notice.

KIRA: Kind of historically a lot of the studies that have to do inattention blindness have used a novel stimuli like that. ummm you know, someone dressed up in animal suit or something like that, and we were kind joking around about what we could do, you know, can we get like a bear or something like that on Red Square. ummm... this student was like, "ohhh, I have a unicycle and I have a clown suit." And then somehow like a couple weeks later, we were standing out on Red Square with a guy cycling around in a clown suit.

Well for me, they're two really important aspects of the findings here. One is just how bad cellphones making you. ummm even on something as simple as walking, cellphones disrupt it. That you're substantially slower, you change directions more, you weave more, you just not able to to get there. ummm you're also less likely to notice important stimuli. In a car, it's even worse. uhhh because there are other cars, there are unicyclist out there, they're pedestrians out there, ummm you need to be aware of these things. The other thing that's really interesting here is that people think they're doing fine. They get across Red Square and you ask them if they see anything unusual and they don't say, no I don't think so and you said did you see a cycling clown and they're surprised that they could have missed it.

STUDENT 1: ummm I noticed the signs and the people, for I guess it's like A.S., and I noticed the Give Blood umbrella and noticed the blood truck.

STUDENT 2: Oh, I was on my phone, wasn't I? Is that part of it? (yeah) No, I did not notice anything useful on the campus.

STUDENT 3: ummm no? [laughter]

STUDENT 2: No...? no.

KIRA: umm I think our results are particularly telling ummm about how dangerous it could be to talk on a cell phone while driving. Driving, most us have been doing since we were you know sixteen maybe fifteen and a half. umm walking, I would say the majority of us have been practicing since we were like one, and yet even with an activity so practiced and so familiar, people still have their performance affected by talking on their cellphone. I figured now that if

the conversation is important enough that I need to answer while I'm driving, it's important enough to pull over for.

NARRATOR: Kira Mackenzie understands the dangers of talking on the phone while driving. Drivers who use cell phones in the car, are four times more likely to crash and have been shown to be as impaired as drunk drivers. Hopefully studies producing such irrefutable evidence will convince people that when they're on the road, they should leave their phone alone.