



CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

We now have some answers to what captures attention. People reflexively orient to people's faces, especially those who are orienting to them. People also look in the direction others gaze. And people immediately infer people's personalities from their faces.

People especially notice what is salient: stimuli that are novel or perceptually figural in context, people or behaviors that are unusual or unexpected, extreme and sometimes negative behavior, and stimuli relevant to our current goals. All such salience subsequently influences reactions to other people. Attention may also be captured by vivid stimuli, often entertaining, but vivid stimuli do not influence reactions much except when they are vivid case histories.

Attention also orients to situationally or personally primed categories. Recently, frequently, and chronically encountered categories are more accessible for use, and they profoundly influence the encoding of stimuli. They are applied to relevant, moderate, ambiguous stimuli, guiding their interpretation and subsequent cognitive representation.

Attention focuses on ecologically relevant features of the social context; that is, features that afford action. In short, social attention determines what gets encoded into memory, the topic for the next chapter.