



## DEBRIEFING FORM

Project Title: Mechanisms of Attention

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Dana Hayward (dana.hayward@ualberta.ca)

Thank you for your participation in our study. Your time and commitment to psychological research at the University of Alberta is greatly appreciated. The goal of this study was to investigate how we process, attend and ignore various items. Although there has been much research investigating the ways in which people pay attention, there is still much that remains unknown. For example, researchers have found that people pay attention to (i) regions of space (Posner, 1980) (ii) specific objects (Lavie & Driver, 1996), and (iii) moments in time (Hayward & Ristic, 2016), however attention does not always prioritize one method over another. Likewise, some investigations have found that people prioritize certain content (social faces, reward information, etc) more than other, nonsocial content (e.g., Anderson et al., 2011; Friesen & Kingstone, 1998; Hayward et al., 2018), yet this isn't always the case (e.g., Vecera & Rizzo, 2006; Tipples, 2008). Further, while some theories have been put forth to predict level of distractibility based on perceptual features in the environment (e.g., Load theory, Lavie & Tsai, 1994), this theory has recently come under criticism (e.g., Benoni & Tsai, 2010). Thus, the proposed line of research is designed to get a better sense of the mechanisms underlying attention and distraction.

We are interested in exploring whether or not certain objects signal social information. If certain objects do convey social information, we are also interested in investigating the specific types of social information that these objects communicate. No known research has explicitly investigated the social value of specific objects; therefore, the purpose of the current study was to assess whether or not various objects hold social value. We postulate that some objects may communicate information about an individual's identity, while other objects may convey information about social events. Conversely, we hypothesize that other objects may not hold any social value. As a result, a third of the objects included in this study were objects that are commonly associated with social situations, another third of the items were objects that are typically affiliated with certain "groups" of people, and the final third were objects that are generally not unique to social situations or specific groups of people. You were first asked to define a social object and provide examples in order for us to gauge how various individuals perceive the term "social." This task was also done to see what objects individuals associate with the term "social" and whether or not there is a consensus among participants regarding their definitions and examples. The slider questions were included to assess how well an object conveys social information, the specific type of social information that the object communicates, and the level of consensus among participants' responses.

If you have any further questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact the PI, Dr. Dana Hayward, at dana.hayward@ualberta.ca. If you would like to withdraw your data from the study after testing is completed you may do any time up until 30 days after your testing session was completed. This can be done by contacting the PI. If you have any questions about research participation, contact our Research Participation Coordinator at (780) 492-5689, or rescared@ualberta.ca.

For further reading on similar issues you may want to consult this interesting article:

Langton, S.R.H., Law, A.S., Burton, A.M., & Schweinberger, S.R. (2008). Attention capture by faces. *Cognition*, 107, 330-342.

Thank you very much for participating. Without the help of volunteers like you, we could not answer many important scientific questions in psychology. We have one last request: **Please**

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**don't tell other people about what we asked you to do in this study, as it is very important that they approach the study as you originally did, i.e., without expectations and without full awareness of our objectives.** This is important because it is the only way we can obtain objective and valid information.

Yours truly,  
Dr. Dana Hayward  
Assistant Professor