

Introduction to the Special Issue on Face Perception

Nicholas O. Rule

Department of Psychology, University of Toronto

The face is typically the first thing that people notice when encountering another individual. Faces and facial features often dominate the attention of animals (human and non-human): Faces can signal behavioral intentions and internal mental and emotional states, and facial features scaffold overgeneralizations about individuals' personalities—and can come to embody them through changes in the face's actual physical structure over time. The face thus occupies a central place in psychology, with research broadly drawing on contributions from the field's subdisciplines to explain how people perceive faces, process them, and behave in response to the information derived from them. Few other research topics have cut across so many levels of human thought and behavior, and this special issue of

Current Directions in Psychological Science is devoted to showcasing a sample of fundamental questions and recent advances from that enterprise. To this end, researchers from diverse areas within the psychological sciences illustrate various cognitive processes and social consequences, extending from face perception's basic foundations in recognition, human development, and social and economic behavior, through individual and cultural variation in face processing, to the cutting-edge application of tools in computer science. Together, this collection of brief and accessible reviews will help readers to cultivate an understanding of how humans create and extract meaning from the face, justifying why it maintains such a high priority in perception, cognition, and behavior.

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Corresponding Author:

Nicholas O. Rule, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto,
100 St. George St., Toronto, Ontario M5S 3G3, Canada

E-mail: rule@psych.utoronto.ca