

Best memory? You're likely to decide as a teen

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Netherlands soccer legend Johan Cruyff (dark shirt) in the 1974 World Cup final against West Germany.

(Medical Xpress) -- Whether the subject is your favourite songs or the greatest footballer of all time, surveys that rely on remembering the past will be skewed towards one particular decade of the participants' lives, according to a Flinders University researcher.

Psychologist Dr. Steve Janssen said that more memories are accumulated between the ages of 10 and 20 than at any other time of life.

Dr. Janssen has been studying the phenomenon, which is known as the reminiscence bump, as part of his research into the way [memory](#) works.

Recently appointed to Flinders School of Psychology as a postdoctoral research fellow, Dr. Janssen holds a PhD from the University of Amsterdam and has worked at universities in the US and Japan.

He said that while people are likely to have vivid memories of significant events such as marriage, buying a house or the birth of a child from any period of their lives, memories from their second decade of life will be far more numerous and therefore more durable and influential.

A keen soccer fan, Dr. Janssen, with two of his colleagues, demonstrated the robustness of the reminiscence bump by conducting a survey of Dutch soccer fans that asked them to identify the five best football players of all time.

He said the results confirmed that because people have more memories of the games they saw between the ages of 10 and 20, their nominations tended to favour players from that period in their lives.

When comparing the midpoint of the nominated players' careers and the [age](#) of the respondents, Dr. Janssen found a peak at the age of 17.

And while an indisputably great player such as the striker Johan Cruyff would be nominated by [participants](#) of all ages (including those not born at the time he played), Dr Janssen said that the strongest support for Cruyff came from the age group who were between 10 and 20 at the peak of his career.

“Cruyff had his peak in 1974 – the people who chose Cruyff the most were in their 50s and 60s,” he said.

The findings resulted in Dr. Janssen being interviewed by *Champions* magazine, the official publication of UEFA (soccer's ruling body in

Europe).

Dr. Janssen said that further evidence of the reminiscence bump can also be seen with movies, books and music.

“The movies that you see between the ages of 15 and 20 will remain your favourite movies,” he said.

Dr. Janssen said it is a phase of life when memory and other cognitive faculties are at their height.

“We feel that between that between 10 and 20, your memory system works really well: you take on so much new information so easily,” Dr. Janssen said.

Learning a new language is a prime example: “In your teenage period it is fairly easy to learn new words – it takes so much more effort to learn a language at a later age,” he said.

“We think that at this age, the memory system stores information better and that later it’s easier to retrieve this information.”

Provided by Flinders University

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