

Study shows self-evaluation influences facial memory

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Can you remember someone you met for the first time? Was there something in particular about them that caught your eye?

New research from Abertay University suggests that our self-evaluation and circumstances influence our [memory](#) for strangers.

The study from Abertay's Dr Christopher Watkins uncovered evidence which suggests that women in a relationship are particularly good at remembering how other women look, although their memory for [faces](#) also depends on how they rate their own attractiveness.

It was also discovered that [attractive women](#) were particularly good at remembering brief encounters with good-looking men.

During testing, women who did not consider themselves attractive remembered other women as more beautiful than their original [encounter](#), and men as less beautiful than their original encounter.

In addition, women in good relationships tended to remember men's attractiveness in a more positive light.

The experiment, in collaboration with the University of St Andrews, saw [women](#) in a long-term [romantic relationship](#) take part in a task which tested their memory for faces.

They completed a standard memory task in which they viewed faces for

three seconds each and were later asked if they had seen the faces before.

Computer graphics were used to alter the appearance of some of the faces in the memory test, with participants sometimes shown more attractive or less attractive versions of previously viewed identities.

If a participant who rated herself plain-looking originally viewed a less attractive female face, she was biased in her memory and recalled that face as being more attractive.

Dr Watkins of Abertay's Division of Psychology said: "We wanted to examine whether personal factors influence memory – how good you judge your current relationship to be and how attractive other people are likely to find you."

"Our findings suggest that these two factors shape both accuracy and illusions in how you remember the attractiveness of faces after a brief encounter."

Dr Watkins said these findings suggest that memories are attuned to certain features in other people as we move through a romantic relationship, but our memories can also show striking biases.

The research suggests that our own attractiveness and thoughts on our current [relationship](#) shape our memory for encounters with strangers.

More information: To find out more about the research visit www.relationship-lab.com

Provided by University of Abertay Dundee

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