

# The Effects of Attractiveness on Metamemory Accuracy for Faces

By Erica Sharanowski

Advisor: Dr. Nicholas Watier

## Summary:

Metamemory refers to what individuals know about the ways in which memory functions, as well as, the ability to reflect on his or her own memory capacity and limitations (Koriat, 2007). The attractiveness of a face has been known to influence attention and memory in some capacity, however there are currently no studies that have examined the effects of attractiveness on metamemory for faces. Metamemory for attractive faces could have far-reaching implications in real-world applications such as eyewitness testimony, thereby showing the clear need for further research in this area. The purpose of the present study was to determine whether participants are capable of accurately monitoring their memory for faces, and whether the attractiveness of the to-be-remembered faces influences their ability to monitor their memory.

Male and female university student participants (n = 53) were presented with a series of photographs of female faces on a computer screen. Half of the participants were exposed to unattractive and neutral female faces during the course of the experiment, whereas the other half were exposed to attractive and neutral female faces. Participants were asked to study the faces, estimate their ability to recognize the faces by making prospective metamemory judgements, perform a recognition test, and report their confidence in their recognition decisions by making retrospective metamemory judgments. The data was analyzed using 2x2 mixed ANOVAs.

The results revealed that recognition accuracy was poorer for attractive faces compared with neutral faces, but no difference in memory was found between neutral and unattractive faces. The results also suggest that individuals are under-confident when estimating their future memory performance for faces, regardless of attractiveness level, however, individuals were found to have higher retrospective metamemory accuracy for attractive faces compared with unattractive faces. Therefore, these results suggest that attractiveness is not a source of information individuals rely on when determining their potential performance on future facial recognition tests, but is important when individuals reflect on their past performance on facial recognition tests.

## Reference:

Koriat, A. (2007). Metacognition and consciousness. In P. D. Zelazo, M. Moscovitch, & E. Thompson (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness* (pp. 289-325). New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press.