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Authors

Dils, Alexia Toskos
Niedopytalski, Scott
Arroyo, Jeffrey
et al.

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The Temporal Cheerleader Effect: Attractiveness Judgments Depend on Surrounding Faces Through Time

Alexia Toskos Dils
Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, New York, United States

Scott Niedopytalski
Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, New York, United States

Jeffrey Arroyo
Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, New York, United States

Stephen Flusberg
Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, New York, United States

Abstract: Previous research has found that people are seen as more attractive when they appear in a group rather than in isolation. Do faces that surround us in time also affect how attractive we seem? Participants rated the attractiveness of famous female faces presented in a sequence of three and in isolation. We found that people do integrate information about attractiveness over time, but that temporal context has the opposite effect of static context. People perceived faces as less attractive in a series than when those same faces were presented in isolation. We also varied the attractiveness of surrounding faces in order to examine how the serial position of contextual information figures into people's judgments of a face. Faces presented early in the sequence figured more heavily into people's judgments than did faces presented at the end. These findings highlight the role that temporal context plays in the perception of attractiveness.