

# Research Activity 1

## **You're so AVERAGE!: The effect of face morphing on attractiveness**

What exactly makes faces attractive? Research by Judith Langlois and her colleagues (1990; 1994) [DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.1990.tb00079.x] [DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.1994.tb00503.x] contend that people all over the world find “average” faces to be more attractive. To test this prediction, the researchers took pictures of college undergraduates and then digitally morphed these faces into a collection of average faces. Participants were then asked to rate the original pictures as well as the averaged/composite pictures. The results showed that participants preferred the composite faces and found them to be more attractive than most of the individual pictures.

Don't believe these results? Then put it to the test! Two researchers, Lisa DeBruine and Ben Jones, from the University of Glasgow in Scotland have created a website where you can take part in experiments on face perception and even play around with morphing faces!

To conduct your own version of the studies described above, click on the link below and hit the “Averager” button. Next, select eight faces male faces and eight female faces. Once you've made your selections, hover over each individual face and have some of your friends make ratings of each individual face on a 1 (very unattractive) to 5 (very attractive) scale. Then, without your friends' knowledge, click on the same eight faces and click the “View Average” button under the large face on the left of the screen. Tell your friends to ignore the fuzzy images around the person in the picture's head and just make ratings of the person's face. Repeat these steps at least four or five times using different faces. Do your results show that your friends preferred the averaged faces over the original faces? If yes, then average does equal attractive!

<http://faceresearch.org/>

### **References**

- Langlois, J. H., & Roggman, L. A. (1990). [DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.1990.tb00079.x]. Attractive faces are only average. *Psychological Science*, 1, 115–121.
- Langlois, J. H., Roggman, L. A., & Musselman, L. (1994) [DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.1994.tb00503.x]. What is average and what is not average about attractive faces? *Psychological Science*, 5, 214–220.

# Research Activity 2

## **Detection of deception**

Ask people in your environment what they look for when trying to detect truth from deception. This exercise demonstrates that most people look for evidence of deception in a liar's face or words (SP p. 61).

# Research Activity 3

## **I imagined you differently: Limiting the self-fulfilling prophecy**

Self-fulfilling prophecies start with an expectation held by a perceiver. That expectation (whether it's that someone is funny, moody, cruel, or kind), then sets in motion a sequence of events in which the expectation influences the perceiver's own behavior, which influences the target person to behave in-line with the perceiver's expectation, which then confirms the perceiver's original expectancy. Given that perceivers are often completely unaware of the impact of their expectations, can anything be done to derail the self-fulfilling prophecy?

The answer is yes! The next time you are around a friend whom you think is introverted try to think of them as the most extroverted and outgoing person you've ever met. Let that expectation guide the topic of conversation and what you decide to do with that person. At the end of your interaction, reassess your original impression of your friend. Has it changed at all?

If you can't find any introverted friends, this little experiment could also work with friends that have virtually any personality trait. Just expect the opposite and see what happens.

## **Research Activity 4**

### **Integrating inconsistencies**

Try to form an impression of the following people:

- a person being social and lonely;
- a person being stupid and brilliant;
- a person being hostile and dependent;
- a person being sentimental and a betrayer.

This exercise demonstrates that people can be very creative in integrating apparently inconsistent traits (SP p. 89).