

FEEDBACK/DEBRIEFING FORM

Remembering who was where

Thank you for taking part in this study.

Previous research has shown that person identity information is better remembered when faces convey an angry versus happy or neutral expression (Jackson et al., 2009). The angry benefit may be driven by the behavioural relevance of threatening stimuli. Perceived anger is viewed as a social threat and may enhance working memory for faces to help us deal with the potentially dangerous situation by acting as quickly as possible in the most effective manner.

In the experiment you have just completed, we measured whether the precision with which you could relocate the faces was influenced by emotional expression, examining not just visual memory but also spatial memory. To measure precision of visuospatial memory, we will calculate the distance between the original and the reported locations of the faces. We will also examine the relationship between eye movement behaviour (number and duration of fixations, fixation location and order) and memory performance. Is memory more precise when you looked more at a face/location?

We asked you to memorise four faces and we varied the interval (1, 3 or 6 s) before the presentation of the neutral face that you had to relocate in order to modify task difficulty. We are also interested in whether the mood state (positive or negative) you were in at the time of study influenced your memory performance. Negative moods are shown to improve detailed processing while positive moods enhance global processing (the bigger picture). We predict that participants in a negative mood might have more precise memory for faces than those in a positive mood. Social anxiety and autistic-like traits were also measured – these characteristics in the normal population can influence how we process faces and emotional information, so we will assess the potential impact of these factors also.

Feel free to contact Dr Sara Spotorno, sara.spotorno@abdn.ac.uk (01224-272150, Room G15 William Guild Building) or Dr Margaret Jackson, m.jackson@abdn.ac.uk (01224-272236, Room G13 William Guild Building) should you have any further questions about this research.

Further Reading

Jackson, M. C., Wu, C.-Y., Linden, D. E. J., & Raymond, J. E. (2009). Enhanced visual short-term memory for angry faces. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 35(2), 363-374.