## What is the Cheerleader Effect?

* **Concept Definition:**The CheerleaderEffect is a [cognitive bias](https://web.archive.org/web/20221118115544/https:/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_bias) that causes people to think individuals are more attractive when they are in a group.
* **Concept Founder:**A entertaining draft of the effect got popular through the fictional character Barney Stinson in the episode "Not a Father's Day" in the TV series "How I met Your Mother". Later the effect was seriously researched by [Drew Walker and Edward Vul in 2013](https://web.archive.org/web/20221118115544/https:/www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-cheerleader-effect/), and confirmed by van Osch et al. in 2015.
* **Concept Benefit:**Understand that the perceived attractiveness can vary depending on what environment the person is viewed. Be able to distinguish real attractiveness and visual attractiveness caused by the group effect.

## How to demonstrate it?

* In order to test the Cheerleader Effect, Walker and Vul conducted [a series of experiments](https://web.archive.org/web/20221118115544/https:/www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-cheerleader-effect/) in 2013 in which participants rated the attractiveness of other faces that appeared in a crowd or individually.
* In two of their studies, the group photographs included three male or three female faces together in the same scene.
* The individual portraits of each face were cropped from those group photographs. Participants rated each face two times. One time is shown as part of the group photo and one time as an individual portrait.
* The order of these ratings was randomized for all participants.
* Result: Both male and female faces were rated as more attractive when they appeared as part of a group photo than as a solo portrait.
* Note: The Cheerleader effect is a subtle effect and will only increase the appearance by a small amount and not significantly.

## Where can it be found?

* **Tinder Profile picture:** [Less attractive people on tinder](https://web.archive.org/web/20221118115544/https:/www.quora.com/Why-do-relatively-unattractive-women-use-group-photos-with-more-attractive-friends-as-their-profile-picture-on-dating-sites-Is-it-a-bait-and-switch-tactic-or-complete-coincidence) could use the strategy of showing a photo with multiple people together. This demonstrates their socialness and increases their attractiveness perceived by the viewer.
* **Stage Performances:** The same effect could be observed during a stage performance like musicals or theater when multiple actors are on the stage at the same time. Artists often use dance groups in the background to give the performance an extra edge.
* **Party Gathering:** During parties, people gather in groups too and, it is likely that the perceived attractiveness is higher during such parties. During parties, the appearance of others could be additionally distorted by the effect of alcohol.
* **In Advertising:** It is common to use a group photo in even increase the appearance quality of the image.

## Why does it exist?

* **Visual Illusion:** Similar to other visual illusions, when we humans view a group of things, we tend to view them together as an entity instead of viewing them individually. Once perceived as a crowd, we tend to view individual members as being more like the group than they are. Hence, when we see a face in a crowd, we tend to perceive that face as similar to the average of all the faces in the group. As humans find [average faces very attractive](https://web.archive.org/web/20221118115544/http:/homepage.psy.utexas.edu/HomePage/Group/LangloisLAB/PDFs/Langlois.PS.1990.pdf), it leads to the effect that people in groups may seem to be more attractive.
* **Social Value:** Another possible reason is that the group photo also implies the social capability of the individuals in that photo. Since humans are social animals and prefer people who are social, it also increases their attractiveness to the viewer.

## How do I benefit from it?

* **Do:** When evaluating the attractiveness of people in a group, try to look at them individually without putting them into a group environment. When presenting yourself to a big audience, try to include a photo with the right setup that adds value for you.
* **Don't:** Do not present a photo of yourself within a group where the average attractiveness or appearance rating is lower than yours. In that case, your appearance will decrease because the viewer might perceive your appearance as similar to the average of all the faces in the group.
* **Exploit The Concept:**When trying to appear more attractive in a photo for Tinder, a social network profile, or other reasons, one could exploit the Cheerleader effect and use a group photo with you being the center of the image. Always choose a good photo to convey your social status to others.