

# Beautiful Strangers: Physical Evaluation of Strangers is influenced by Friendship Expectation

**Natalia Kononov**  
Tel Aviv University  
**Danit Ein-Gar**  
Tel-Aviv University

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# Beautiful Strangers: Physical Evaluation of Strangers is influenced by Friendship Expectation

## **Abstract**

People tend to evaluate themselves more positively than they objectively are. Such enhanced positive evaluation occurs not only for the self but also for close others. In this research, we extend the exploration of the enhanced evaluation of others to the evaluation of strangers. We predict that when individuals consider a friendship with a stranger, their preference for a pleasant physical experience will drive an enhanced evaluation of that person. In three studies, participants who were interested in a friendship with a stranger evaluated the stranger to look, sound, and smell better than control participants. The amount of time participants expected to spend with the stranger predicted the effect (Studies 1–2). In a large-scale study ( $n = 3,998$ ) using various targets, we show that when participants have an interest in a friendship but are unable to physically spend time together, the enhanced evaluation was weaker compared to when they could spend time together (Study 3).

**Subject Areas:** *Cognition, Consumer Behaviour*

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