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## *An Eye into the Mind: Eye Movements and Memory for Emotional and Neutral Scenes*

While in line at the bank, a man near you suddenly brandishes a gun and robs the bank. Because of the "weapon focus" effect, your attention is likely focused on the gun, but does this focusing of attention affect your later memory for the event? In fact, a recent study in my lab (Blank & Marsolek, 2007) showed that the eye movements (which reflect attention) made while viewing a scene can predict later memory for both emotionally evocative and emotionally neutral scenes. Whereas a *narrowing* of attention produced good memory only for strongly emotional scenes (e.g., scenes with guns), a *broadening* of attention produced good memory only for emotionally neutral scenes. However, in that study, participants judged the emotional content of each scene after viewing it. In the current study we tested if these effects would also occur in a more realistic setting, when participants freely view each scene. Although memory for both emotional and neutral scenes was equivalent to the previous study, the relationship between eye movements and memory was changed. In the current study, a broadening of attention predicted good memory for *all* scenes, regardless of emotional content -- a finding previously observed *only* for neutral scenes. Therefore, when freely viewing scenes, participants may selectively ignore emotional aspects of a scene or seek to control their emotional reactions, to help effectively store a memory for the scene.



Poster Number:      Session: