



Beauty – in the eye of the beholder, or is it!?



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Learning outcomes

- At the end of my two sessions, you'll be able to:
- Describe a number of operational indicators related to attraction;
- Both in terms of facial attraction and body type and across a range of social and interpersonal factors;
- Identify some evaluative comment on research in this area.

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Pioneers in the field

Ellen Berscheid

Elaine Hatfield



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Do we all find this person beautiful?



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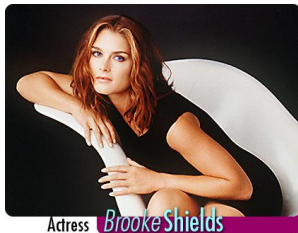
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Physical Attractiveness

•Cunningham, 1986 - Male ratings of female photos

- Large eyes
- Small nose
- Small chin
- Prominent cheekbones
- Narrow cheeks
- High eyebrows
- Big Smile



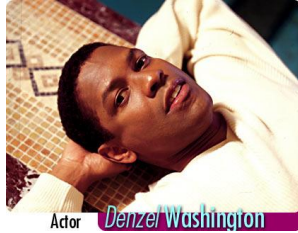
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Physical Attractiveness

•Cunningham, Barbee & Pine, 1995 - Female ratings of male photos

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- Large Chin
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Physical Attractiveness.

- The first thing we notice about people is their appearance, and often an assessment of physical attractiveness is made by whether they are clean/dirty.
- Women in particular are perceived as attractive if they have child like faces.
- Can you think of any women who match the description above....?*

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Child like faces???



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However, there are exceptions...

- ❑ Wide cheekbones and narrow cheeks are also seen as attractive and these features are not commonly found in children.



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What about the men?

- Square jaw, small eyes and thin lips are regarded as attractive by women, these features can be regarded as a sign of maturity, rarely found in children.



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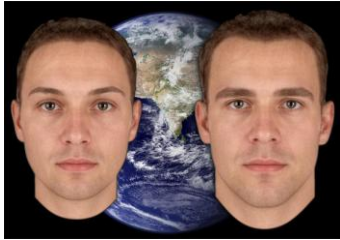
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Is there any evidence to support the previous assertions??

- ❑ Brigham (1971) reported physically attractive people are thought of as being attractive in personality too:
- ❑ as more sociable, interesting, independent, exciting and sexually warm.
- ❑ This is known as the ***Halo effect***.
- ❑ The total impression formed is unjustifiably influenced by one outstanding characteristic.



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But may be beauty depends on the time of the month!

- Penton-Voak (1999) found that females showed a difference preference for masculinised or feminised male faces depending on where they were in their menstrual cycle.
- Perret – Menstruating women preferred the top row of faces (transformed to be 50% more feminine) and when ovulating the bottom row (transformed to be 50% more masculine). This suggests...

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The Matching Hypothesis.

- We actively seek individuals who are equivalent to us in attractiveness.



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- Although we would like the most attractive partner, in reality we are more likely to keep someone of equal physical attractiveness and are less likely to be rejected by them!
- The release of pleasure neurochemicals dupes us to thinking they are [for a time at least] wonderful and beautiful when really we know they're not!

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- Murstein (1972) tested the matching hypothesis using photos of engaged couples cut apart.
- His findings supported the matching hypothesis.
- He also studied 99 couples who were dating and compared them with randomly paired couples.
- The real couples were more alike in terms of physical attractiveness

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- Mismatches do exist but often this can be explained by other assets!

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Some interesting facts

Physical similarity among married couples



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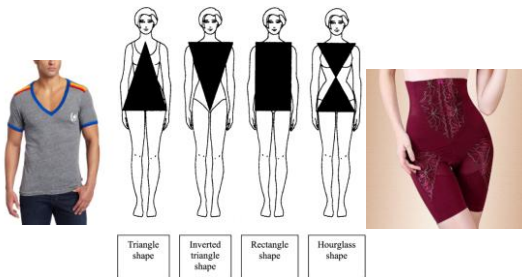
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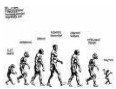
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Attractiveness Bias: Evolutionary Explanation

- What Features Are Seen as Beautiful?
 - Symmetric Faces
 - Low Waist to Hip Ratio or WHR in women (For females .7 being ideal); waist to chest ratio in men V-shape (Singh, 1993, 1995)
 - Normal – "Average" Faces
 - Babies Prefer Attractive Faces
- Why Is Beauty Preferred?
 - Health
 - Fertile

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Relationship rules



- Argyle and Henderson (1984) 6 rules:
 1. Trust and confide in the other person
 2. Show emotional support
 3. Share news of success
 4. Strive to make the friend happy
 5. Volunteer help in time of need
 6. Stand up for a friend in his or her absence

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Evolutionary psychology and relationships

- Natural and sexual selection are the most important evolutionary processes responsible for creating psychological mechanisms



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Evidence

- Male and female size differences and comparative psychology
- The lengthy gestation period and highly dependent off-spring drives females to seek partners who are emotionally committed, resourceful, intelligent and have an interesting personality (Buss, 1992)

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- Females show no obvious signs of oestrus and age, health and physical make-up are strong predictors of fertility. This dictates the male behaviour towards the female.

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Evidence

- Singh’s cross-cultural survey of waist to hip ratio preferences in males
- Kendal’s sex differences in lonely heart columns
- Buss’ sex differences in sources of jealousy
- Clarke and Hatfield’s ‘Sex on a campus’ study

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METHODS IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

- Experimental methods can only focus on an isolated slice of a relationship
- Also relationships change over time, so should be studied as processes rather than states
- Longitudinal studies are therefore helpful.
- But if a relationship is studied, this in itself may change it
- Most research is only a snapshot, and focuses on same-aged, heterosexual relationships, among mainly white, middle class, undergrad populations!

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