

Topic 1.

Introduction to attractiveness research

Why study physical attractiveness?



Physical attractiveness influences social outcomes.

We prefer to mate with, date, associate with, employ, and even vote for attractive individuals.

Why study physical attractiveness?



People also tend to automatically ascribe positive personality characteristics (e.g. trustworthiness) to attractive individuals.

(the 'attractiveness halo effect' or 'beauty is good stereotype').

Why study physical attractiveness?



Both males and females claim that physical attractiveness is not important when choosing a partner, but the best predictor of satisfaction with a 'blind date' is facial attractiveness.

Unlike in the story, in real life the Beast would probably be more satisfied with his 'blind date' than Beauty would!

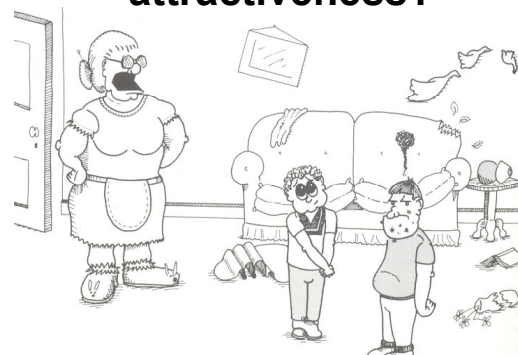
Why study physical attractiveness?

The physical attractiveness of individuals appearing in court has been found to influence perceptions of their misdemeanours.



Attractiveness counts against fraudsters when juries pass sentence, while attractiveness reduces the perceived seriousness of the crime of burglary.

Why study physical attractiveness?



Attractive children's misdemeanours are perceived by others' as less serious than the misdemeanours of unattractive children

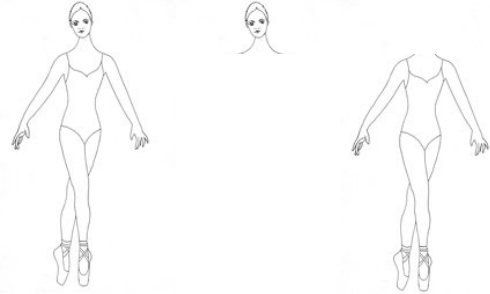
Why study physical attractiveness?



Mothers bond more readily with attractive children and attractive premature infants receive more care from nurses (and recover faster) than their relatively unattractive counterparts.

These findings all show attractiveness is important.

Why study facial attractiveness?



The face is more important for judgements of the attractiveness of the "whole person" than body attractiveness.

For example, a youthful facial appearance appears to be more important for women's overall attractiveness than a youthful body.

Agreement and attractiveness

Although it's often said that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'.....



.....the extent to which people agree about what faces are attractive is striking!

Even very young infants prefer to look at faces adults judge as to be attractive



Agreement and attractiveness

People from different cultures prefer the same types of faces.



These findings show that attraction is not arbitrary and suggest there is something about our biological makeup that influences what sort of facial characteristics we consider attractive.

Key points from Topic 1

Physical attractiveness (and facial attractiveness in particular) is important

i.e. it influences partner and friend choices, voting and hiring behaviour, perceptions of wrongdoers and maternal bonding

People of different ages and from different cultures generally agree about what faces are attractive

i.e. attractiveness is not arbitrary but has a 'biological basis'