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THE EFFECT OF SELF-RATED ATTRACTIVENESS ON PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING

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ABSTRACT

Self-ratings of one's own physical attractiveness among 455 students (311 male and 144 female) were compared with their scores on a scale measuring personality (the California Psychological Inventory) and subjective perceptions of their body weight. In addition, they completed two measures of shyness; the Social Provisions scale (Russell & Cutrona, 1984); the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1984); and the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale. For both sexes, self-rated physical attractiveness correlated significantly with (a) all seven folk scales (dominance, capacity for status, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, independence, and empathy) on Cluster I (extraversion) of the CPI; (b) two of the three vectors on the CPI: v.1 (intrinsicness) and v.2 (openness to norms); (c) shyness; and (d) having a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Self-rated physical attractiveness affected females, but not males with Social Provisions and perceived body weight.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely cited research conclusions in social psychology is summarized by Dion, Berscheid, and Walster's (1972) claim that, in people's perceptions of others, "what is beautiful is good" (p. 285). This statement linking beauty and goodness suggests a stereotype in which physically attractive individuals are believed to possess a variety of positive personal qualities. Dion et al. (1972) had subjects rate facial photographs selected on the basis of judge's agreement. The pictured individuals were low, medium, or high in physical attractiveness. Subjects' ratings of the people in the photographs pertained to various personality traits as well as to life outcomes such as marital happiness and career success. To the extent the pictured individuals were physically attractive, the subjects ascribed more favorable personality traits and more successful life outcomes.

This paradigm has guided many subsequent investigations, and a large body of research exists on the attractiveness stereotype. Most reviews of this literature are in agreement -- the "beauty-is-good" stereotype is a strong and general phenomenon (Adams, 1982; Alley & Hildebrandt, 1988; Berscheid, 1981; Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Dion, 1981; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Secondary sources (e.g., introductory social psychology textbooks) have likewise treated the beauty-is-good stereotype as a homogeneous, potent, and firmly established phenomenon. Although the general consensus is that an attractive target leads perceivers to make strong inferences of personality goodness, some reviewers have noted exceptions to this phenomenon. Dion (1981) suggested that the beauty-is-good effect is strongest for measures of social competence and interpersonal ease, and Bassili (1981) reached a similar conclusion, arguing that the core of the physical attractiveness stereotype is social vitality or extraversion. In a recent meta analysis of this literature, Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, and Longo (1991), similarly, found that the effect may not be as wide-ranging as previously thought. Eagly et al., (1991) found the effect to

be limited primarily to the domains of social competence, and it had only intermediate effects in the area of potency, adjustment, and near zero effects on integrity and concern for others.

Nearly all research on attractiveness has used observer's assessments of a target's attractiveness. Self-ratings by the targets, themselves, of their own attractiveness, have been all but absent in the field. Moreover, ratings between self and others generally lack agreement. Patzer (1985, p.24), in fact, states that "self-measures of physical attractiveness do not work," and others note the low correlations between self-ratings and ratings by others (Downs & Wright, 1982). Balban (1981) found inter-rater reliability among observers to be .89, while reliability between self-ratings and others' ratings was .22. Other investigations (Stroebe, Insko, Thompson, and Layton, 1971; Adams, 1977) have found similar results.

A discrepancy as large as the one found between self-ratings of physical attractiveness and others' ratings raises an intriguing question. Why should such a disparity exist? In general, self-reports serve as legitimate sources of data and are treated as such. In addition, research indicates a widely applicable standard (though not quite universal) of human beauty. Even infants of four months of age respond differentially to an attractive versus an unattractive human face, and children at the age of four years and older have been shown to use the same criteria as adults in deciding who is, and is not, attractive. With such a highly developed set of perceptual and judgmental faculties so attuned with the "rest of the world" when judging the physical appearance of others, why would people be unable to apply these same standards when asked to judge themselves? Some evidence (Gurman & Balban, 1990; Montgomery, Haemmerlie, & Edwards, 1991) suggests, that except for those who are extremely attractive, many of us engage in a "self-serving" bias. That is, we see ourselves as being more attractive than we really are, at least in comparison to how we would be rated by a set of uninvolved independent judges. Moreover, this self-serving bias could function as an adaptive illusion. Stated otherwise, the belief we are more attractive than reality permits may benefit us in terms of self-esteem maintenance, personality integration, our interpersonal functioning, and in having a more active engagement with life.

The purpose of this study was to see if positive self-ratings of physical attractiveness may not, in fact, be of benefit. This was accomplished by having students rate themselves in attractiveness on a 1 to 10 scale and by comparing these scores with those made on the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), a well-known, valid, and reliable test of personality. In addition, self-rated physical attractiveness scores were compared to the scores made on two measures of shyness and on the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale (IBS) -- a test that we used to assess integrity. In addition, we wanted to see how one's self-rated physical attractiveness might impact other aspects in an individual's life -- one's adjustment to college, the number and types of friends one had, and the variety, quantity, and quality of social support provided by each of these friends. In general, we expected that the effects of physical attractiveness, as rated by oneself, would be limited primarily to the domain of extraversion, social competence, and interpersonal ease, and have only intermediate effects in the area of adjustment and social support. Finally, self-rated physical attractiveness was expected to have near zero effects on integrity and/or concern for others.

The CPI, a widely used and well-researched measure of personality (Anastasi, 1988), has 20 "folk concept" scales that measure a variety of personality traits. These "folk concept" scales are similar to the traits that an average person would use when describing himself or herself, or that independent observers might use when describing an average person. Factor analytic studies show the existence of five main factors that cut across the 20 "folk concept" scales. Gough (1987) has labeled these Extraversion, Control, Flexibility, Concensuality, and Femininity/Masculinity. The latest, 1987 version of the CPI also identifies three thematic vectors which underlie the inventory. Persons scoring high on v.1 are introverted, inwardly oriented, and reserved. Persons high on v.2 are conscientious, self-disciplined, and rule following. And persons scoring high on v.3 are reflective, capable, and optimistic concerning their present and future status. In general, self-rated physical attractiveness was expected to be highly related to the extraversion factor and v.1 of the CPI, and also to other traits assessed by the CPI, though to a much smaller extent.

With regard to shyness, previous research suggests a substantial correlation with it and self-rated physical attractiveness (in a negative direction), but a near zero correlation with shyness and ratings of physical attractiveness by independent observers (Cheek & Melchior, 1990; Garcia,

Stinson, Ickes, Bissonette, & Briggs, 1991; Jones, Briggs, & Smith, 1986). Because of the focus on self-rated physical attractiveness in this study, a significant negative relationship with shyness and physical attractiveness was expected. With regard to one's social life, as assessed by the Social Provisions Scale (SPS; Russell & Cutrona, 1984), we expected that those who viewed themselves as attractive would have a larger network of friends (particularly nonkin), more contact with each of those friends, and greater quantity, quality, and variety of social provisions being met with each friend.

Finally, we were interested in seeing if self-rated physically attractive people viewed themselves as less overweight (Rodin, 1984). Several studies have found that the perception of being overweight is related to having low levels of self-esteem and that this relationship may be stronger for females than for males. In general, we expected to replicate this result. That is, people who saw themselves as unattractive would similarly see themselves as being more overweight, and these effects would be more dramatic for women than men.

METHOD

Subjects and Procedures Subjects were undergraduate general psychology student class volunteers required to participate in 3 hours of psychology research as part of the class they were taking. This particular project took approximately 2 hours and it occurred outside of the normal classroom setting in a Psychology Laboratory. Students typically participated together in groups of 5 to 12.

College students (455: 311 males and 144 females¹) rated their own physical attractiveness on a 1 to 10 scale, gave their height and weight, and completed the CPI (Gough, 1987). Students also indicated whether or not they saw themselves as being overweight on a 1 to 5 point scale with a "3" being normal or average in weight. In addition, the height and weight information they provided was, in turn, compared by the investigators with a "Metropolitan Life Insurance Chart" listing for medium builds, to determine whether or not they were over- or under-weight. To reduce the fatigue factor of taking too many tests in one setting, the two shyness measures (Social Avoidance and Distress: Watson & Friend, 1969; Social Reticence: Jones, 1987) were given to only 160 of the subjects. The Social Provisions Scale (Russell & Cutrona, 1984) and the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale (Jones, 1988) was given to 320. And the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1984) was given to 225 of the 455 students.

Preliminary analysis of the physical attractiveness measure indicated the existence of a strong "self-serving" bias for the majority of students. On a 1 to 10 point rating scale, eighty-two percent of the 455 students rated themselves above 5, or the midpoint or average; 13% rated themselves right at the midpoint; and only 5% rated themselves below average.

Validity and Reliability of the Measures

California Psychological Inventory. The CPI was developed specifically for use with normal adult populations. It draws nearly half of its 462 items from the MMPI. Retest reliability scores (median of .70 for an interval of over a year) as well as internal consistency reliability coefficients (median alpha coefficient of .73) for the individual 20 "folk concept" scales compare favorably with those found with other personality inventories (Gough, 1987, p. 31).

The SRS and the SAD are both reliable measures of shyness (Jones, et al., 1986). The SRS has an alpha coefficient of .91 and a test-retest correlation of .87 over an eight week period. Its inter-item correlations average .36. The SAD has an alpha coefficient of .90 and a test-retest correlation of .68 over four weeks, and its inter-item correlations average .25.

The Social Provisions Scale, based on Robert Weiss's (1974) theory of social relationships, involves six social functions or provisions that could be obtained in relationships with others. Although all six might be needed for individuals to feel adequately supported and to avoid loneliness, different ones could be more crucial at different stages of one's life cycle. The six relational provisions are (a) attachment, a sense of emotional closeness and security, usually provided by a spouse or lover; (b) social integration, a sense of belonging to a group of people

who share common interests and recreational activities, usually obtained from friends; (c) reassurance of worth, an acknowledgment of one's competence and skill, usually obtained from coworkers; (d) reliable alliance, the assurance that one can count on others for assistance under any circumstance, often obtained from family members; (e) guidance, advice and information, usually obtained from teachers, mentors, or parent figures; and (f) opportunity for nurturance, a sense of responsibility for the well-being of another, often obtained from one's children. Internal consistency for the total score on the SPS is relatively high, ranging from .85 to .92 across a variety of populations (Russell & Cutrona, 1984). Alpha coefficients for the individual subscales range from .64 to .76, and factor analysis has confirmed a six-factor structure that corresponds to the six social provisions.

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, developed by Baker and Siryk (1984) and published by Western Psychological Services (1989), was employed as a measure of adjustment to college and it contained 52 items. Students rated their estimated level of adjustment on a 9-point rating continuum. A higher score indicated better adjustment. The four subscales of the test included academic adjustment (18 items), social adjustment (14 items), personal-emotional adjustment (10 items), and Goal Commitment (8 items). The sum of the scores for all items yielded a measure of overall adjustment to college. Baker and Siryk (1984) reported internal consistency measures of reliability in the .90's for the full SACO scale score, the .80's for the academic adjustment and social adjustment subscales, and the .70's for the personal-emotional subscale. Validity data reported by Baker and Siryk (1984) indicates significant relationships between the subscales and numerous relevant independent criteria: the personal-emotional subscale and being known to a psychological services center; the academic adjustment scale and freshman year grade point average and subsequent election to Phi Beta Kappa; and the social adjustment subscale and a campus activities checklist and decisions regarding applications for dormitory assistant positions.

The Interpersonal Betrayal Scale (Jones, 1988) is a 40 item scale consisting of three subscales, mole, terrorist, and spy and assesses the likelihood that an individual will betray friends and acquaintances. Not much is known yet about the validity and reliability of this particular scale.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed first using Pearson product moment correlations among self-rated attractiveness scores and on scores on the 20 CPI "folk" traits and three vectors, the SAD and SRS measures of shyness, the 24 SPS measures, estimates of being over-weight, the SACQ, and the IBS. Following this analysis, a series of multivariate and univariate analyses of variance were performed to see if reliable effects could be attributed to male/female differences.

Pearson's r correlation of Perceived Attractiveness with CPI, Shyness, Social Support, Weight Student Adjustment to College, and Betrayal. As can be seen in Table I, self-ratings of physical attractiveness correlated with 9 of the 20 CPI scales and with v.1 ($r = -.30, p < .001$) and v.2 ($r = .11, p < .05$) but not with v.3 ($r = -.05$). For shyness, one's self-rated physical attractiveness correlated significantly with both the SAD, $r = -.26, p < .001$, and the Social Reticence, $r = -.29, p < .05$ scales. With regard to social support only two dimensions out of a possible 24 were statistically significant. Those viewing themselves as physically attractive were more likely to have a boyfriend/girlfriend ($r = .25, p < .001$), and (related to this component of their social lives) they were more likely to maintain a higher mean total mean frequency of contact with nonkin people concerning their needs for attachment ($r = .19, p < .05$). One's weight as rated and/or perceived by themselves on the 1 to 5 scale, was inversely ($r = -.12, p < .01$) and significantly correlated with self-rated attractiveness. The perception of one's weight also correlated positively with actual weight ($r = .26, p < .001$) and with weight as defined by the Metropolitan Life Insurance chart ($r = .37, p < .001$). Neither actual weight ($r = -.06$), nor one's weight relative to others, as determined from the Metropolitan Life Insurance chart ($r = -.01$), however, were correlated with self-ratings of attractiveness. With regard to adjustment to college, self-rated attractiveness was related to social adjustment ($r = .14, p < .05$), but not to academic adjustment,

personal adjustment, or goal commitment. Self-rated attractiveness was unrelated to the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale as a whole, and to each of its individual subscales.

TABLE I: PEARSON r CORRELATIONS WITH PERCEIVED ATTRACTIVENESS

Calif. Psych. Inv.	Physical Attractiveness
Dominance	.26***
Capacity for Status	.12**
Sociability	.28***
Social Presence	.18***
Self-Acceptance	.22***
Independence	.21***
Empathy	.10*
Responsibility	.00
Socialization	.04
Self-Control	-.12**
Good Impression	-.03
Well-being	.12**
Achievement via Conformity	.04
Tolerance	-.04
Achievement via Independence	-.03
Flexibility	-.09
Intellectual Efficiency	.01
Psychological Mindedness	.05
Communality	.08
Femininity	-.08
Vector 1 (Internality)	-.30***
Vector 2 (Norm-favoring)	.11*
Vector 3 (Self-realization)	-.05
Shyness	
Social Avoidance & Distress	-.26***
Social Reticence	-.29***
Social Provisions Scale	
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	.25**
Mean Freq. Contact with nonkin for attachment needs	.19*
Weight	
Actual Weight	-.06
Perceived Weight	-.12***
Metropolitan Chart Weight	-.01
Interpersonal Betrayal Scale	-.02
Mole	-.04
Terrorist	.01
Spy	-.00
Student Adjustment to College	.10
Academic Adjustment	.04
Social Adjustment	.14*
Personal Adjustment	.06
Goal Commitment	.08

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Self-rated Attractiveness x Male / Female differences on the CPI factors, vectors, and scales.
To determine if any of the five CPI factors (Extraversion, Control, Flexibility, Concensuality, Femininity/Masculinity) were related to self-rated attractiveness ratings, and if they were differentially affected by male / female differences, a Perceived Attractiveness x Sex (Top 50%/

Bottom 50%² x Male/Female) multivariate analysis of variance was performed on each of the five CPI clusters. Results are summarized in Table II.

TABLE II. MULTIVARIATE AND UNIVARIATE MAIN EFFECTS FOR LOW VS. HIGH SELF-RATED PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS X SEX GROUPS ON CPI FACTORS, VECTORS, AND SCALES^a

	Physical Attractiveness				Sex			
	Means		F	p	Means		F	p
	Low	High			Male	Female		
<u>Factor I (Extravers.)</u>	-	-	<u>3.6</u>	<u>.0009</u>	-	-	<u>1.0</u>	<u>.42</u>
Dominance	51.8	54.0	15.6	.0001	51.8	54.0	4.2	.04
Capacity for status	49.0	50.0	2.7	.10	49.0	50.0	1.5	.22
Sociability	52.0	54.0	20.5	.0001	52.0	53.8	5.0	.03
Social presence	51.1	53.0	8.5	.0001	51.1	52.5	1.6	.21
Self-acceptance	52.7	54.9	10.8	.001	52.7	54.9	5.1	.03
Independence	49.8	51.0	10.2	.002	50.0	51.0	2.4	.12
Empathy	50.6	51.4	.3	.62	50.6	51.4	.6	.43
<u>Factor II (Control)</u>	-	-	<u>2.6</u>	<u>.01</u>	-	-	<u>.4</u>	<u>.89</u>
Responsibility	47.7	47.9	.3	.58	48.0	48.0	.7	.41
Socialization	48.9	49.5	.3	.59	49.3	49.2	.0	.94
Self-control	44.9	45.4	.1	.22	44.5	44.7	.1	.81
Good impression	45.1	45.3	.0	.92	45.1	45.6	.7	.42
Well-being	45.5	48.0	6.4	.01	47.0	47.4	.2	.70
Tolerance	49.6	48.7	.1	.81	48.8	49.5	.0	.86
Achievement by con	49.3	50.1	1.5	.22	49.9	49.7	.1	.74
<u>Factor III (Flexibility)</u>	-	-	<u>.8</u>	<u>.53</u>	-	-	<u>2.1</u>	<u>.06</u>
Tolerance	49.6	48.7	.1	.81	48.8	49.5	.0	.86
Achievement by ind	51.2	51.0	.1	.77	51.3	50.4	2.4	.13
Flexibility	50.9	48.8	2.2	.14	49.8	49.1	1.3	.26
Intellectual effic.	47.3	47.4	.1	.73	47.8	46.4	4.0	.05
Psychol. mindedn.	49.7	50.4	.5	.46	50.2	50.1	.0	.96
<u>Factor IV (Consensual)</u>	-	-	<u>1.9</u>	<u>.12</u>	-	-	<u>.9</u>	<u>.45</u>
Communality	52.3	53.3	1.5	.23	52.7	53.6	1.9	.17
Responsibility	47.7	47.9	.3	.59	48.0	47.5	.7	.41
Socialization	49.0	49.5	.3	.59	49.3	49.2	.0	.94
Well-being	45.5	48.0	6.4	.01	47.0	47.4	.2	.70
<u>Factor V (F / M)</u>	46.2	45.9	<u>.0</u>	<u>.91</u>	46.1	45.6	<u>.7</u>	<u>.41</u>
<u>Vectors</u>	-	-	<u>5.1</u>	<u>.002</u>	-	-	<u>.9</u>	<u>.47</u>
v.1 (Introverted)	16.9	14.6	10.3	.001	13.5	18.2	.4	.52
v.2 (Rule-follow.)	21.2	22.5	5.5	.02	22.6	21.2	1.9	.17
v.3 (Self-realiz.)	34.0	33.2	.3	.61	35.7	30.8	.3	.61

A strong significant multivariate main effect for self-rated attractiveness ($p < .0009$) was found for Cluster I (extraversion) and a moderately strong multivariate main effect ($p < .01$) was found for Cluster II (control), but a significant main effect for self-rated attractiveness was not found in

^a Multivariate effects are underlined and univariate effects are not.

Cluster III (flexibility), Cluster IV (consensuality), or Cluster V (femininity). Sex and the interaction effect of self-rated attractiveness with sex were not significant at the multivariate level.

A strong significant, univariate main effect for self-rated physical attractiveness was found on five of seven scales (dominance, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, and independence) in Cluster I (extraversion). With Cluster II, out of seven scales, only Well-being ($p < .01$) was statistically significant. Self-rated physical attractiveness had no significant effect on any of the remaining 14 scales. Furthermore, among individual univariate analyses, no significant interactions with sex were found on any of the 20 scales, and male/female differences were found on only four scales. The females were significantly higher than males on dominance, sociability, independence, and intellectual efficiency. Overall, these results strongly suggest that the effect of one's self-rated attractiveness was primarily limited to the area of extraversion and/or social competence.

A multivariate analysis of the Vectors associated with the CPI indicated a strong multivariate main effect for self-rated attractiveness ($p < .002$), but no significant effects for sex or for the interaction of sex with self-rated attractiveness. For the univariate analyses, significant main effects for sex or interactions with sex were not found. A strong univariate main effect ($p < .001$) for self-rated attractiveness was found with v.1 (introversion), and a weaker one ($p < .02$) was found with v.2 (openness to rules or norms), but no significant effect was found with v.3 (the vector assessing self-realization). Again, this suggests that the effect of one's perceived physical attractiveness was primarily limited to the area of extraversion and/or social competence.

Self-rated Attractiveness x Male/Female differences and Shyness.

A series of univariate analyses of variance (Top 50% / Bottom 50% x Male / Female) were also conducted on the shyness measures. Subjects scoring high on the 1 to 10 scale measure of attractiveness reported less shyness on the Social Reticence Scale than did low scoring subjects ($F = 7.16$, $p < .008$, high $M = 46.0$, low $M = 52.3$) and on the SAD scale ($F = 7.46$, $p < .007$; high $M = 6.1$, low $M = 9.6$). Neither male/female differences, however, nor the interaction of sex with attractiveness were significant for either Social Reticence or the SAD scales. These results also strongly suggested a link between one's self-rated attractiveness and extraversion, social competence, and interpersonal ease.

Self-rated Attractiveness x Male/Female differences in Social Support.

On the Social Provisions Scale, only two significant main effects were found for physical attractiveness. Self-rated highly attractive people are more likely than low ($F = 3.96$, $p < .05$, high $M = .5$, low $M = .3$) to have a friend of the opposite sex (boyfriend/ girlfriend), and (related to this) they were more likely to maintain a higher total mean frequency of contact with nonkin people concerning attachment needs ($F = 4.09$, $p < .05$, high $M = 4.6$, low $M = 3.9$).

Numerous main effects for sex were found in the SPS results (See Table III). While females did not differ from males in total network size or total mean frequency of contact, they did differ from males in the types of provisions received -- both in number and in frequency. Nurturance was received from a larger number of kin people by females than by males, and females also had a greater frequency of contact with each kin person for purposes of social integration, guidance, reassurance of worth, and a reliable alliance. In addition, significant interactions were found (See Table IV) between self-rated attractiveness and sex on the SPS for total kin nurturance ($F = 3.97$, $p < .05$), and for total attachment needs met by nonkin ($F = 5.67$, $p < .02$). With regard to nurturance, for males, self-rated attractiveness was unrelated (high $M = 1.8$, low $M = 1.7$) to the total number of kin providing it. For females, however, this was not the case. Females viewing themselves as attractive had significantly fewer kin providing nurturance than females who saw themselves as unattractive (high $M = 2.0$, low $M = 3.2$) and suggests that unattractive females relied more on kin for nurturance than attractive females. With regard to attachment provisions by nonkin, for males, there was no statistically significant difference between those seeing themselves as attractive or unattractive (high $M = 1.4$, low $M = 1.9$), but for females there was. Females who saw themselves as more attractive had significantly more nonkin people ($p < .05$) who satisfied attachment needs than did females who saw themselves as unattractive (high $M = 1.8$, low $M = .9$). These results indicated that females with high self-rated attractiveness scores had fewer nurturance needs met by kin, but more of their attachment needs met by nonkin than females with

low self-rated attractiveness scores. Overall, self-rated attractiveness was of importance to a female and relatively unimportant to a male with regard to these two social provisions.

TABLE III. MAIN EFFECTS ON THE SPS FOR SEX

	SPS Means		F	p
	Male	Female		
<u>Number</u>				
<u>Provisions by Kin</u>				
Nurturance	1.8	2.5	5.45	.02
<u>Frequency</u>				
<u>Provisions by Kin</u>				
Social integration	3.0	3.9	4.24	.01
Guidance	4.0	5.0	8.76	.003
Reassurance of worth	3.7	4.8	7.50	.007
Reliable Alliance	3.6	4.7	7.12	.009

TABLE IV. SIGNIFICANT INTERACTION EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED ATTRACTION X SEX ON THE SPS

	SPS Means		F	p
	Male	Female		
<u>Number</u>				
<u>Total Kin Providing Nurturance</u>				
Low Attractive	1.7	3.2	3.97	.05
High Attractive	1.8	2.0		
<u>Total Nonkin Providing Attachment</u>				
Low Attractive	1.9	.9	5.67	.02
High Attractive	1.4	1.8		

Self-rated Attractiveness x Male/Female differences and Weight

With regard to actual weight, males ($M = 167.4$) in the sample, not surprisingly, weighed significantly more, $F(1, 447) = 144.94$, $p < .001$, than females ($M = 132.8$). In addition, a significant Attractiveness x Sex interaction, $F(1,447) = 5.01$, $p < .03$, indicated that males and females differed with regard to the relationship between actual weight and their self-rated attractiveness. Among males, self-rated attractiveness was unrelated to one's real weight (high M

= 167.1, low $M = 167.2$). Among females, on the other hand, those giving themselves higher self-ratings for physical attractiveness, weighed significantly less (high $M = 128.5$, low $M = 140.3$).

With regard to a perception of being overweight, females ($M = 3.7$) scored significantly higher, $F(1,447) = 5.83$, $p < .02$, than males ($M = 3.5$). A significant self-rated physical attractiveness x sex interaction, $F(1,447) = 4.08$, $p < .04$, moreover, indicated that males and females differed with regard to the perception of being overweight and self-ratings of physical attractiveness. Among males, the perception of being overweight was unrelated to one's self-rated physical attractiveness (high $M = 3.5$, low $M = 3.5$), but among females it was. Females rating themselves as low in attractiveness, saw themselves as significantly more overweight (high $M = 3.5$, low $M = 4.1$) on a 1 to 5 scale (with 3 being normal weight).

By comparing the height/weight figures provided by each subject with the Metropolitan Life Insurance chart, it was also possible to determine if subjects actually were overweight. Overall, the results indicated males ($M = 3.1$) were relatively more overweight, $F(1,447) = 3.86$, $p < .05$, than females ($M = 2.6$). Again the self-rated attractiveness x sex interaction was also significant, $F(1,447) = 3.86$, $p < .05$. A simple effects analysis of this interaction indicated that while self-rated attractiveness was unrelated to weight among males (high $M = 3.2$, low $M = 3.1$), among females, self-rated physical attractiveness was significantly ($p < .05$) and negatively related to being over-weight. In other words, those females who saw themselves as more attractive, were significantly thinner (high $M = 2.5$, low $M = 2.9$). In fact, those females who saw themselves as unattractive and overweight were only slightly below ($M = 2.9$) normal weight with regard to the Metropolitan chart, while those who saw themselves as most attractive were significantly ($M = 2.5$) below normal weight -- at least as determined by the chart.

Perceived Attractiveness x Male/Female differences for IBS and Student Adjustment to College

For the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale (IBS), neither the main effects of physical attractiveness, $F(1,316) = 1.46$, $p < .22$, Sex, $F(1,316) = 1.77$, $p < .18$, nor their interaction, $F(1,316) = .13$, $p < .71$, were significant. These results are consistent with the meta analysis of Eagly et al., (1991) where physical attractiveness, as rated by independent observers, had near zero effects on integrity and concern for others.

For the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire, neither the main effects of physical attractiveness, $F(1,222) = 1.29$, $p < .26$, Sex, $F(1,222) = .60$, $p < .44$, nor their interaction, $F(1,222) = .13$, $p < .71$, were significant. Further, on each of the subscales (Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Personal Adjustment, and Goal Commitment), neither main effects nor their interactions were significant. These results suggested that self-rated physical attractiveness had little bearing on a student's adjustment to college.

DISCUSSION

In some instances, for both males and females, self-rated physical attractiveness significantly affected personality and interpersonal relationships. These instances included (a) all seven folk scales (dominance, capacity for status, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, independence, and empathy) on Cluster I (extraversion) of the CPI; (b) two of the three vectors on the CPI: v.1 (intraversion) and v.2 (openness to norms); (c) shyness; and (d) having a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

In other instances self-rated physical attractiveness affected females, but not males (i.e., a significant Attractiveness x Sex interaction occurred). These instances included (a) social provisions in the areas of nurturance and attachment, and (b) both perceived and actual weight. In the area of Social Provisions, self-rated unattractive females received greater nurturance from kin and had fewer attachment needs met from nonkin than did attractive females. For males, self-rated attractiveness had little impact on either nurturance or attachment. With regard to weight, the thinner females were, the higher they rated themselves on the self-rated attractiveness scale. Although the males in this sample were more likely to actually be overweight, the females in this sample were more likely to perceive that they were overweight. For males, self-rated physical

attractiveness was unrelated to weight. In fact, the evidence indicated that those females who considered themselves to be the most attractive were significantly below normal weight.

In other instances, only sex differences were found, and these differences were unrelated to self-rated physical attractiveness. For example, males were generally taller and they weighed more; and females relied on kin more for the social provisions of social integration, guidance, nurturance, reassurance of worth, and for having a reliable alliance than males.

Finally, there were instances in which neither self-rated physical attractiveness nor being a male or female made a difference. These included (a) several of the CPI "folk" scales & v.3 (personal integration); (b) several of the dimensions assessed by the Social Provisions Scale; (c) one's adjustment to college as measured by the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire; and (d) one's propensity toward betrayal as measured by the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale.

Overall, self-ratings of physical attractiveness chiefly affected the domain of extraversion, perceived social competence, and interpersonal ease, but not integrity, self-realization, adjustment, sensitivity to others, or concern for others. In general, it would seem that a positive, self-serving bias, as it pertains to self-rated physical attractiveness, does serve the role of an adaptive illusion, but its domain of beneficence is largely circumscribed to the areas of extraversion, perceived social competence, and interpersonal ease. Other than having an opposite sex friend (i.e., a boy or girl friend), this beneficence did not extend into personal relationships (either in terms of quantity or quality), nor to one's adjustment to college, levels of personal integration, integrity, nor to other domains. Thus, while the effect of self-rated attractiveness may be fairly potent as it relates to the area of perceived social competence, it does not have much of an effect in other areas.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The male/female ratio of 3:1 closely mirrors that of the student body population where the study took place.

² Previous studies are mixed in whether they compare only those subjects who score extremely high or low (e.g., top vs. bottom 25%), or whether they compare all subjects. The advantage of selecting participants with extreme scores is that it increases the likelihood of uncovering a relationship. However, this increase in power is achieved by artificially inflating the magnitude of a relationship. Because an analysis of only the extremes would not provide an accurate estimate of the size of the effects being studied, we elected to present the data including all subjects.

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