# Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

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The physical attractiveness stereotype is a term that psychologists use to refer to the tendency to assume that people who are physically attractive also possess other socially desirable personality traits.

Many studies have found that people tend to think that more attractive people are also happier, outgoing, successful, kinder and have many other positive traits. In less-individualistic cultures, beautiful people are assumed to have traits that those cultures value, such as concern for others, loyalty and integrity.

The stereotype acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy where the perception of attractive people as more valuable members of society leads to their receiving preferential treatment, positive feedback and tangible benefit. Studies have found that attractiveness does correlate positively with some traits such as personal income, social skills and self-confidence. This cognitive bias could be considered to be a specific kind of halo effect.

Physical attractiveness can have a significant effect on how people are judged in terms of employment or social opportunities, friendship, sexual behavior, and marriage. In many cases, humans attribute positive characteristics, such as intelligence and honesty, to attractive people without consciously realizing it. In certain instances, physical attractiveness is distinct from sexual attraction; humans may regard the young as attractive for various reasons, for example, but without sexual attraction.

Women, on average, tend to be attracted to men who are slightly taller and who have a relatively narrow waist and broad shoulders. Men, overall, tend to be attracted by women who are slightly shorter, have a youthful appearance and exhibit features such as a symmetrical face, full breasts, full lips, and a low waist-hip ratio.

Generally, physical attraction is dependent on three factors: universal perceptions common to all human cultures, cultural and social aspects, and individual subjective preferences. Despite universally held perceptions of beauty in both sexes, males tend to place significantly higher value on physical appearance in a partner than women do. This can be explained by evolutionary psychology as a consequence of ancestral humans who selected partners based on secondary sexual characteristics, as well as general indicators of fitness (for example, symmetrical features) enjoying greater reproductive success as a result of higher fertility in those partners, although a male's ability to provide resources for offspring was likely signalled less by physical features. This is because the most prominent indicator of fertility in women is youth, while the traits in a man that enhance reproductive success are proxies for his ability to accrue resources and protect. There appear to be universal standards regarding attractiveness both within and across cultures and ethnic groups.

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