

ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF
PSYCHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

VOLUME 3

Edited by
RAYMOND J. CORSINI

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Volume 3

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A Wiley-Interscience Publication

JOHN WILEY & SONS

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ADAPTED FROM A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION AND PUBLISHERS.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data:

Encyclopedia of psychology / Raymond J. Corsini, editor ; consulting editors, Anne Anastasi . . . [et al.] ; associate editors, Mary Allen . . . [et al.] ; foreign editors, Ruben Ardila . . . [et al.] ; biography editor, Robert Lundin ; foreign editor, Neal Pinckney ; managing editor, Kristine Altweis. -- 2nd ed.

p. cm.

"A Wiley-Interscience publication."

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-471-55819-2 (hard : set : alk. paper)

I. Psychology—Encyclopedias. I. Corsini, Raymond J.

BF31. E52 1994

150'.3—dc20

93-22638

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**GESTALT THERAPY
GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY
PSYCHOANALYSIS**

J. T. HART

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS

Physical attractiveness has been defined as: "That which represents one's conception of the ideal in appearance; that which gives the greatest degree of pleasure to the senses" (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986, p. 4). Beginning with Charles Darwin (1871), anthropologists have long tried to discover universal standards of attractiveness. (One must know what various peoples consider sexually appealing, if one is to predict the course of sexual selection and, ultimately, human evolution). Darwin's painstaking observations finally convinced most scientists that culture sets the standard, and thus it was futile to search for universals. Any lingering hopes of identifying sweeping standards were shattered in Clellan Ford and Frank Beach's (1951) landmark survey of more than 200 primitive societies. They, too, failed to find *any* universal standards of sexual allure.

Recently, however, sociobiologists have revived hopes that more sophisticated sociobiological theory and research techniques may finally enable scientists to pinpoint some aesthetic universals. In one promising study, Judith Langlois and Lori Roggman (1990) found evidence that the Greek's golden mean may serve as the standard of appeal. The authors assembled photographs of the faces of men and women. Using video and computer techniques, they generated a series of composite faces (truly average men and women). They found that composites were more attractive than any individual face.

Other sociobiologists have tested the hypothesis that men and women prefer faces that, in a sense, have it all—faces that combine the innocence of childhood with the ripe sexuality of the mature. Early ethologists observed that men and women often experienced a tender rush of feeling when they viewed infantile "kewpie doll" faces—faces with huge eyes, tiny noses and mouths, and little chins (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1971). Other authors (Symons, 1979) proposed that men and women should be aroused by faces that possess features associated with maturity, especially lush, adult sexuality (say, thick hair, dewy skin, and full lips) and/or mature power (say, high cheekbones or a firm jaw and chin). Most recent evidence finds that people like faces that possess both assets; say large eyes and a small nose, combined with full sexual lips and a strong jaw and chin (Cunningham et al., 1990). Whether these preferences will turn out to be universal is not yet known. Historians (Banner, 1983) remind us that in any society standards of beauty often change at a dizzying rate.

EVIDENCE THAT PEOPLE ARE BIASED IN FAVOR OF THE PHYSICALLY ATTRACTIVE

Scientists find that most people, most of the time, are biased in their reactions to good-looking versus unattractive people. This discovery is certainly not new. (The Greek philosopher Sappho contended that "what is beautiful is good.") Today's scientists, however, have come to a little better understanding of just how, where, when, and why physical appearance is important. There seem to be four steps in the stereotyping process:

1. Most people know that it is not fair to discriminate against the unattractive (they would be incensed if others discriminated against *them*), and yet . . .
2. Privately, most people take it for granted that attractive and unattractive people are different; generally, they assume that what is beautiful is good; what is unattractive is bad.
3. Most people treat good looking and average people better than they treat the unattractive.
4. As a consequence, a self-fulfilling prophecy occurs. The way people are treated shapes the kinds of people they become. (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986, p. 36).

There is evidence that people do perceive attractive-unattractive people differently (see Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Bull & Ramsey, 1988; Graham & Kligman, 1985, for encyclopedic reviews of this research). In one classic experiment, researchers (Dion et al., 1972) showed college men and women yearbook photographs of men and women who varied markedly in appearance and asked them their first impressions of the students. Young adults assumed that handsome men and beautiful women possessed nearly all the virtues. They assumed that the good-looking were more sociable, outgoing, poised, and interesting; that they were warmer, more exciting, and more sexually responsive; and that they had better characters, were more kind, nurturant, modest, strong, and sensitive than their homely peers. Good-looking people also were expected to have more fulfilling lives. Students predicted the good looking would be happier, have more successful marriages, find better jobs, and all-in-all, live more fulfilling lives. On only one dimension were young adults suspicious of good looks; they did not expect attractive people to make especially good parents.

Observers recognize that good looks might have a bit of a dark side. For example, Dermer and Thiel (1975) asked college students to rate college women who varied greatly in attractiveness. In general, subjects assumed that attractive and average women possessed more appealing personalities and were more socially skilled than unattractive women. In this study, however, researchers also documented some ugly truths about beauty. Subjects expected attractive women to be more vain and egotistical, more bourgeois (i.e., materialistic, snobbish, and unsympathetic to oppressed peoples), and less committed to their marriages (more likely to have extramarital affairs and/or to request a divorce) than homely women. Similar results have been secured by Eagley et al. (1991).

Not only do people think that the attractive are special but they treat that way (Bull & Ramsey, 1988; Graham & Kligman, 1985; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Teachers award good-looking grade school, high school, and college students with better grades than their less attractive counterparts for the same work. Executives are more likely to hire and promote good-looking men and women and to pay them more. Clinicians spend more time with good-looking clients who get better care and do better in therapy. Unattractive people are more likely to be judged mentally ill. Attractive law-breakers are less likely to get caught, less likely to be reported to the authorities, less likely to be found guilty, and even if convicted, are less likely to receive strict sentences. The good looking are less likely to be asked to help others, but more likely to receive assistance if they ask for help or are in trouble. Finally, society's biases ensure that good-looking men and women have a marked advantage at every stage of an intimate relationship. The attractive have an easier time meeting potential dates and mates, attracting more appealing dates and mates, and ending up with better dating and marital relationships. They have an advantage in trying to sustain these relationships. If things go wrong, they find it easier to start anew.

There are some limits to people's preference for and biased treatment of the most attractive, of course. Some types of people seem to care more about looks than do others: traditional men and women seem to care more about looks than do the less traditional and men seem to care more about other's looks than do women. People care more about looks

in some situations than in others: appearance seems to matter most when people are getting acquainted; later on, other things—intelligence, personality, and so forth—become more important. Appearance matters more in romantic settings than in others.

What effect does such stereotyping have on men and women? The evidence is mixed (Bull & Ramsey, 1988; Graham & Kligman, 1985; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). The good looking and unattractive are not as different as people assume them to be. Self-esteem and self-concept are positively related to how good-looking people *think* they are, but not to their *actual* appearance. The personalities of the attractive and unattractive differ only slightly if at all. A few studies have found that the good looking are slightly more inner-directed, more assertive, more likely to seek success, and possess more fear-of-failure than do others. Other studies have failed to replicate these results.

Attractive and unattractive people do seem to differ in one respect. The good looking appear to be more confident in romantic and social situations and to possess more social skills. People expect the good looking to be socially appealing and treat them that way. The evidence suggests that a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy generally operates. People expect the good looking to be charming, treat them that way, and as a consequence, they become more skilled. This self-fulfilling aspect of physical attractiveness was demonstrated in a study by Mark Snyder, Elizabeth Tanke, and Ellen Berscheid (1977). Men and women at the University of Minnesota were recruited for a study on the acquaintance process. First, men were given a Polaroid snapshot and biographical information about their partners. In fact, the snapshot was a plant, it depicted either a beautiful or a homely woman. Men were asked their first impressions of her. Those who believed they had been assigned a beautiful partner expected her to be sociable, poised, humorous, and socially skilled. Those who thought they had been assigned to an unattractive partner expected her to be unsociable, awkward, serious, and socially inept. Such prejudice is not surprising: it is known that good-looking people make exceptionally good first impressions.

The next set of findings, however, was surprising. Men were asked to get acquainted with their partner via the telephone. Male expectations had a dramatic impact on the way they talked to their partners during the telephone call. That, in turn, created a correspondingly great impact on the response of the women. Men, of course, thought they were talking to a beautiful or homely woman; in fact, the women on the other end of the line varied greatly in appearance, although most were probably average in appearance. Nonetheless, within the space of a telephone conversation, women became what men expected them to be. After the telephone conversation, judges listened to tapes of the women's portion of the conversation and tried to guess what the women were like just from that conversation. Women who had been talked to as if they were beautiful, soon began to sound that way. They became unusually animated, confident, and socially skilled. Those who had been treated as if they were unattractive, soon began acting that way. They became withdrawn, lacked confidence, and seemed awkward. The men's prophecies had been fulfilled.

How did this happen? When the portions of the male conversation were analyzed, it was found that those men who thought they were talking to a beautiful woman were more sociable, sexually warm, interesting, independent, sexually permissive, bold, outgoing, humorous, and socially skilled than the men who thought they were talking to a homely woman. The men assigned to an attractive woman also were more comfortable, enjoyed themselves more, liked their partners more, took the initiative more often, and used their voices more effectively. In brief, the men who thought they were talking to a beautiful woman tried harder. Undoubtedly, this behavior caused the women to try harder, too. If the stereotypes held by the men became reality within the 10 min of a telephone conversation, one can imagine what happens when people are treated well or badly over a lifetime. In fact, researchers

have found some evidence that the attractive are in fact unusually socially skilled and experienced (Curran, 1975; Kaats & Davis, 1970).

A final observation: the evidence makes it clear that the good looking have an advantage and the unattractive have a disadvantage in life. However, a careful analysis of existing data makes it clear that the emphasis should be on the latter half of this sentence. If the relationship between appearance and a host of other variables—self-esteem, happiness, job opportunities, dating, and popularity—are examined, it is soon discovered that the relationship between appearance and advantage is not a monotonically decreasing one. The data make it clear that the extremely attractive have only a small advantage over the more ordinary peers. What is really important is to be at least average. The average-looking have a real advantage over the unattractive or the disfigured.

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DRESS
 EXCHANGE THEORY
 EXPECTANCY THEORY
 HALO EFFECT
 IMAGERY
 PERCEPTUAL TRANSACTIONALISM
 PYGMALION EFFECT
 SOCIAL COGNITION
 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

E. HATFIELD

PHYSICS AND THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Many behavioral scientists have looked to the basic tenets of classical Newtonian physics in developing their models of human behavior. Findings from a new physics, atomic and subatomic, and from relativity theory, however, suggest that the older tenets no longer give rise to satisfactory models. The new physics is causing consternation among scientists, altering their images of the nature of the world and their methods of knowing. These new findings contain profound implications for the behavioral sciences. This discussion regarding the old and new physics is guided by the writings of Fritjof Capra in *The tao of physics* and by Gary Zukav in *The dancing wu li masters*.

CLASSICAL PHYSICS

In classical physics, the universe is considered to be a huge machine, running blindly on and on, with all of its parts, including humankind, functioning as mere cogs predetermined to play their roles. This has led to the belief that the future of any part of a system or any system itself could be predicted with perfect certainty, if its state at any time could be known completely in all of its details. In addition, scientists have concluded from these basic premises that they could observe and analyze the universe, including humans, in a completely objective fashion. They believed, therefore, that they could conduct research without consideration being given to themselves as observers.

Classical physics has enabled humankind to make outstanding advances in technology. Because of this great success, its basic assumptions served as the foundation for other sciences, including the behavioral sciences. From the old classical physics grew the doctrine that