Cultural stereotypes and discrimination in impression formation: Effects of sex, physical attractiveness, and task

by

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, discrimination based upon cultural stereotypes has been experimentally approached from a unideterminant point of view. In other words, subjects are assigned a task which is intended to assess the effects of one particular cultural stereotype upon impression formation. While this approach is often empirically rigorous, it simply does not reflect the complex processes involved in impression formation which occur outside the laboratory. Individuals do not typically present themselves, nor are they judged, on the basis of a single modality. Rather, any single individual presents a formidable array of information, all of which may be impinging upon a perceiver at any given moment. In order to codify this myriad of information, the perceiver must simplify the input that is presented (Brown, 1965; Kelvin, 1970). Cultural stereotypes, however misleading, have often proved useful in this regard. The stereotype allows classification of the individual, which then evokes discriminatory (either positive or negative) behavior. Typically, however, a number of these stereotypes are operating at the same time. Thus, an interaction of cultural stereotypes is often vital to the process of discrimination.

In order to achieve an understanding of the process of discrimination in impression formation, it may well be more important to assess the interaction of cultural stereotypes

than to examine the effects of any one stereotype operating in isolation (Hill & Kahn, 1974). The purpose of this research was to test the interaction of two pervasive cultural stereotypes (physical attractiveness and sex consistent/inconsistent task performance) in mediating discriminatory behavior.

Review of Physical Attractiveness Literature

Physical attractiveness is extremely salient in the attributional process. As early as 1921, Perrin demonstrated the importance of a person's physical characteristics, when that individual interacts with others. Several other investigators (Hollingworth, H. L., 1922; Hollingworth, L. S., 1935; Holmes and Hatch, 1938; Mohr, 1932; and Rokeach, 1943) have addressed themselves to correlational studies concerning physical attractiveness. All concur in the conclusion that level of physical appeal exerts a strong influence on qualities attributed to a person.

More recently, research in physical attractiveness has concentrated on experimental analyses in widely divergent areas. For example, the area of physical attractiveness and dating behavior has been extensively explored (Berscheid, et al., 1971; Brislin and Lewis, 1968; Byrne, Ervin, and Lamberth, 1970; Walster, et al., 1966). These investigators found that the primary factor in enjoyment of an initial date, and the desire to date again, was the partner's level of physical appeal. Other research has centered on the physical

attractiveness of children (Clifford and Walster, in press; Dion, 1972; Dion and Berscheid, 1972). In their study of teacher expectations of educational potential, Clifford and Walster (in press) found that the more attractive the child, the higher the educational potential the teacher assumed the child to have, and this held true regardless of the sex of the rater or the sex of the child. This is consistent with Dion's (1973) finding that when teachers are asked to evaluate the significance of hypothesized transgressions, they predict that the behavior would recur significantly more often for unattractive than for attractive children.

In research directly related to the present study, Miller (1970a) found that when judges of both sexes rated stimulus persons of both sexes, there were significant effects for physical attractiveness on 15 of the 17 dimensions of the Adjective Preference Scale (Jackson and Minton, 1963). The results demonstrate that the unattractive person is consigned to the negative or undesirable portion of the scale, while the highly attractive person was perceived more positively. Miller concluded that physical attractiveness was a potentially strong determinant of first impressions, and that it is extremely pervasive, occurring in a large array of impression responses, and with both male and female stimulus persons (SP's).

Miller's conclusion is bolstered by a number of other studies (Byrne, London, and Reeves, 1968; Kirkpatrick and

Cotton, 1951; Lerner, 1965; Miller, 1970b; Miller and Rivenbark, 1970; Mills and Aronson, 1965; Murstein, 1972; Sigall and Aronson, 1969; Singer, 1964) which also demonstrate a pervasive effect for physical attractiveness in attribution formation. Of significance is the Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) finding that physically attractive persons are attributed greater generalized levels of success (i.e., higher professional status, intelligence, happiness, etc.) than their physically unattractive counterparts. Berscheid and Walster (1974) concluded from their review of the available evidence that the perception of a stimulus person's level of physical appeal should affect the kinds of inferences people generally make about the acts of that person.

This hypothesis has been directly addressed by Landy and Sigall (1974), Mathis (1973), and Hill and Kahn (1974). Landy and Sigall (1974) had male students evaluate essays written by either an attractive or an unattractive female. Physical attractiveness was manipulated by supplying the evaluators with a photograph of an attractive or unattractive female. They found that the higher the physical appeal of the female writer, the higher the evaluation of the essay. Hill and Kahn (1974) manipulated the physical attractiveness of a single confederate in a co-acting situation, and then had subjects evaluate the confederate's perceived level of success in an ambiguous situation. The results show a strong effect for physical attractiveness. The confederate was

attributed significantly greater success when she appeared physically attractive. Utilizing a different approach, Mathis (1973) tested the hypothesis that the Beauty-Is-Good stereotype may not be validated when subjects are asked to make actual behavioral predictions. He asked subjects to make predictions of specific behaviors in which a stimulus person would engage. His results show that the Beauty-Is-Good stereotype is used when subjects are asked to make trait attributions, but not when they are asked for behavioral ratings. Together, these studies give empirical support (within the qualifications maintained by Mathis) to the "What Is Beautiful Is Good" thesis (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster, 1972).

Review of Sex-role Stereotyping Literature

The perceived sexual stereotyping of the task in which a stimulus person is engaged constitutes a second extremely salient variable in an impression formation paradigm. The research conducted by Deaux and her associates (Deaux, 1972; Deaux and Emswiller, 1974; Deaux and Farris, 1972; Deaux and Taynor, 1973; Farris and Deaux, 1973; Taynor and Deaux, 1973) gives strong empirical support to this contention. The research conducted by these authors into the effect of sex-linked task performance has demonstrated that behavioral expectations based upon what we culturally perceive as being female and male tasks are strong determinants of attributions made about the performer.

Deaux and Emswiller (1974) constructed tasks that, although equal in rated difficulty, were clearly perceived as being either male or female oriented. They hypothesized that successful performance on a sex-consistent task should be more readily attributed to internal factors (i.e. ability), whereas successful performance on sex-inconsistent tasks should be more often attributed to external factors (i.e. chance; cf. Feather, 1969; Weiner, et al., 1971). In their experiment, Deaux and Emswiller gave the subjects specific success information and then asked for attributions of causality (i.e. ability, effort, luck, task difficulty). Their hypotheses were only partially confirmed. Overall, male stimulus persons were seen as significantly more skillful than females. Also, a given level of performance on the masculine task was rated as better than the equivalent performance on the female task. However, while a male's successful performance in a masculine task was attributed to skill and a female's performance was attributed to luck, the reverse did not hold true: attributions of skill to male and female stimulus persons in the female task were almost identical.

The data from the Deaux and Emswiller study would appear to point to the existence of an anti-female bias in impression formation. Further evidence for such a bias was found by Goldberg (1968) where female subjects were presented stories which were identical except for the name of the author. Subject's ratings indicated a significant effect for sexual

stereotyping. Stories which were attributed to male authors were given higher ratings than the same stories attributed to female authors.

Overview of Literature and Methodology

From the previous research (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster, 1972; Hill and Kahn, 1974; Landy and Sigall, 1974; Mathis, 1973), it is obvious that physical attractiveness significantly affects the attributions made about a person's ability. It is also evident that one's sex significantly affects the attributions made about that person's ability on a sex-linked task (i.e. Deaux and Emswiller, 1974). But what happens to attributions when these two factors are taken together? Does the competency attributed to an attractive person persist when that person performs a sex-inconsistent task? Is the low level of success typically attributed to an unattractive person moderated by seeing that person performing in a sex-consistent task. Since no previous study has independently manipulated both physical attractiveness and sexual stereotyping in a single context, these questions must be regarded as empirical in nature.

To address these questions, both male and female subjects were employed. Subjects were asked to predict the performance of a stimulus person (either male or female who was either physically attractive or unattractive) on two tasks: one which was clearly male oriented and one which was clearly

female oriented. This yielded a 2x2x2/2 design which allowed the direct analysis of the interaction of these two stereotypes in an attribution setting. Whereas the emphasis of the Deaux and Emswiller (1974) study was on the attribution of causality (success information was given), the present study was designed to examine the attribution of success per se. For this reason, subjects were required to make attributions of successful performance on the basis of the physical attractiveness of a stimulus person and the sexual stereotyping of the task engaged in by that stimulus person.

HYPOTHESES

Primary Hypotheses

Given the complete lack of prior research upon possible interactions between the cultural stereotypes being investigated, a priori hypotheses were proposed with extreme caution. However, the prediction of extreme points was made. Thus, it was hypothesized that the physically attractive male performing in a male task would be attributed the greatest level of success by subjects of both sexes. Lowest expectation of success was predicted for the unattractive female performing in the male task by male subjects.

Secondary Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are directly consistent with previous research findings:

1. The higher the level of physical attractiveness, the greater the attributed success in the tasks.
2. Sexually consistent behavior will be attributed a greater degree of success than will sexually inconsistent behavior.
3. Both male and female subjects will attribute greater success to male stimulus persons.

METHOD

Subjects

Eighty subjects (40 males and 40 females) were recruited from the Introductory Psychology classes at Iowa State University. All received experimental credit for their participation.

Procedure

All subjects participated in groups of four. Subjects were told that they were participating in an experiment designed to assess their ability to make clinical judgments. Instructions as to the nature of the task were designed to bring about subject involvement. Each subject was given a folder containing all the stimulus materials used in the study. After completing the task, each group was fully debriefed.

Stimulus Materials

Each subject received a folder containing a cover sheet giving the instructions for the task (see Appendix D). Information contained in the folder varied along the following dimensions: sex of the stimulus person (male or female); physical attractiveness of the stimulus person (attractive or unattractive); and task orientation (both a masculine oriented and a feminine oriented task were included). Subjects were asked to make attributions of success to the pictured person

on both the male and female tasks.

Physical attractiveness and sex of stimulus person information were conveyed through the use of photographs of either an attractive or unattractive male or female. Independent judges had rated photographs of eighty male and female undergraduates at Iowa State University. From their ratings, two male and two female photographs were selected to represent the physical attractiveness dimension.[1]

Task information in the folder was conveyed through the use of a written description of the embedded figures task the stimulus person had presumably undergone (see Appendix B). Information contained suggested both a masculine and a feminine task orientation. The tasks utilized were a modified version of those used by Deaux and Emswiller (1974) who found the tasks reliably sex-typed. Since the tasks were modified for the purpose of this study, pilot testing was done to ensure the generality of the findings of Deaux and Emswiller. Pretesting showed that the tasks were clearly seen as sex-typed ($p < .0001$),[2] yet there was no difference in perceived level of difficulty.

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[1]Pilot data demonstrates discrimination of physical attractiveness on the photographs of $t_{male} = 6.795$, $df = 17$, $p < .001$; $t_{female} = 6.522$, $df = 11$, $p < .001$.

[2]Pilot data demonstrates a sexual differentiation of the two tasks of $t_{sex} = 0.058$, $df = 27$, $p < .0001$.

In addition to the foregoing, each folder contained a cover sheet which was a modified version of the cover story given to the subjects (see Appendix C), and a biographic data sheet for subject information (see Appendix E). These served to reiterate the cover story and further ensure the subject's involvement.

Dependent Measure

The dependent measure (see Appendix A) consisted of nine separate seven-point Likert-type scales anchored on the extremes. The first three scales were crucial to the experiment as they called for behavioral predictions. Questions four, five, and seven were designed to assess generalized trait attributions in accord with previous research. The remainder of the dependent measure was designed primarily as a series of manipulation checks.

Question one and questions four through nine were analyzed as separate 2 (physically attractive/unattractive) x 2 (male/female stimulus person) x 2 (male/female subject) ANOVA's. Scales two and three were analyzed in a split-plot design of the form 2x2x2/2 (male/female task). Differences between means were analyzed through the appropriate use of either Students t-statistic or Tukeys Honest Standard Difference (HSD) test.

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

Questions six, eight, and nine of the dependent measure (Appendix A) were designed as manipulation checks to assess perceived physical attractiveness, and difficulty of male and female oriented tasks respectively.

Table 1 presents the ANOVA summary table for the subject's ratings of the stimulus person's perceived attractiveness. Pre-testing had established significant discrimination of physical attractiveness for both male and female stimulus persons at $p < .001$. Table 1 presents a strong main effect for physical attractiveness (Mean Unattractive = -1.000; Mean Attractive = 1.025; $F = 62.354$, $p < .0001$). The analysis also shows a significant physical attractiveness by sex of

Table 1. Analysis of variance for rated attractiveness

Source	df	MS	F
Physical attractiveness (A)	1	82.0125	62.354****
Sex of stimulus person (B)	1	2.1125	1.606
Sex of subject (C)	1	0.0125	0.01
A x B	1	19.0125	14.455***
A x C	1	0.1125	0.086
B x C	1	0.0125	0.01
A x B x C	1	1.0125	0.7698
Residual	72	1.3153	

*** $p < .001$.

**** $p < .0001$.

stimulus person interacting ($F = 14.455$, $p < .0006$). Inspection of the interaction (see Figure 1) shows that attractive stimulus persons of both sexes (based on the pretesting) were rated higher than the unattractive persons ($p < .01$ in each case). The data further shows that the physically unattractive female was rated significantly lower in attractiveness

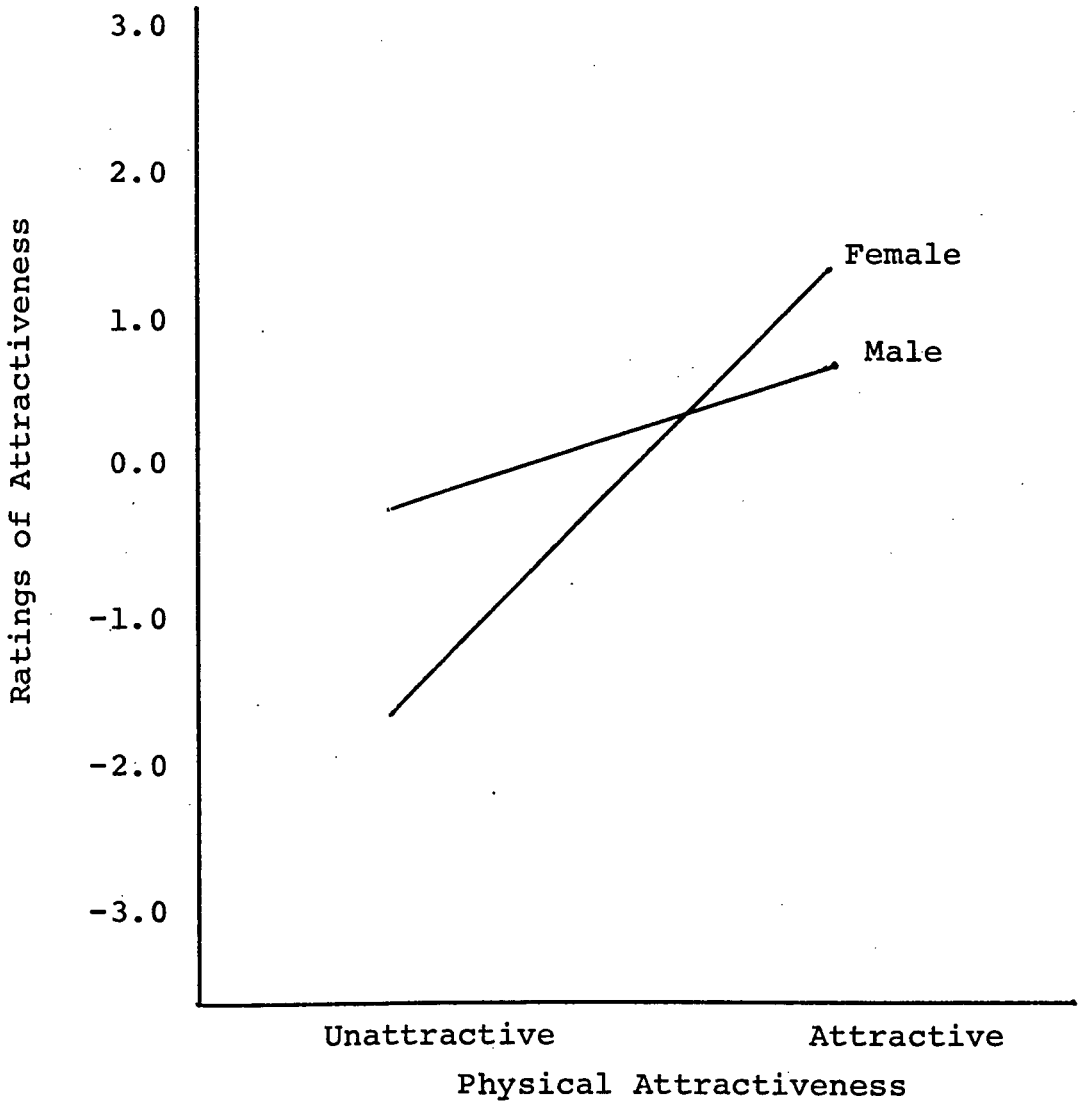


Figure 1. Physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction for rated attractiveness ($p < .0006$)

than the unattractive male ($p < .01$). Conversely, the attractive female was rated higher in attractiveness than the attractive male, although this difference did not reach conventional levels of significance.

Questions eight and nine asked the subjects to assess the level of difficulty of the two tasks. A t-test of the mean differences for the difficulty rating of the two tasks revealed no difference ($t = .1694$, $df = 158$).

Correlational Analysis

A correlational analysis was performed to assess the interrelationships among the separate items of the dependent measure.

The analysis reveals a significant negative correlation ($r_{12} = -.358$, $p < .002$) between question one (comparative evaluation of task performance) and question two (absolute evaluation on the male task). There is also a significant correlation ($r_{13} = .589$, $p < .0001$) between question one and question three (absolute evaluation on the female task), as well as a significant negative correlation between questions two and three ($r_{23} = -.286$, $p < .001$). Significant correlations were also found between perceived intelligence and happiness in life ($r_{74} = .296$, $p < .008$); perceived physical attractiveness and happiness in life ($r_{PA4} = .226$, $p < .05$); and between perceived intelligence and personal life fulfillment ($r_{75} = .346$, $p < .002$). Lastly, there was a highly

significant correlation between difficulty ratings of the two tasks ($r_{89} = .442$, $p < .001$).

Behavioral Attributions

Questions one, two, and three of the dependent measure asked the subject to make behavioral outcome predictions. Specifically, question one asked the subject to rate the stimulus person's performance on one task (Task A) as compared to the other (Task B). Question two asked the subject to predict the behavioral outcome on the male oriented task, and question three asked the subject to make the same prediction for the female oriented task.

The analysis for question one is presented in Table 2. Results show a significant main effect for Sex of Stimulus Person with the female stimulus person perceived as performing

Table 2. Analysis of variance for comparative evaluations

Source	df	MS	F
Physical attractiveness (A)	1	2.450	2.151
Sex of stimulus person (B)	1	92.450	81.176****
Sex of subject (C)	1	2.450	2.151
A x B	1	18.050	15.849***
A x C	1	0.050	0.044
B x C	1	0.050	0.044
A x B x C	1	0.450	0.395
Residual	72	1.139	

*** $p < .001$.

**** $p < .0001$.

relatively more successfully on the female task (Mean Female SP = .800) and the male perceived as performing relatively more successfully on the male task (Mean Male SP = -1.35, $F = 81.176$, $p < .0001$). The significant physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction ($F = 15.849$, $p < .0004$) is presented in Figure 2. The interaction shows

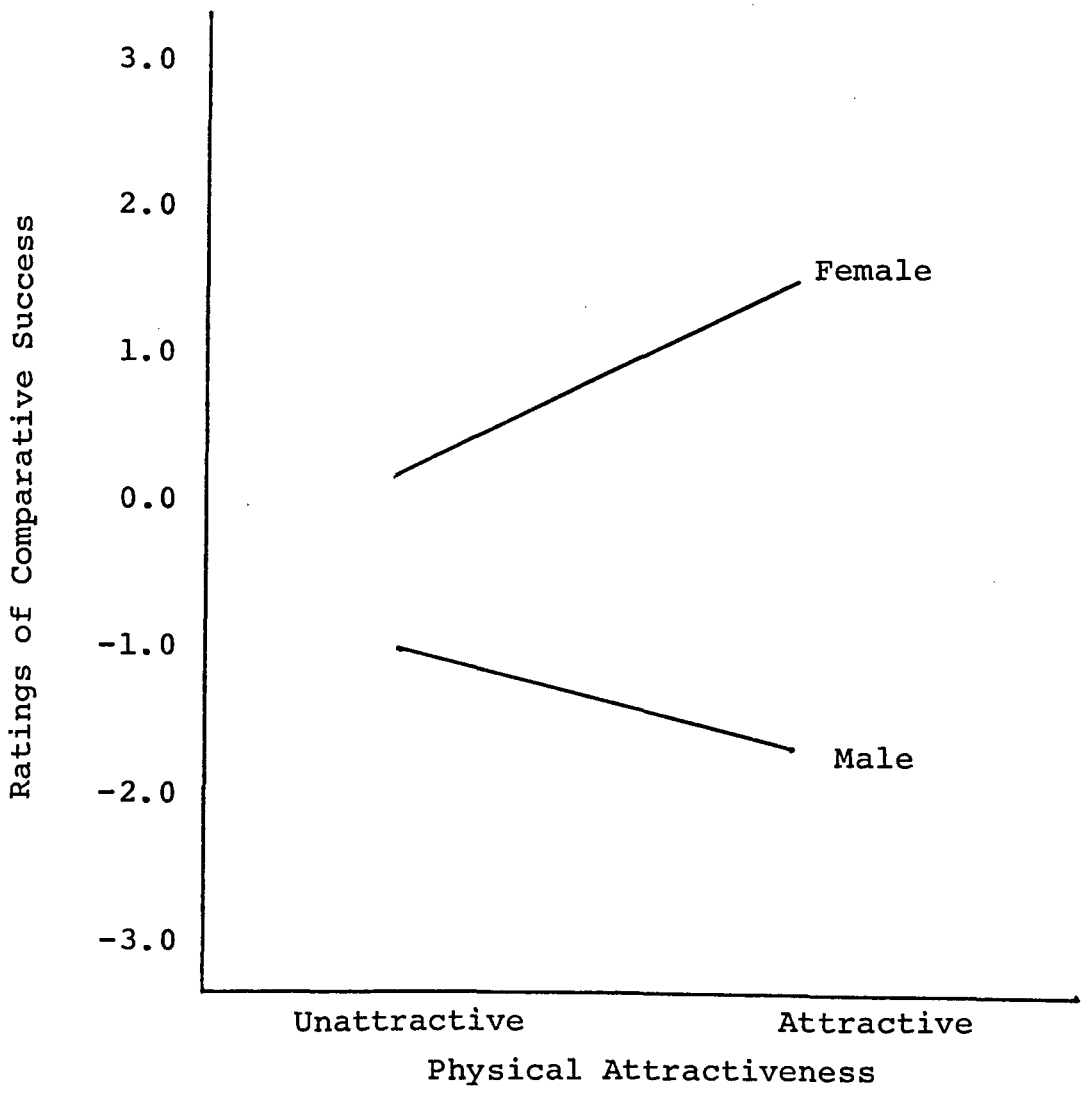


Figure 2. Physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction for ratings of comparative success ($p < .0004$)

the attractive female stimulus person to be relatively more successful on the female oriented task than her unattractive counterpart (HSD $p < .01$). Similarly, the attractive male appears to be perceived as relatively more successful on the male task than the unattractive male, although this difference only approaches significance (HSD $p < .08$).

Questions two and three were analyzed together in a split-plot design. These results are presented in Table 3. The split-plot format allows for presentation of both within

Table 3. Split-plot analysis of variance for absolute ratings

Source	df	MS	F
Between			
Physical attractiveness (A)	1	8.100	5.517*
Sex of stimulus person (B)	1	2.025	1.379
Sex of subject (C)	1	0.100	0.681
A x B	1	5.625	3.832
A x C	1	0.100	0.681
B x C	1	0.625	0.426
A x B x C	1	0.275	0.153
Subjects within groups	72	1.468	
Within			
Task (D)	1	0.400	0.181
A x D	1	2.500	1.133
B x D	1	42.025	19.042***
C x D	1	0.100	0.045
A x B x D	1	4.225	1.914
A x C x D	1	3.600	1.631
B x C x D	1	7.225	3.274
A x B x C x D	1	2.025	0.918
D x subjects within groups	72	2.207	

*$p < .05$.

***$p < .001$.

and between effects. The between analysis shows a significant main effect for physical attractiveness (Mean Unattractive = .400; Mean Attractive = .850; $F = 5.517$, $p < .05$) with the physically attractive person perceived as more successful over both tasks.

Figure 3 presents the significant sex of stimulus person

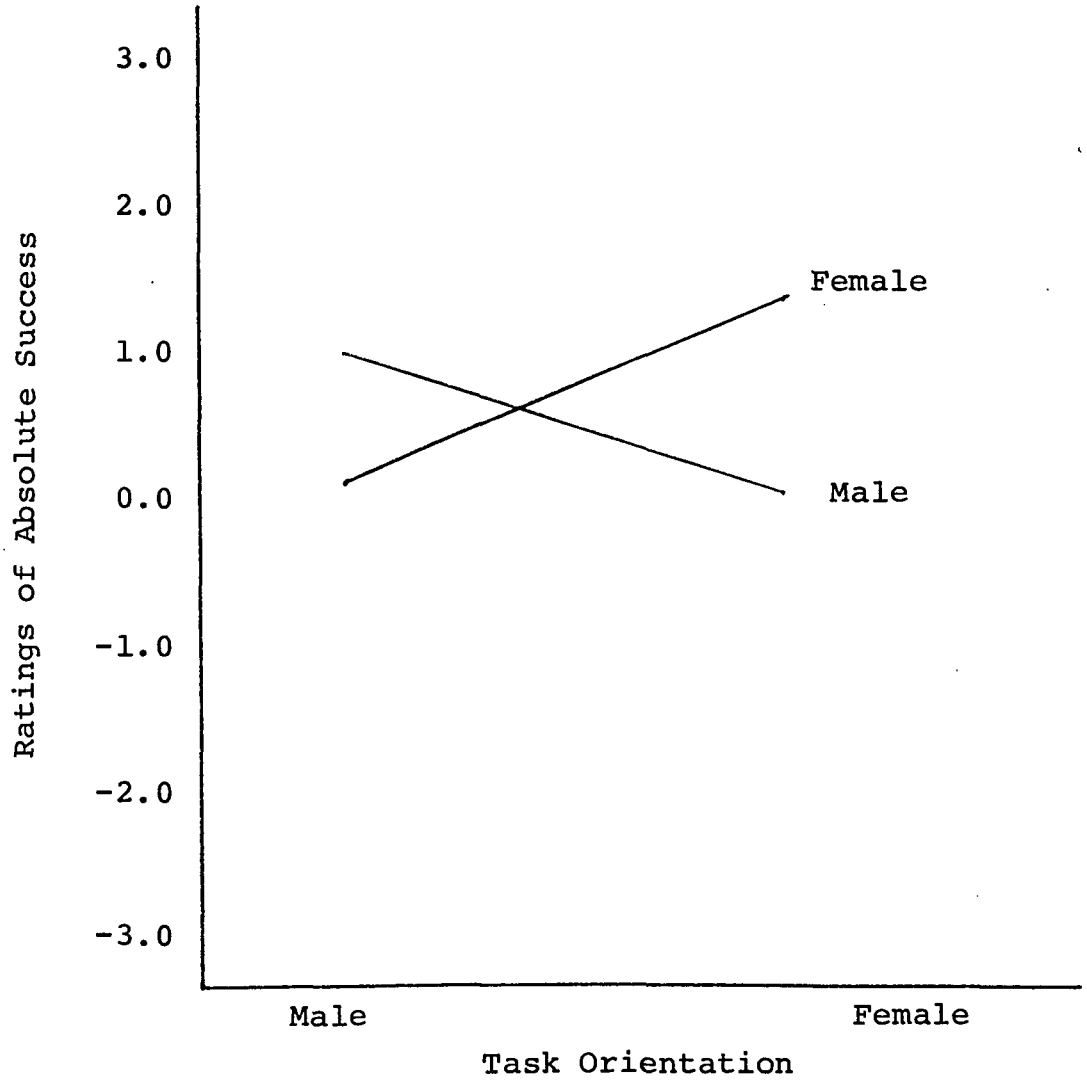


Figure 3. Sex of stimulus person by task orientation interaction for ratings of success ($p < .001$)

by task interaction ($F = 19.042$, $p < .001$) within groups. Analyses show the female stimulus person to be perceived as significantly more successful on the female task (HSD $p < .01$) and the male as significantly more successful on the male task (HSD $p < .05$) than their opposite sex counterparts.

Trait Attributions

Questions four, five, and seven were designed to assess trait attributions. Specifically, question four asked for an assessment of general happiness and enjoyment; question five asked for an attribution of deep personal fulfillment; and question seven asked for intelligence attributions.

Table 4 presents the ANOVA for happiness and enjoyment attributions. The analysis presents a significant main effect for physical attractiveness in the predicted direction (Mean

Table 4. Analysis of variance for ratings of happiness

Source	df	MS	F
Physical attractiveness (A)	1	7.812	4.870*
Sex of stimulus person (B)	1	0.112	0.070
Sex of subject (C)	1	4.512	2.813
A x B	1	15.312	9.545**
A x C	1	0.112	0.070
B x C	1	5.512	3.436*
A x B x C	1	4.512	2.813
Residual	72	1.604	

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

Attractive = 1.05; Mean Unattractive = .900; F = 4.870, $p < .03$). The attractive person was perceived as being happier and enjoying life more than the unattractive person.

The analysis further presents a significant physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction (F = 9.545, $p < .003$). The interaction (presented in Figure 4)

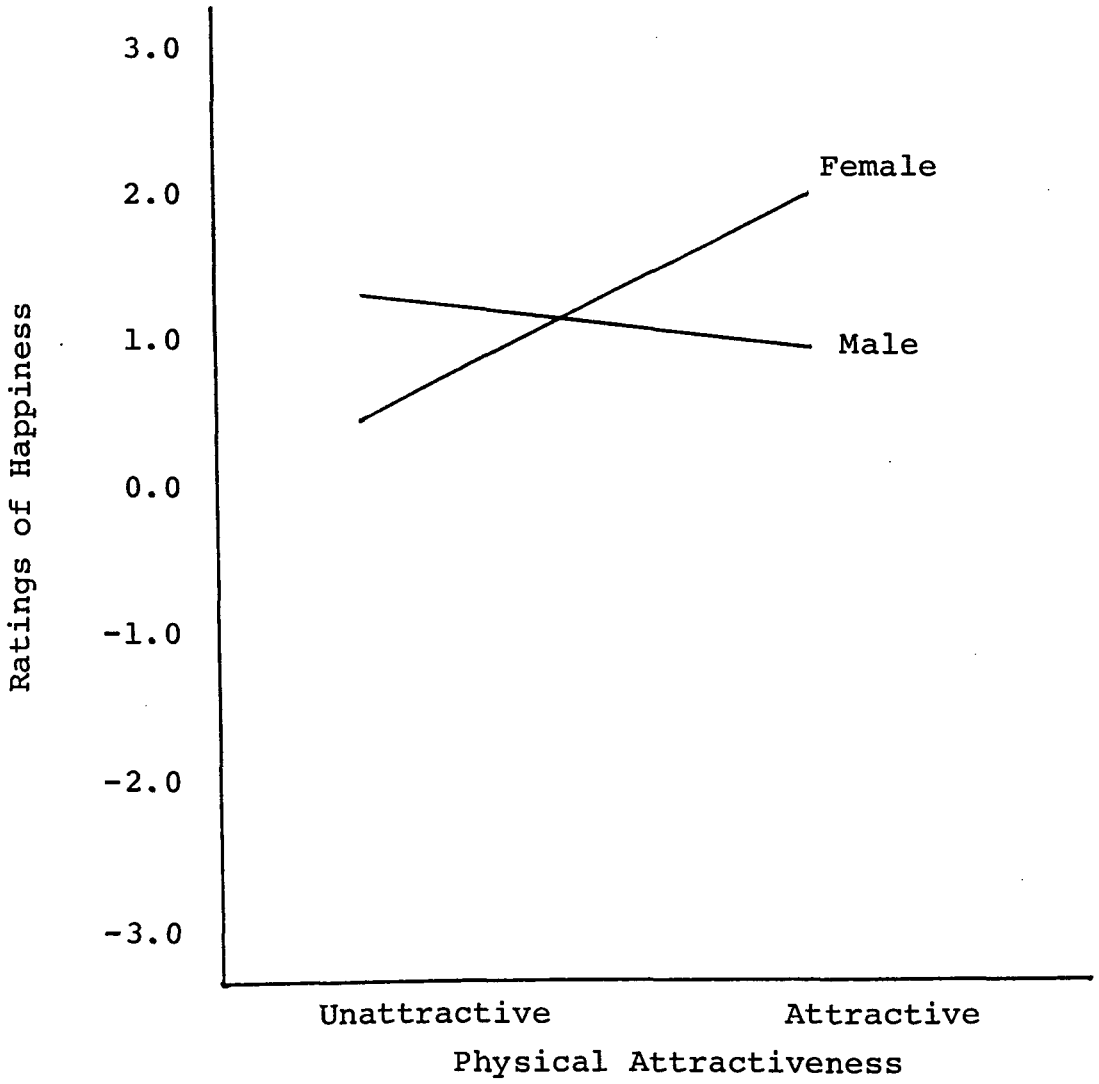


Figure 4. Physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction for rated happiness and enjoyment ($p < .003$)

demonstrates that the effect results from attributions made to the female stimulus person. The analysis shows that the attractive female stimulus person is perceived as significantly happier than the unattractive female (HSD $p < .01$). Differences between male stimulus persons were not significant.

The marginally significant sex of stimulus person by sex of subject interaction ($F = 3.436$, $p < .06$) presented in Figure 5 shows that female subjects attribute greater happiness and enjoyment to the female stimulus person than do male subjects (HSD $p < .05$), while there is minimal sex difference among subjects in their attributions to the male stimulus person.

Question five (attributions of deep personal fulfillment) shows a marginally significant main effect, in the predicted direction, for physical attractiveness (Mean Attractive = .800; Mean Unattractive = .300; $F = 2.817$, $p < .09$; see Table 5). None of the interactions approach significance, however.

Table 6 presents the data for the trait attribution of intelligence (question 7). While no significant main effects were found, two interactions reached significance.

The physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction ($F = 8.345$, $p < .005$) is presented in Figure 6. Physically attractive females were perceived as being significantly more intelligent than unattractive females (HSD $p < .01$)

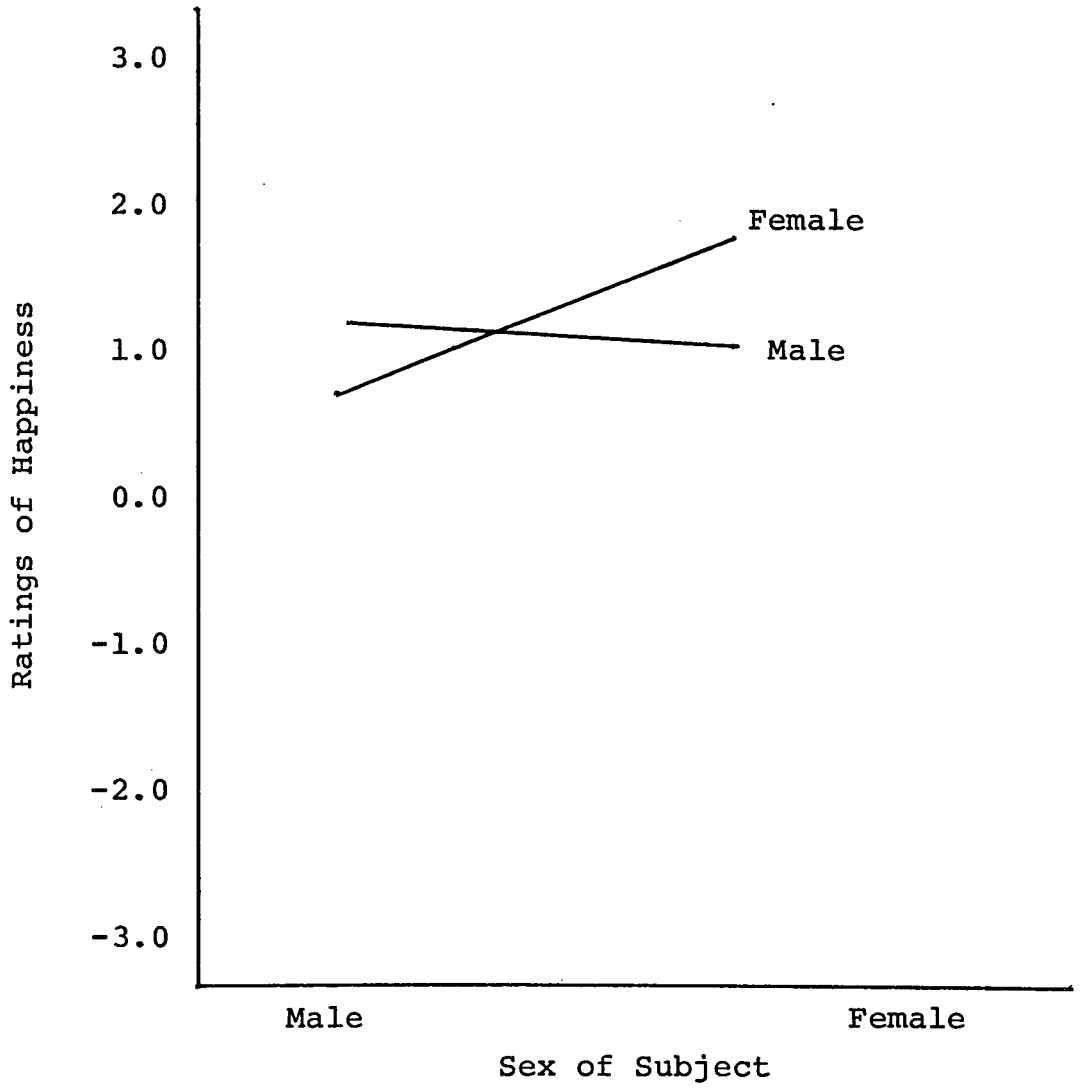


Figure 5. Sex of subject by sex of stimulus person interaction for ratings of happiness and enjoyment ($p < .06$).

and attractive males (HSD $p < .01$). This difference was not found for male stimulus persons. A significant three-way interaction of physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person by sex of subject ($F = 4.376$, $p < .04$; presented in Figure 7) shows that perception of the attractive stimulus

Table 5. Analysis of variance for ratings of personal fulfillment

Source	df	MS	F
Physical attractiveness (A)	1	5.000	2.817*
Sex of stimulus person (B)	1	0.800	0.451
Sex of subject (C)	1	1.250	0.704
A x B	1	3.200	1.802
A x C	1	1.250	0.704
B x C	1	4.050	2.282
A x B x C	1	0.450	0.254
Residual	72	1.775	

*$p < .09$.

Table 6. Analysis of variance for rated intelligence

Source	df	MS	F
Physical attractiveness (A)	1	1.012	0.804
Sex of stimulus person (B)	1	1.512	1.201
Sex of subject (C)	1	1.012	0.804
A x B	1	10.512	8.345**
A x C	1	0.312	0.248
B x C	1	2.812	2.233
A x B x C	1	5.512	4.376*
Residual	72	1.260	

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

person accounts for the significance of the three-way (and two-way) interaction. Female subjects perceived the physically attractive male as significantly less intelligent than the attractive female (HSD $p < .01$), but did not perceive a

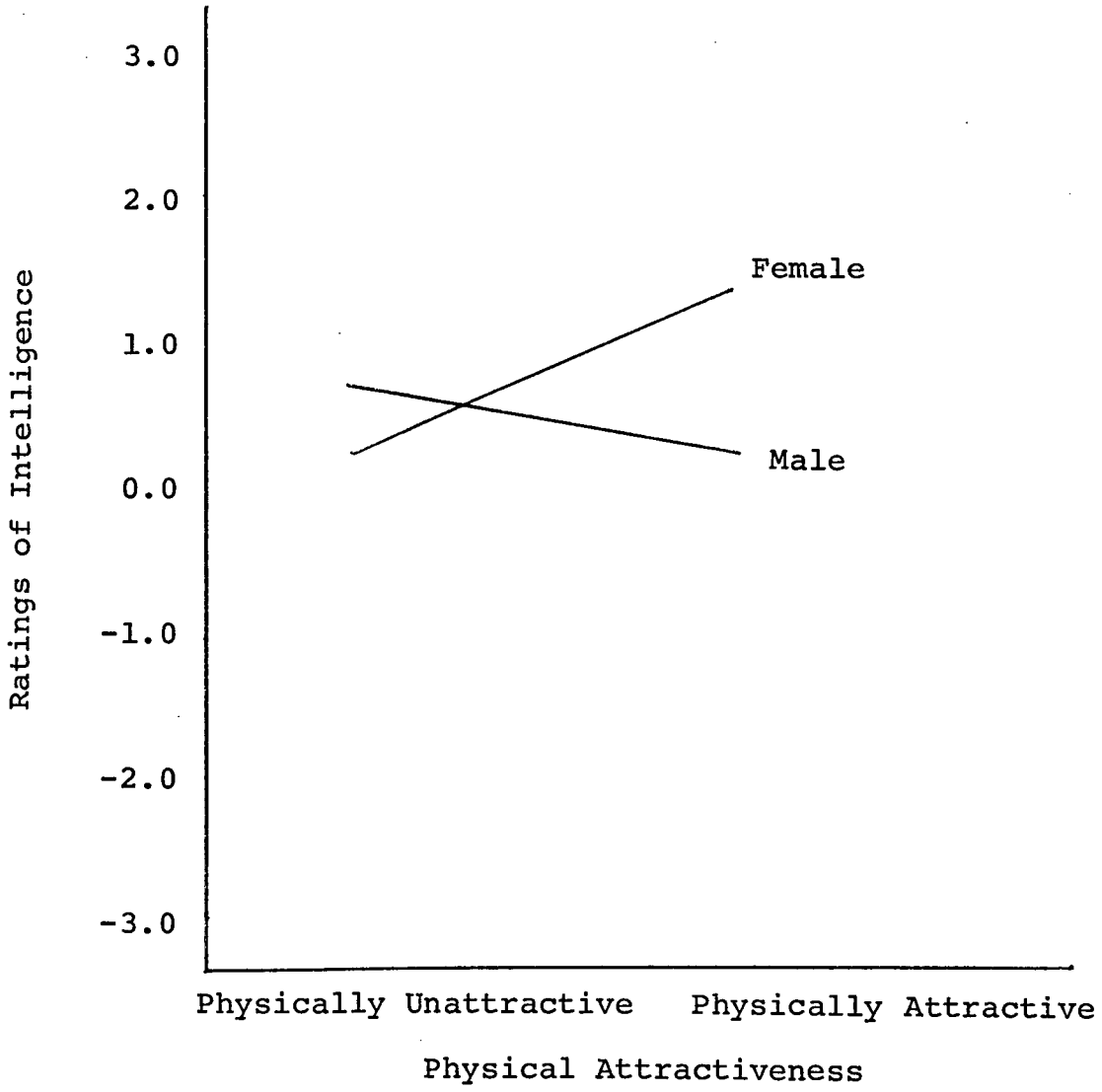


Figure 6. Physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction for rated intelligence ($p < .005$)

difference between unattractive stimulus persons. Male subjects, on the other hand, failed to discriminate significantly on the basis of sex in rating intelligence.

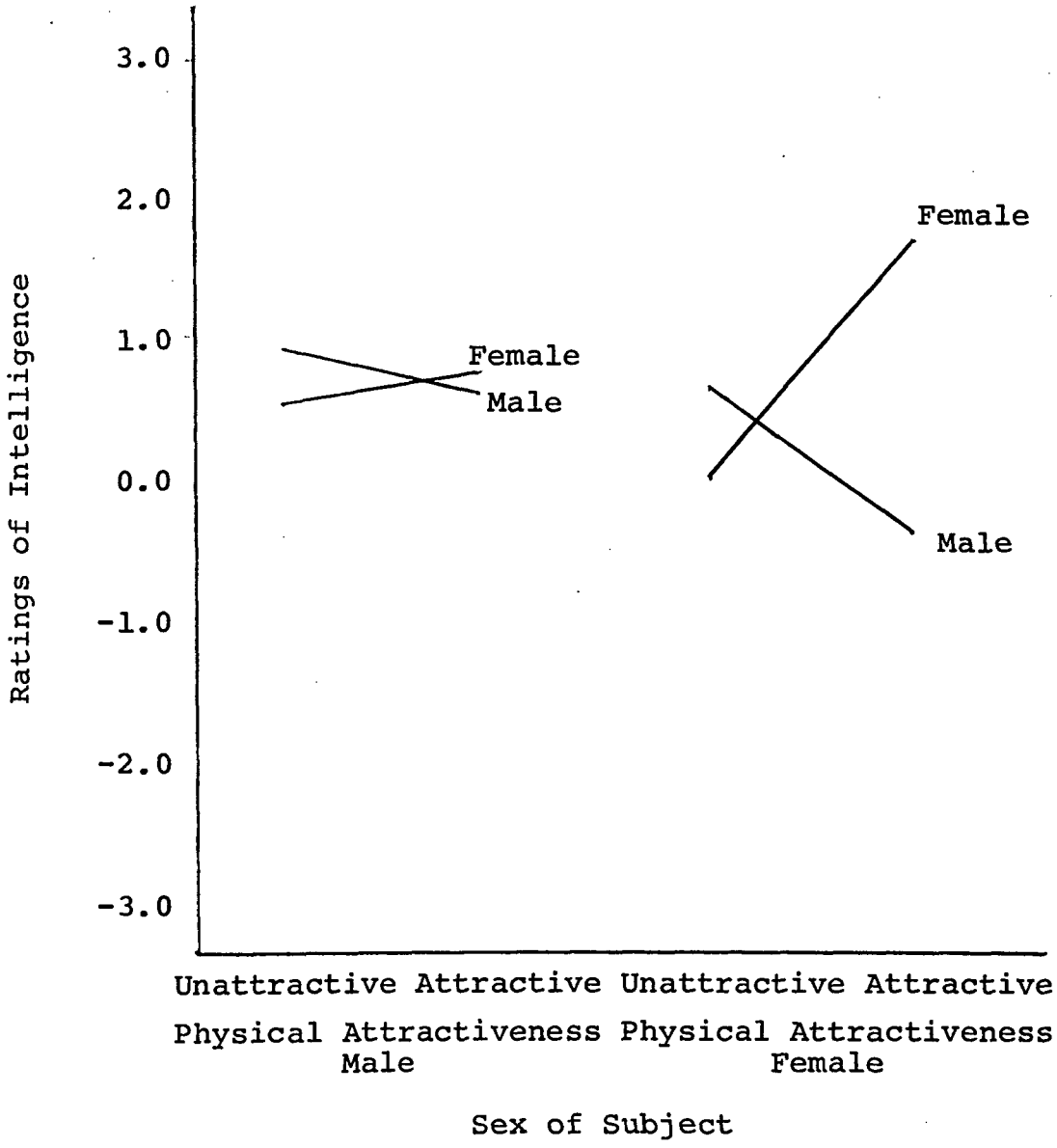


Figure 7. Physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person by sex of subject interaction for rated intelligence ($p < .04$)

DISCUSSION

Although the exact nature of the three-way (physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person by sex of subject) interaction investigated in this study was not specified, it was hypothesized that such an interaction would take place. However, in only two instances did the sex of the subject significantly affect attributions and both of these occurred for trait attributions. No effects were found for sex of subject in behavioral attributions. Female subjects attributed greater happiness and enjoyment to the female stimulus person than to the male stimulus person; there were no differences in the attributions of male subjects. In the attribution of intelligence, female subjects rated the attractive female stimulus person as significantly more intelligent than the attractive male stimulus person. Again, males made no significant differentiation on the basis of sex of stimulus person and physical attractiveness. Previous research (Byrne, London, and Reeves, 1968) which established a discrimination by female subjects against an attractive male lends credence to the present findings and support to the contention that females may be more discriminatory than males when dealing with interpersonal variables.

In general, the consistent finding was an interaction of sex of stimulus person by physical attractiveness. However, main effects which did occur supported two of the three

secondary hypotheses. Specifically, a generalized effect was found for physical attractiveness (Hypothesis 1) with greater success attributed to the physically attractive person on both behavioral and trait measures. In accord with Hypothesis 2, sexually consistent behavior was attributed greater success than sexually inconsistent behavior. However, greater predictions of success for the male stimulus person (Hypothesis 3) were not found. When subjects were asked to make predictions of performance, sex role stereotyping became salient. Female stimulus persons were perceived as performing at a higher level of success on the female task, as compared to the male task, and males were seen as doing better on the male task than on the female task.

The lack of support for the third hypothesis does not imply that the Deaux and Emswiller (1974) results depicting skillful males and lucky females have no validity. However, the findings of this study do impose some degree of caution in accepting their proposal of a general derogation of female performance. These authors gave subjects success information and then asked for attributions of causality (i.e. skill, luck, effort, and task difficulty). They found that males were seen as more skillful than females on a male task; but on the female task, no difference was found. Extrapolating from these results to this paradigm, one would hypothesize that males would be perceived as more successful than females on the male task, but that there would be no difference on

the female task. The results of this study clearly do not confirm this hypothesis. Males are perceived as doing better on male tasks, and females as doing better on female tasks. One obvious possible explanation for the discrepancy between the two studies is the difference in experimental paradigm. Deaux and Emswiller gave subjects success information (specifically that the stimulus person did succeed). The present study asked subjects to predict success rather than explain it. While the specific mechanisms determining derogation or non-derogation remain to be proposed, this study limits the generality of the Deaux and Emswiller (1974) conclusion of an anti-female bias.

While the maintenance of a generalized anti-female bias was refuted by this study, a positive bias was found for physically attractive females. Specifically, this can be stated as What-Is-Beautiful-If-Female-Is Good. The results of this study show that for both behavioral and trait attributions, the attractive female is perceived as significantly more successful than her physically unattractive counterpart. Comparable findings for the male were not found. These results were evident for attributions of happiness and enjoyment and for comparative success on the two tasks. Previous research has either not reported a physical attractiveness by sex of stimulus person interaction (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster, 1972) or has not specified this component as a major finding (Mathis, 1973). In either instance, this has led

these investigators to the assumption that stereotypes based on Beauty-Is-Good are cross-sexual phenomena. The present study strongly questions this position. It appears that a stereotype does exist which defines the physically attractive female as possessing socially desirable traits and engaging in desirable activities. Unattractive females, on the other hand, are seen as possessing undesirable traits and doing undesirable (or at least not as desirable) acts.

At this point the question may be posed as to why the stereotype does not hold for men. It may well be that in our culture, standards of attractiveness are more pervasive and more defined for women than for men. The standard of the Playboy Bunny as the epitome of feminine beauty has long pervaded our culture. However, no such readily indentifiable standard exists for the male. Thus, the standards for judging the attractiveness of the male may be more idiosyncratic and flexible. Support for this contention may be derived from the difficulty initially encountered in obtaining discriminatively different physical attractiveness ratings of photographs for use in the current study. Photographs of females were clearly discriminated along a physical attractiveness dimension in pilot testing, while great difficulty was encountered in obtaining similar ratings for male stimulus persons. Further, results of this study show that subjects were able to discriminate more clearly between attractive and unattractive female stimulus persons than between attractive

and unattractive male stimulus persons.

Of crucial importance in this study was the inclusion of both trait and behavioral attribution measures. Scales four, five and seven of the dependent measure directly assessed trait attributions. These attributions (happiness, enjoyment, deep personal fulfillment, and intelligence) appear to derive solely from the Beauty-Is-Good thesis for females. The physically attractive female is perceived as receiving more happiness and enjoyment from life than the unattractive female. Although attributions of personal fulfillment were only marginally significant, the prediction of greater personal fulfillment for the attractive female was fulfilled. Thus, it appears that in trait attributions, when no situational constraints are placed on the perceiver, the Beauty-Is-Good stereotype is both robust and pervasive for the female.

The first three scales of the dependent measure directly assessed behavioral attributions. Subjects were asked to predict the performance of stimulus persons in sex-typed tasks. When subjects were asked to make absolute predictions on each of the tasks, two separate factors emerge. Regardless of the nature of the task, attractive persons were perceived as performing at a higher level than unattractive persons. Within this constraint, in-role behavior was expected. Males were perceived as performing at a higher level on the male task and females were similarly perceived on the female task.

While this specific interaction is contrary to prediction, it may be understood and explained if one assumes that, rather than utilizing an interactional framework to simplify information input, some factors are differentially weighted. If one can assume that a perceiver incorporates both trait and situations information to account for behavior (see Hastorf, Schneider, and Polefka, 1970; Schneider, 1973), the general attribution formulation becomes evident. In general, Beauty-Is-Good (for females); within this context, salient situational variables (sex of the stimulus person and sexual stereotyping of the task) are utilized to form behavioral ascriptions.

The significant effect of Beauty-Is-Good upon behavioral attributions appears to contradict earlier findings reported by Mathis (1973) in which predicted effects were found for Beauty-Is-Good on trait, but not behavioral attributions. While all previous research has substantiated Beauty-Is-Good for trait measures, Mathis (1973) and this study offer contradictory results for behavioral attributions.

A resolution of the conflict between these two studies may be found by assessing the actual tasks given to the subjects. Mathis' behavioral attributions were of the form:

Jane Smith receives a dollar she does not deserve; she

a. returns the dollar immediately

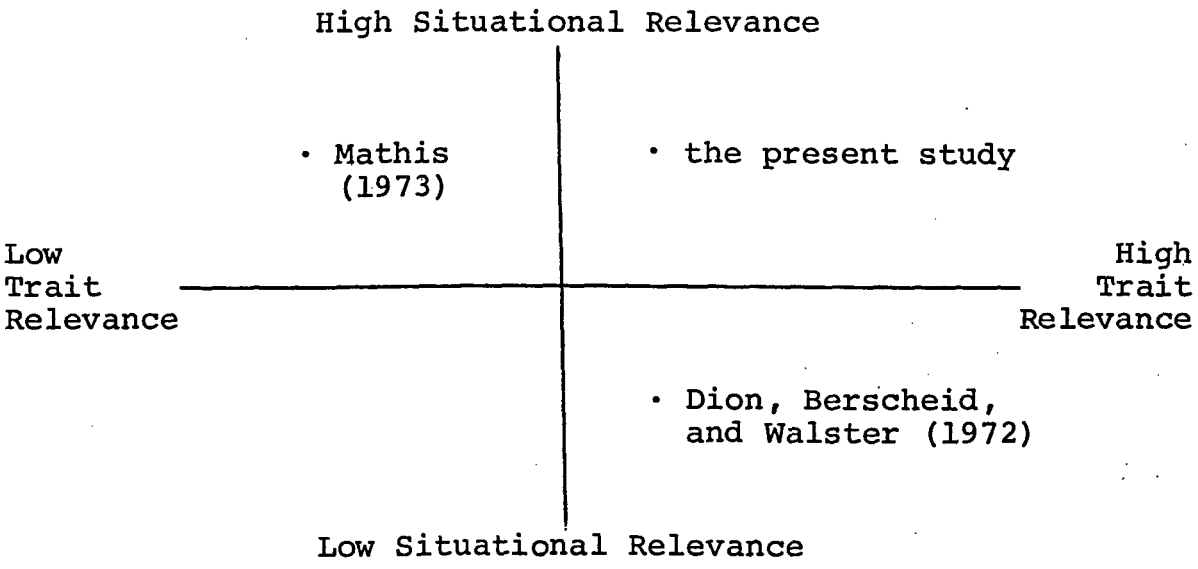
b. returns the dollar after receiving a letter stating a mistake had been made

c. did not return the dollar.

Thus, subjects were asked to make concrete predictions of specified behaviors. However, in the present study, subjects were asked to make behavioral predictions, not of a specific form, but of a behavioral outcome. No subject had to state how the stimulus person would go about the task, but simply what would be the outcome of the task specific behaviors. Asking the subject to make behavioral predictions males salient the situation in which the performer is engaged. However, trait attributions (of the form asked by this study; Mathis, 1973; and Dion, Berscheid, and Walster, 1972) do not impose this situational saliency. Therefore, Beauty-Is-Good accounts for all of the differential trait attributions. With increasing situational saliency, Beauty-Is-Good decreases in saliency.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it is apparent that studies in this area may be categorized into two dimensions of relevance: trait relevance and situational relevance. Situational relevance refers to the degree of situational saliency inherent in the paradigm; trait relevance (rather than being the opposite of situational relevance) refers to the degree of stable, personal characteristics assumed by the subject to be relevant. At one extreme of situational

relevance lies the situational constraints imposed by Mathis (predictions of behavioral occurrence); this study would presumably also lie toward the high constraint end of the continuum (prediction of behavioral outcome). On the trait relevance continuum, those studies asking only for generalized attributions occupy the high end of the scale, while the Mathis study, with no emphasis on trait information, occupies the lower end. Analyzing both the present study and Mathis (1973) on the basis of the two continuums proposed, it may be seen that Mathis constructed a high situation but low trait relevance paradigm, thus not allowing the stereotype to operate. This study, however, incorporated both a high situation and high trait relevance paradigm, thus allowing Beauty-Is-Good to operate. This analysis is schematized below:



In summary, it appears that this study both extends and limits the Beauty-Is-Good thesis. The limitation imposed concerns Beauty-Is-Good (If Female). This effect has not been investigated in other research, but is clearly supported here. The extension relates to behavioral attributions. Behavioral attributions had not previously been shown to be affected by the beauty stereotype. The significant effect found in the current study suggests an even wider range of applicability for Beauty-Is-Good.

This study has raised a number of questions and possibilities for future research. An obvious place to begin would be with the fourth quadrant of the proposed explanatory scheme. Hypotheses derived from this quadrant may serve to delimit what information is needed to make the attributions called for. Further work remains to be done concerning differential stimulus salience for the sexes. Not only does causation for the differentiation need to be explored, but the impact of this differentiation itself must be assessed. These results could have potential information, not only for the area of impression formation, but for studies assessing patterns of dating and mate selection as well. Impression information is the study of how people evaluate others. With an intensely interpersonal variable such as physical attractiveness, it should not remain an academic exercise.

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APPENDIX A: PERSONAL EVALUATIONS

1. Judging the two tasks engaged in by the person you are evaluating, how successful do you feel the person was on the two tasks, when they are compared with each other?

More Successful on Task A than on Task B : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : Equal on Both : More Successful on Task B than on Task A

Now, please evaluate the performance of the person on each task separately.

2. How successful do you feel the person described was on Task A?

Extremely Unsuccessful : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : Extremely Successful

3. How successful do you feel the person described was on Task B?

Extremely Unsuccessful : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : Extremely Successful

4. How much happiness and enjoyment do you feel this person will get out of life?

A Great Deal : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : None at All

5. To what extent do you feel this person will experience deep personal fulfillment in life?

Extremely Unfulfilled : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : Extremely Fulfilled

6. How would you rate this person's level of physical attractiveness?

Extremely Unattractive : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : Extremely Attractive

7. How would you rate this person's level of intelligence?

Extremely Intelligent : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : Extremely Unintelligent

8. How difficult do you feel Task A is?

Extremely Easy :____:____:____:____:____:____:____: Extremely Difficult

9. How difficult do you feel Task B is?

Extremely Easy :____:____:____:____:____:____:____: Extremely Difficult

APPENDIX B(1): DESCRIPTION OF TASK A

The following description is provided to acquaint you with the situation in which the person you are evaluating is involved. This is a copy of the exact description given the person. Please read this description carefully as it will be of considerable importance in making your evaluations.

The task is an embedded figures problem. In case you are not familiar with this type of task, an embedded figures task presents a common item hidden in a camouflaged background. This serves to distort the outline of the object and make it more difficult to recognize. Each figure will be shown on a screen for approximately one second. Your task is to identify the hidden object immediately after the one-second exposure. The embedded figures selected are common mechanical objects, for example, a wrench, a pair of pliers, or a tire jack. There are twenty embedded figures to identify. To repeat, you will be shown the figures one at a time for approximately one second. Immediately after the figure is removed from the screen, write down your answer.

The person was then asked if they had any questions. If not, the task was begun.

APPENDIX B(2): DESCRIPTION OF TASK B

The following description is provided to acquaint you with the situation in which the person you are evaluating is involved. This is a copy of the exact description given the person. Please read this description carefully as it will be of considerable importance in making your evaluations.

The task is an embedded figures problem. In case you are not familiar with this type of task, an embedded figures task presents a common item hidden in a camouflaged background. This serves to distort the outline of the object and make it more difficult to recognize. Each figure will be shown on a screen for approximately one second. Your task is to identify the hidden object immediately after the one-second exposure. The embedded figures selected are common household objects, for example, a mop, a double-boiler, or a sewing bobbin. There are twenty embedded figures to identify. To repeat, you will be shown the figures one at a time for approximately one second. Immediately after the figure is removed from the screen, write down your answer.

The person was then asked if they had any questions. If not, the task was begun.

APPENDIX C: RATIONALE

The person you are to evaluate in this study is a student at a large Midwestern state university. The judgments that you will make concerning this person will be matched with the information we have available from actual tests given the person. The purpose of this research is to assess people's ability to make judgments of others using only minimal information. Counselors are constantly called upon to make judgments about certain people, for example, their suitability for treatment, degree of pathology, etc. The ability to make such judgments is considered to be one of the most important tools the counselor possesses. We believe that the ability to make accurate assessments is a talent which cannot formally be taught. Some people appear to have this ability in considerable measure, others to a lesser degree. The purpose of this task is to evaluate your skill in making these judgments.

Previous research has indicated that the task you are about to be given is a good index of this type of skill. As a matter of fact, this type of task is often used as a part of the competitive examinations given to students applying for admission to counseling programs.

The instructions for carrying out this task are relatively simple. First, carefully read the information provided in the folder you have been given. Then, you will be asked

to make a number of evaluations of the person depicted. You should take your time both in reading the material and in answering the questions.

APPENDIX D: EXPERIMENTAL INSTRUCTIONS

You are participating in an experiment concerned with assessing your skill in making judgments about people. The folder contains a person impression task in which you will be asked to make certain judgments about a person based upon minimal information. This task plays a crucial part in the assessment of your ability to make these judgments, as well as providing an index of your level of social awareness and empathy.

People are constantly forming impressions about others. When you first meet a person you form certain impressions of him. Counselors do the same thing, but to them it is crucial. This basic ability is what we want to assess. Although all people possess this ability to some extent, some people possess more of it than others.

In one section of this study, you are asked to make several evaluations of a person based upon limited information. In making your evaluations use all of the information provided. Even though judgments must be based on minimal information, this does not mean no information at all. Read the material provided, study the photograph, then make your evaluation.

APPENDIX E: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name _____

Social Security Number _____

Age _____

Sex (circle one) M F

Approximate GPA _____

Class (circle one) Fr. So. Jr. Sr.

Major _____

Psychology course you are currently enrolled in _____

Have you ever had any other psychology courses? If so, what? _____

Have you ever worked with people before (i.e. as an advisor, counselor, etc.)? _____

_____

How many brothers and sisters do you have? _____

How many brothers and sisters are older than you? _____

How many brothers and sisters are younger than you? _____