

Income vs Attractiveness

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PSYC 333 Section AB3

### **Introduction**

The culture in today's society is quite cutthroat and status is dependent on education and income. Attractiveness also plays a role in societal perceptions--there is an 'attractiveness halo' which contributes to how others see people based on their appearance (Zebrowitz, L. A., & Montepare, J. M.). If one is perceived to be attractive, then it is assumed that they have other desirable traits, such as intelligence, social skills, and high status (Zebrowitz, L. A., & Montepare, J. M.). These judgements based on attractiveness were seen in the 2016 elections, and may be a contributing factor to the sexism that arose during that period (Keith, T.). This is an important issue especially in politics, where all issues should be laid out on the table without establishing the importance of the issue from considering which gender was advocating it (Keith, T.).

Gender also plays a part in whether one is perceived to have a high income or not (Udry, J. R., & Eckland, B. K.). In this study titled "Benefits of Being Attractive: Differential Payoffs for Men and Women," marital and socio-economic status of men and women were predicted by using attractiveness ratings of 601 males and 745 females based on high school photographs (Udry, J. R., & Eckland, B. K.). If a woman was perceived to be attractive, subjects thought they would be married to a highly educated man with a high income, while male attractiveness was associated with achieving a high status, in terms of income and education (Udry, J. R., & Eckland, B. K.).

According to a study done by Umberson, D., & Hughes, M. (1987), the more attractive someone is, the higher their achievement and well-being. The impact of attractiveness on the actual achievement and mental health of individuals was analyzed using a national sample

(Umberson, D., & Hughes, M.). The findings were that attractiveness does affect, negatively or positively depending on status characteristics, one's achievement and psychological well-being (Umberson, D., & Hughes, M.). However, does the opposite ring true? Does achievement, defined as the amount of income one makes affect perceived attractiveness of an individual?

*This paper delves into how wealthier people are perceived, and if that has an impact on their role in society. The more income someone has, the more attractive they are perceived.*

### **Method**

Using a random distribution method, we distributed a survey to students of PSYC 333. There were 42 total subjects, 38% males, 62% females, 7% sophomores, 38% juniors, and 55% seniors. Our independent variable was income and our dependent variable was attractiveness.

### **Measures**

There were two conditions, the experimental and the control. Half of the subjects received a description of a photo of a lady with a high income, while the other half received a description of a photo of a lady with a low income. The photo and description are the same for both groups other than the income. The control group was given this description: "Jane is a recent graduate from Harvard University. She is employed from 9-5 on weekdays, and has holidays off. She makes \$25,000 annually before taxes. She comes home to her dog and enjoys going on long runs. Her favorite food is pasta." The experimental group was given this description: "Jane is a recent graduate from Harvard University. She is employed from 9-5 on weekdays, and has holidays off. She makes \$120,000 annually before taxes. She comes home to her dog and enjoys going on long runs. Her favorite food is pasta." The photo was the same:



After showing the photo and description, the subjects were asked to rate the lady's "Attractiveness," "Trustworthiness," "Integrity," and "Friendliness" using a scale of 1-10 (1 = not at all and 10 = extremely). The last question was multiple choice, "Would you marry this person?" (Yes/No).

### Results

We used a Chi-Squared method to analyze the results of our experimental survey. The independent variable was not at all correlated with our dependent variable:  $X^2(1, N = 42) = .03, p = .94$ . As such, our hypothesis was not supported. There was a significant main effect of condition on integrity,  $F(1, 32) = 5.11, p = .031$ . People in the experimental condition thought the woman had lower integrity ( $M = 6.01, SD = 1.47$ ) than people in the control condition ( $M = 7.17, SD = 1.47$ ). There was a marginally significant interaction between gender and condition on friendliness,  $F(1, 32) = 4.12, p = .051$ . Males in the experimental group thought the woman was less friendly ( $M = 5.78, SD = 2.58$ ) compared to males in the control group ( $M = 8.00, SD =$

1.63),  $t(32) = 2.10$ ,  $p = .044$ . Difference in condition did not affect female answers of friendliness, experimental ( $M = 7.11$ ,  $SD = 1.76$ ) while control ( $M = 6.45$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ),  $t(32) = -.70$ ,  $p = .49$ . There was a marginally significant interaction between males and marriage,  $X^2(1, N = 42) = 3.66^a$ ,  $p = .06$ .

### Discussion

Our hypothesis was not supported; income given in the description of the photo did not affect how attractive the subjects thought the lady was. This could have been due to the limitations of our study, such as the usage of convenience sampling of PSYC 333 students. Another limitation was the photo that we used, it limits us to using only one gender for this survey design, which was female. A disadvantage was the sample size being only 42 subjects. Also, other confounding variables, such as the current situation of the subjects cannot be accounted for with a survey design. In order to control this confounding variable, we would need to use a laboratory experiment to ensure that the subjects take the survey under the same conditions. An advantage of our study design was that it was randomly assigned, so there should be no issue with biases. If we were to redesign this experiment in the future, we could use a male photo and compare the results to the results of using a female photo.

The results we found were that the wealthier someone is, the less integrity others think they have. This could be due to assumptions from others that they made their money from dishonest ways, or got to their status from. We also found that the wealthier a female is, the less friendly males will perceive her. Males might be intimidated by a woman who makes a lot of money and has her life together, therefore thinking that she would be contemptuous of them not

achieving the same socioeconomic status. Lastly, males were more likely to marry the lady in the photo than females, which is unsurprising if females are heterosexual.

Overall, our results pointed out that people do not believe money defines attractiveness. Given our capitalistic era, this is great for society as a whole. Money does give people power, but it cannot change individual, core views. Although attractive people have a 'halo effect', wealthy people do not have that same 'halo effect'. This means that the amount of income someone makes does not affect how attractive others see them.

## References

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## Appendix

11/20/2019

Qualtrics Survey Software

### Default Question Block

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

What year are you?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior

### Instruction

The following questions will ask you to rate an individual in the picture based on the description. Please rate accordingly the scale given.

Thank you!

### Experimental



11/20/2019

Qualtrics Survey Software



*Jane is a recent graduate from Harvard University. She is employed from 9-5 on weekdays, and has holidays off. She makes \$120,000 annually before taxes. She comes home to her dog and enjoys going on long runs. Her favorite food is pasta.*

**Please rate her on the following:**

	Not at all											Extremely
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Attractiveness												
Trustworthiness												
Integrity												
Friendliness												

**Controlled**

11/20/2019

Qualtrics Survey Software



*Jane is a recent graduate from Harvard University. She is employed from 9-5 on weekdays, and has holidays off. She makes \$25,000 annually before taxes. She comes home to her dog and enjoys going on long runs. Her favorite food is pasta.*

**Please rate her on the following:**

	Not at all											Extremely
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Attractiveness												
Trustworthiness												
Integrity												
Friendliness												

## Marriage

Would you marry this person?

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Qualtrics Survey Software

☐ Yes

☐ No

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### Experiment Paper Group Member Peer Review Table

Please list out all your group members, excluding yourself, in the experiment project in the table below, and then rate their input of the experiment project on a scale of 1-10 points.

- If the specific group member has been present and actively participated in most of the group work for the experiment project during lab, they should receive the full 10 points.

If you decide to take any points off the specific group member, please indicate the reasons in the “Reasons” column. You don’t have to provide any reason if you give the full 10 points to the specific group member.

- Please rate each of your group member based on whether the specific group member help with the study design and the analysis for the experiment project.

First Name	Last Name	Score (1-10 points)	Reasons
Younje	Lee	10	
Erin	Close	10	
Gabriel	Fausto	9	Missed key discussion sections where we made the surveys/experiments/hypotheses, and did not really contribute in that aspect.

			Was still positive about everything and asked questions

Please attach this document in the very end of your experiment paper (i.e., after the appendix), and please make it a separate page only for this document.

What is your gender?		FL_5 - Block Randomizer - Display Order Experimental	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
attract	Male	Control	6.1429	1.46385	7
		Experimental	5.8889	2.26078	9
		Total	6.0000	1.89737	16
	Female	Control	5.6364	2.57964	11
		Experimental	5.7778	1.85592	9
		Total	5.7000	2.22663	20
	Total	Control	5.8333	2.17607	18
		Experimental	5.8333	2.00734	18
		Total	5.8333	2.06328	36
trustworthy	Male	Control	6.5714	2.07020	7
		Experimental	5.2222	2.33333	9
		Total	5.8125	2.25740	16
	Female	Control	5.7273	3.13340	11
		Experimental	7.0000	1.41421	9
		Total	6.3000	2.53606	20
	Total	Control	6.0556	2.73264	18
		Experimental	6.1111	2.08324	18
		Total	6.0833	2.39494	36
friendly	Male	Control	8.0000	1.63299	7
		Experimental	5.7778	2.58736	9
		Total	6.7500	2.43584	16
	Female	Control	6.4545	2.16165	11
		Experimental	7.1111	1.76383	9
		Total	6.7500	1.97017	20
	Total	Control	7.0556	2.07144	18
		Experimental	6.4444	2.25499	18
		Total	6.7500	2.15639	36
integrity	Male	Control	7.2857	.75593	7
		Experimental	5.6667	1.58114	9
		Total	6.3750	1.50000	16
	Female	Control	7.0909	1.81409	11
		Experimental	6.4444	1.33333	9
		Total	6.8000	1.60918	20