NOBA

Attraction and Beauty

Instructor Manual

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The Attraction and Beauty module introduces students to basic concepts of attraction and what we find attractive. This instructor's manual provides information to help you craft either a one- or two-class lesson supporting the module material. The supplied PowerPoint presentation, which includes activities, videos, and discussion questions, is designed to accompany the two-class period version of this lesson. This instructor's manual also contains additional outside resources and information you may find helpful for your course about attraction and beauty.

Learning Objectives

- **Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)**

  - Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)

  - Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains (1.2)

  - Describe applications of psychology (1.3)

  - Engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving (2.3)

- **Content Specific Learning Objectives**

  - Learn the advantages of attractiveness in social situations.

  - Know what features are associated with facial, body, and vocal attractiveness.

  - Understand the universality and cultural variations in attractiveness.

  - Learn about the mechanisms proposed to explain positive responses to attractiveness.

Abstract

More attractive people elicit more positive first impressions. This effect is called the attractiveness halo, and it is shown when judging those with more attractive faces, bodies, or voices. Moreover, it yields significant social outcomes, including advantages to attractive people in domains as far-reaching as romance, friendships, family relations, education, work, and criminal justice. Physical qualities that increase attractiveness include youthfulness, symmetry, averageness, masculinity in men, and femininity in women. Positive expressions and behaviors also raise evaluations of a person's attractiveness. Cultural, cognitive, evolutionary, and overgeneralization explanations have been offered to explain why we find certain people attractive. Whereas the evolutionary explanation predicts that the impressions associated with the halo effect will be accurate, the other explanations do not. Although the research evidence does show some accuracy, it is too weak to satisfactorily account for the positive responses shown to more attractive people.

Class Design Recommendations

This module can be taught over one or two class periods, depending on the number of videos and activities you use. The Noba PowerPoint slides will also assist you in determining your class schedule.

An Example of a Two-Class Lesson

1st Period (50-75 min)

- Introduction to topic:

  - Briefly introduce the learning objectives.

  - *Warm up activity:* Have students write personal ads (see Activities/Demonstrations below and the Noba PowerPoint slides).

  - The three main topics are (1) the advantages of attractiveness, (2) what makes a person attractive, and (3) why certain people are attractive.

- The advantages of being attractive:

- ○ Attractiveness Halo Effect

    - ▪ Discuss the connection between the halo effect and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

    - ▪ Outline the six advantages of being attractive discussed in the module.

    - ▪ Discuss and show the *Economics of Being Beautiful* video (see the Noba PowerPoint slides and/or Outside Resources below).

- One-minute paper:

    - ○ In this classroom assessment technique (CAT) have students complete a one-minute paper describing what they learned and what questions they still have (see the Noba PowerPoint slides and description below).

2nd Period (50—75 min)

- Review any misconceptions discovered in your assessments of the one-minute papers.
- Orient students to the topic.
- What Makes a Person Attractive?

    - ○ Hallmarks of High Attractiveness

        - ▪ Outline the eight hallmarks of attractiveness discussed in the module.

        - ▪ Show and discuss the *Beauty of Symmetry* video when discussing symmetry (see the Noba PowerPoint slides and/or Outside Resources below).

        - ▪ Discuss and show the *Is Your Face Attractive?* video when discussing femininity and masculinity (see the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below).

- Why Are Certain People Attractive?

    - ○ Discuss the four reasons why certain people are attractive: (1) culture, (2) preference for prototypes, (3) signal of mate quality, and (4) overgeneralized reactions to disease or bad genes.

    - ○ Do the Face Morph Activity when discussing it in the preference for prototype section (see Activities/Demonstrations below).

- Do a Think/Pair/Share Activity (see the Noba PowerPoint slides for a description) to reinforce the four reasons why certain people are attractive.

- Conclusion:

  - Discuss research about the matching hypothesis (in the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below).
  - Ask students what their muddiest point was (see Noba PowerPoint slides).

An Example of a One-Class Lesson (50-75 min)

- Introduction to topic:

  - Briefly introduce the learning objectives.
  - The three main topics are (1) the advantages of attractiveness, (2) what makes a person attractive, and (3) why certain people are attractive.

- The Advantages of Being Attractive:

  - Attractiveness Halo Effect

    - Discuss the connection between the halo effect and self-fulfilling prophecy.
    - Outline the six advantages discussed in the module.

- What Makes a Person Attractive?

  - Hallmarks of High Attractiveness

    - Outline the eight hallmarks of attractiveness discussed in the module.
    - Show and discuss the *Beauty of Symmetry* video when covering symmetry (see the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below).
    - Show and discuss *Is Your Face Attractive?* video when covering femininity and masculinity (see the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below).

- Why Are Certain People Attractive?

- Discuss the four reasons why certain people are attractive: (1) culture, (2) preference for prototypes, (3) signal of mate quality, and (4) overgeneralized reactions to disease or bad genes.

- Conclusion:

  - Ask students what their muddiest point was (see the Noba PowerPoint slides).

Module Outline

Introduction: We receive conflicting messages about attractiveness. We are not supposed to "judge a book by its cover," yet we rely on physical attractiveness in forming impressions of other people and in deciding whom to pursue romantic relationships with.

The Advantages of Attractiveness

- This section outlines the advantages of attractiveness, including the **attractiveness halo effect**,which is the finding that attractive people are more likely to be seen positively for many different traits. For example, attractive people are generally seen as being more intelligent, healthy, trustworthy, and sociable.

- This section could be easily summarized with the "Advantages of High Attractiveness" illustration in the module, which notes the advantages attractive people have in the areas of first impressions, mating prospects, parent and peer favoritism, education and employment, electoral success, and judicial outcomes.

What Makes a Person Attractive?

- When social psychologists discuss attractiveness, they may discuss attractiveness as aesthetic preferences (nonsexual attractiveness), such as our attraction to babies, or they may discuss attractiveness as sexual preferences (sexual attractiveness), such as our attraction to a potential mate. The module describes attraction as a dual process.

- People who are considered attractive tend to have the characteristics of youthfulness, unblemished skin, symmetry, averageness, femininity in women, masculinity in men,

positive expressions, and positive behaviors. No single characteristic will determine high attractiveness, as someone with excellent skin would not be considered attractive without some other characteristics on the list. However, missing one characteristic could make someone low in attractiveness.

Why Are Certain People Attractive?

- *Cultural Learning*: Although there are many cultural universals in what we find attractive, there are some cultural differences in our ratings of attractiveness. The module contains a picture of a long-necked woman in Myanmar, and it cites research such as the finding that Western European people view larger bodies more harshly than people from other cultures.

- *Preferences for Prototypes*: This is a cognitive explanation. A **prototype** is an "average member of the category." If I say "man" and an image pops into your mind, that image is likely your prototype of the category, man. People who are closer to the prototype or average tend to be considered more attractive. This is likely why we prefer men who are more masculine and women who are more feminine. We also consider face **morphs**, averages of many different faces, more attractive than individual faces. This may be because we tend to prefer people and things we have seen before, as with the **mere-exposure effect**. This finding also extends to people and things that are similar to those we have seen before.

- *Signal of Mate Quality*: This is an evolutionary explanation. The **good genes hypothesis** states that we find qualities such as symmetry, averageness, prototypicality, and youthfulness attractive because they indicate better health, fertility, and genetic traits. There is some evidence that being very low on these attractiveness traits can predict low levels of health and intelligence. In general, though, these attractiveness qualities are poor predictors of traits associated with good health.

- *Overgeneralized Reactions to Disease or Bad Genes*: This is another evolutionary explanation. Based on the idea that we avoid bad genes, there is the **anomalous face overgeneralization**. This idea states that we overgeneralize our adaptive tendency toward attractiveness to exclude people whose faces resemble the unfit (i.e., the very unattractive), making all but the very attractive unfit—or unattractive—in our view.

Difficult Terms

Anomalous face overgeneralization hypothesis
Attractiveness halo-effect
Good genes hypothesis
Mere-exposure effect
Morph
Prototype

Lecture Frameworks

Overview: One issue to consider when designing this lesson is that many students will be thinking about their own level of attractiveness and how that affects their own life. This module contains information about the advantages of attractiveness, as well as what qualities we consider attractive and why.

1st Period (50-75 min)

- **Introduction and warm up activity:** Briefly introduce the learning objectives. Highlighting the learning objectives at the beginning of a unit helps students know what topics will be introduced.

  ○ Warm up activity: Have students write personal ads (see Activities/Demonstrations below and the Noba PowerPoint slides).

- **Direct Instruction—The Advantages of Being Attractive**

  ○ Attractiveness Halo Effect: When discussing the attractiveness halo effect, it may be advantageous to discuss the **self-fulfilling prophecy**, which is not discussed in the module. The self-fulfilling prophecy explains how people can create an outcome simply by believing that outcome is already true. For example, if someone believes that a very attractive person is more sociable, then they will act toward that person in a friendlier manner, which in turn causes the attractive person to reciprocate with friendliness.

  ○ Outline the 6 advantages discussed in the module: (1) first impressions, (2) mating prospects, (3) parent and peer favoritism, (4) education and employment, (5) electoral success, and (6) judicial outcomes. This section will likely be direct instruction.

    ■ Show the *Economics of Being Beautiful* video (see the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below) and discuss it. This video showcases 14 different advantages of being attractive, some of which overlap with the module's listed

advantages. Seven of the 14 include career and economic advantages.

- ■ The last point this video makes is about the massive amount of money we spend on beauty products, so a discussion of beauty products and plastic surgery could occur here. (See the Noba PowerPoint slides and Discussion Points below).

- **One-minute paper:**Spend some time having students complete a one-minute paper describing what they learned and what questions they still have (see the Noba PowerPoint slides). This is CAT is very useful in assessing student knowledge.

2nd Period (50—75 min)

- **Review one-minute paper:**This is a good time to go over the information from last class's one-minute paper. What questions can you clear up at this point? What information can you reinforce? In addition, it's helpful for students to know that you read and are responding to their questions.

- **Direct Instruction—What Makes a Person Attractive?**

  - ○ *Hallmarks of High Attractiveness*

    - ■ Outline the 8 hallmarks discussed in the module. The hallmarks are (1) youthfulness, (2) unblemished skin, (3) symmetry, (4) averageness, (5) femininity in women, (6) masculinity in men, (7) positive expressions, and (8) positive behaviors. No single characteristic will determine high attractiveness, as someone with excellent skin would not be considered attractive without some other characteristics on the list. However, missing one characteristic could make someone low in attractiveness. So, someone who has all the physical markers of attractiveness but who does not have positive expressions and does not behave positively may not be considered attractive by people who witness these expressions and behaviors.

    - ■ Show the *Beauty of Symmetry* video when discussing symmetry (see the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below) and discuss it.

    - ■ Show the *Is Your Face Attractive*? video when discussing femininity and masculinity (see the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below) and discuss it.

- **Direct Instruction and Discussion—Why Are Certain People Attractive?**

- Discuss the four factors for why people are considered attractive: (1) culture, (2) preference for prototypes, (3) signal of mate quality, and (4) overgeneralized reactions to disease or bad genes.

- Do the Face Morph activity when discussing the preference for prototype section (see Activities/Demonstrations below).

- Do a Think/Pair/Share activity (see the Noba PowerPoint slides for a description) to reinforce understanding of the 4 reasons certain people are attractive.

- **Conclusion**

  - Discuss research about the matching hypothesis (in the Noba PowerPoint slides or Outside Resources below) and discuss it.

  - Ask students what their muddiest point was (see the Noba PowerPoint slides): The "muddiest point" is a way to find out where there may be confusion or misunderstanding overall—by asking students what the muddiest (most confusing) point was for them. Be sure to follow up during the next class period to clear up students' confusions.

Activities & Demonstrations

Personal Ad Activity: Based on Isbell and Tyler (2005), have students write a personal ad, which includes a description of the person they would like to meet. This is a great warm-up activity, which gets students thinking about how important attractiveness is in romantic relationships, as well as whether there is a difference in that importance based on short-term or long-term relationships.

- Time: 10-15 minutes

- Materials/Resource: Isbell, L. M., & Tyler, J. M. (2005). Using students' personal ads to teach about interpersonal attraction and intimate relationships. *Teaching of Psychology, 32*, 170-172. doi:10.1207/s15328023top3203_9

  - This article outlines an activity that should be   done at the beginning of the module. Students write personal ads, and   then they discuss how the ads relate to interpersonal relationships. One   topic that will likely be brought up is the gender difference in mate

preference for short-term sexual relationships. The authors also note   that students often think personality factors are more important in a   potential partner, but this activity highlights how important   attractiveness is in mate selection.

Directions:

1. Have students take out a piece of paper for a brief in-class writing exercise. Instruct them not to put their name on it, so that their responses are anonymous.

2. Have them imagine they are looking for a romantic partner. Some students may already be in relationships or may otherwise not be looking for a partner, so ask them to creatively imagine it.

3. Instruct the students to write a personal ad that includes a description of the person they would like to meet. This ensures that they have a physical description in their personal ad, and it gets them to think about physical characteristics of their preferred partner.

4. Have them indicate their gender and the gender of the person they would like to meet. By asking about gender, you may be able to pick up on any gender differences in students' responses. Some previous research has found such differences and other previous research has not.

Face Morphs Activity

This activity demonstrates face morphs that are averages of many faces, and should show that face morphs are more attractive than individual faces. It should also show that the more that faces are averaged, the more attractive the face morph is. The instructions below are for an in-class activity, but it could easily be adapted for an out-of-class activity.

*   Time: 10-15 minutes

*   Materials: Computer with internet connection; ability to project computer image for class presentation

*   Directions:

1. Go to *Make an Average Face* website: http://www.faceresearch.org/demos/average

2. Pick two women's pictures (or, if you have enough time, have the students pick the women) from the options in the middle of the screen. Make sure the students can see which faces you are picking (the pictures will show up larger on the left when you hover your cursor

over them).

3. Click 'View Average' to see the face morph of those two women. It's very likely that the face morph is more attractive than each of the two individual women.

4. Pick a third woman and click 'View Average.' Your previous selections will remain, so you do not have to select them again.

5. Pick a fourth woman and click 'View Average.' All of your face morphs are shown toward the bottom of the screen. It should be clear by now that the face morphs are (1) more attractive than the individual faces, and (2) often get more attractive, the more faces you add.

6. Continue selecting women's faces (depending on the time you have available). After the first few pictures, the face morphs don't change as much, and you can pick many more pictures at one time to illustrate that face morphs with more faces are more attractive than a few faces.

7. Click "Clear Selections." Repeat the process above with men's faces.

8. For fun, you can also go to Celebrity Averager:

*   http://www.faceresearch.org/demos/famous

    *   This is not the best website for the original activity, as students will likely be distracted by the famous people, some of whom are photographed in character. Students' like/ dislike for certain actors and characters will likely make it harder for them to be objective about whether the individual picture or face morph is more attractive, which could be a matter for discussion, as liking and attraction are related.

Additional Activities

Ellis, B. J., & Kelley, H. H. (1999). The pairing game: A classroom demonstration of the matching phenomenon. *Teaching of Psychology, 26*, 118-121. doi:10.1207/s15328023top2602_8

*   This activity illustrates the matching hypothesis and mate selection. Students put a number on their forehead (which can be done with a deck of cards) that they can't see but others can see. The goal is to find a partner with the highest value possible. Students often end

up with another student with a similar number, even though they do not know their own number. Some students end up with a student who sits close to them and whose number may not be as similar, but this can illustrate proximity or how previous levels of liking can influence relationships.

Discussion Points

1. Why do you think the attractiveness halo exists if it is not a reliable assessment of a person's qualities? Is it a self-fulfilling prophecy?When discussing the attractiveness halo effect, it may be advantageous to discuss the self-fulfilling prophecy, which is not discussed in the module. The self-fulfilling prophesy states that people can produce an outcome simply when they believe that outcome is already true. For example, if someone believes that a very attractive person is more sociable, then they will act toward that person in a friendlier manner, which causes the attractive person to reciprocate the friendliness.

2. Given the advantages of being very attractive, what do you think about the increasing amount of plastic surgery and the amount of money spent on beauty products? This discussion question can prompt students to think about the importance of attractiveness, as well as the lengths we go to in order to be more attractive. This link (**http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com//2015/07/14/cos...** has an infographic with statistics on the increasing popularity of cosmetic surgery, which can give you some data to use in this discussion.

3. How does culture influence who and what you think is attractive? How does the media? Can beauty standards change over time? If so, how have they changed in our culture? This question encourages students to think about how cultural influences, including the media, affect our perceptions of what is attractive. You can connect this discussion to the Cultural Learning section of the module. For an illustration of the changing cultural standards of beauty for women, see this video: (**https://youtu.be/Xrp0zJZu0a4)**, or this webpage: (**http://www.rehabs.com/explore/womens-body-image-an....**

4. Is attractiveness of a potential partner more important for short-term relationships than long-term relationships? Why or why not? Some previous research (Kendrick et al., 1990) has found a gender difference in mate preference for casual sex partners but not for long-term relationships. This question is intended to get students to think about when and how attractiveness might matter in relationships.

Outside Resources

Article: For Couples, Time Can Upend the Laws of Attraction - This is an accessible New York Times article, summarizing research findings that show romantic couples' level of attractiveness is correlated if they started dating soon after meeting (predicted by the matching hypothesis). However, if they knew each other or were friends for a while before dating, they were less likely to match on physical attractiveness. This research highlights that while attractiveness is important, other factors such as acquaintanceship length can also be important.
http://nyti.ms/1HtIkFt

Article: Is Faceism Spoiling Your Life? - This is an accessible article that describes faceism, as well as how our expectations of people (based on their facial features) influence our reactions to them. It presents the findings from a few studies, such as how participants making snap judgments of political candidates' faces predicted who won the election with almost 70% accuracy. It includes example photos of faces we would consider more or less competent, dominant, extroverted, or trustworthy.
http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20150707-is-faceism-spoiling-your-life

Video: Is Your Face Attractive? - This is a short video. The researcher in the video discusses and shows examples of face morphs, and then manipulates pictures of faces, making them more or less masculine or feminine. We tend to prefer women with more feminized faces and men with more masculine faces, and the video briefly correlates these characteristics to good health.
http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/other-shows/videos/science-of-sex-appeal-is-your-face-attractive/

Video: Multiple videos realted to the science of beauty
http://dsc.discovery.com/search.htm?terms=science+of+beauty

Video: Multiple videos related to the science of sex appeal
http://dsc.discovery.com/search.htm?terms=science+of+sex+appeal

Video: The Beauty of Symmetry - A short video about facial symmetry. It describes facial symmetry, and explains why our faces aren't always symmetrical. The video shows a demonstration of a researcher photographing a man and a woman and then manipulating the photos.
http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/other-shows/videos/science-of-sex-appeal-the-beauty-of-symmetry/

Video: The Economic Benefits of Being Beautiful - Less than 2-minute video with cited statistics about the advantages of being beautiful. The video starts with information about how babies are treated differently, and it quickly cites 14 facts about the advantages of being attractive, including the halo effect.
https://youtu.be/b_gx2Uc95os

Evidence-Based Teaching

Gurung, R. A. R., & Vespia, K. (2007). Looking good, teaching well? Linking liking, looks, and learning. *Teaching of Psychology 34*, 5-10. doi:10.1080/00986280709336641

- This research could be discussed when examining how attractiveness is advantageous in employment, as this finding happens with professors as well. This multiple regression study "found that likable, good-looking, well-dressed, and approachable teachers had students who said they learned more, had higher grades, and liked the class better" (p. 5).

Hebl, M. R., & King, E. B. (2004). You are what you wear: An interactive demonstration of the self-fulfilling prophecy. *Teaching of Psychology, 31*, 260-262. doi:10.1207/s15328023top3104_7

- This activity calls for 5 student volunteers. Have each volunteer wear a label that they cannot see (i.e., attractive, intelligent, good leader, lazy, annoying) while completing a group task in front of the class. The students are instructed to treat each other like their labels, and students often start acting in accordance with the label they have, illustrating the self-fulfilling prophesy.

Madson, L. (2001). A classroom activity exploring the complexity of sexual orientation. *Teaching of Psychology, 28*, 32-35. doi:10.1207/S15328023TOP2801_08

- When discussing attraction, many textbooks and instructors only discuss heterosexual attraction. This activity brings up sexual orientation, and it could be a part of a broader discussion of how sexual attraction is one component of sexual orientation.

Links to ToPIX Materials

Social in the Classroom: Attraction and Beauty - Articles and activities about social psychology topics, including a link to a story, "Break Up Before College: Should You Stay With Your High School Sweetheart?"
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981041/Social%20in%20the%20Classroom

Social in the News: Attraction and Beauty - Links to news articles covering social psychology topics, including an article reporting on research findings that suggest women are more likely to buy lipstick when economics times are harsh, explained with an evolutionary explanation
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/23142325/Social%20in%20the%20News

Videos/Audio: Attraction and Beauty - Videos about social psychology topics, including a video about how ideal body image has changed over time
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981040/Social%20Video

Teaching Topics

Teaching The Most Important Course
https://nobaproject.com/documents/1_Teaching_The_Most_Important_Course.pdf

Content Coverage
https://nobaproject.com/documents/2_Content_Coverage.pdf

Motivating Students
https://nobaproject.com/documents/3_Motivating_Students_Tips.pdf

Engaging Large Classes
https://nobaproject.com/documents/4_Engaging_Large_Classes.pdf

Assessment Learning
https://nobaproject.com/documents/5_Assessment_Learning.pdf

Teaching Biological Psychology
https://nobaproject.com/documents/6_Teaching_Bio_Psych.pdf

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/152/Attraction%20-and%20Beauty.ppt?1475878187.

About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award- winning university teachers.

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