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CHANGES IN PERCEIVED DESIRABILITY AND GOODNESS OF RELATIONSHIP AS A FUNCTION OF BEING PAIRED WITH ATTRACTIVE VERSUS UNATTRACTIVE PARTNERS

A Thesis Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

The central aim of this study was to help explain why people tend to choose persons who are physically attractive as dating partners. Would a person's romantic association with an attractive partner enhance his desirability as judged by neutral observers? Only partial indications of such enhancement were found. It was clearly established, however, that relationships between equally attractive partners were judged as more durable than those between unequally attractive partners.

C H A P T E R I

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of a subject's own level of physical appearance, it has been found that both male and female subjects tend to prefer and choose the most physically attractive dating partner from those available (Agoglia, 1969; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, and Rottmann, 1966). This finding fails to confirm the plausible alternative hypothesis.that subjects would choose a dating partner of about equal physical attractiveness. Why does an individual, regardless of his own physical appearance, tend to choose the most physically attractive alternative presented to him (her) for a dating partner?

There is little doubt that people in our culture value physical beauty. Beauty contests at city, state, national, and international levels are common events. The media bombard our senses with attractive people telling us to buy scores of products and the advertisements hint less than subtly that if we do buy the product, we too will be beautiful, or at least able to attract beautiful people. Assuming that handsomeness has positive value, it is reasonable that studies have found differences attributed to people on the basis of their physical appearance if no other information was available. It is also reasonable that attractive people are generally judged to be more desirable than unattractive people when no other information is available (Byrne, London, and Reeves, 1968; Lampel and Anderson, 1968; Walster, et. al., 1966).

Now consider the boy-girl dating relationship. Given the

cultural value placed on physical attractiveness, the "dating game" can be conceptualized as a task with the most valued accomplishment being to date an attractive other (Agoglia, 1969; Rosenfeld, 1964). Assuming that accomplishments are among the criteria people use in judging others, and that romantic attachments may well be considered accomplishments, a partner with whom one becomes involved may serve as a conveyor of information about one's own personal characteristics. It then follows that interaction with an attractive other might be desirable because of what it conveys to others about oneself. Thus, if an individual, (A), succeeds in getting a date with another, (B), and if B is attractive, the A-B pairing would reflect positively on A in the eyes of others who see them together holding hands. In other words, A's romantic association with an attractive B would enhance others' impressions of A. It B is unattractive, however, A's relating romantically to B would reflect negatively on A in the eyes of others and, therefore, make less favorable their impressions of A.

The perceived enhancement for simply dating an attractive other may account for the finding that physically attractive people are chosen so frequently for romantic associations. Dating an unattractive other is an alternative to be avoided because it invites degradation by others. The preceding notions are consistent with some of the predictions drawn from congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955). In an application of the congruity paradigm to the present study, A and B would be viewed as two stimuli being judged by an external observer.

If A and B were presented to an observer as a couple that has been dating steadily for three months, they would be positively related (a positive assertion in the language of congruity theory). That is, A likes B and B likes A. If A and B were both about equal in physical attractiveness, then when judged in a pair joined by a positive assertion, the compound stimulus would be congruent with respect to physical appearance. According to congruity theory, then, there should be no change in the perceived desirability of either A or B as a result of their being paired in a positive romantic relationship (averaging effect).

Hypothesis 1a: A's romantic association with a B of about equal physical attractiveness will not affect judges' ratings of A's desirability.

A plausible alternative prediction can be derived from Rosenberg and Abelson's (1960) hypothesis of "evaluation induction." Simply stated, this hypothesis proposes that the affect aroused by each of the two elements in a positive association tends to become attached to the other element (summation effect). Therefore, the congruent pairing of two attractive or two unattractive persons will result in both of them being perceived as either more or less desirable by an external observer.

Hypothesis 1b: A's romantic association with a B of about equal physical attractiveness will raise a judge's ratings of A's and B's desirability if they are attractive, and lower their desirability if they are unattractive.

If A and B were of very different levels of physical

appearance, i.e., one is unattractive, the other attractive, then the compound stimulus of A and B would be incongruent. A judge might respond to this incongruity by adjusting the evaluation of each component in a way that would render the compound stimulus congruent. Both congruity theory and the evaluation induction hypothesis would predict that the unattractive component would become more desirable and the attractive component would become less desirable in order to achieve congruity in the compound stimulus (convergence).

Hypothesis 2a: A's romantic association with a B more physically attractive than A, will raise judges' ratings of A's desirability.

Hypothesis 2b: A's romantic association with a B less physically attractive than A, will lower judges' ratings of A's desirability.

It is possible to argue that the changes predicted by Hypotheses 2a and 2b in A's and B's desirability are the result of a context effect of merely viewing A and B simultaneously and not as a pair which has attained a positive romantic relationship. In other words, merely viewing A and B together as opposed to viewing them singly might cause their desirability ratings to change before a romantic association has even been considered. This context effect can be controlled by employing a condition where A and B are presented as two individuals who don't know each other (Unrelated condition). Thus, there would be no relationship between A and B (A doesn't know B, and B doesn't know A). Since no association (or dissociation)

between A and B would be involved in this condition, both congruity theory and the evaluation induction hypothesis would predict no change in judges' ratings of A's or B's desirability as a result of this pairing.

Hypothesis 3: The observation of an unrelated A and B pair will not affect a judge's ratings of A's or B's desirability (as contrasted with their alone scores).

Support for Hypothesis 3, i.e., the absence of a context effect, comes from a study by Wyer and Dermer (1968). Their results showed a context effect when subjects had to rate three adjectives in a set as a collective (compound stimulus) before rating the adjectives individually. No context effects were found when subjects rated the adjectives individually before rating the collective group. Since the present study involved the latter procedure (subjects judged A and B individually first, then as a couple later), no context effects were expected.

Thus far, this paper has been primarily concerned with a romantic relationship between A and B. An interesting question arises: would the predictions of Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 generalize to other kinds of relationships between A and B, such as a same-sex friendship relationship? Congruity theory would hold that the same predictions should apply because there would still be a positive assertion (positive relationship) between A and B of the same strength (that is, same-sex A and B have been friends for the same amount of time as opposite-sex A and B have been dating). Congruity theory, however, does notdiscriminate between qualitatively different positive

associations. But it is assumed that the congruence of physical attractiveness is not as important for same-sex friends as for dating partners. Therefore, Hypotheses 2a and 2b should not apply to same-sex friendship relationships.

Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) have postulated other reactions to incongruity in addition to the distortion of the evaluations of the components of the compound stimulus. They recognized that subjects could also devalue the assertion or association linking the two incongruent elements (A and B), thereby resolving the incongruity by dissolving the compound stimulus (incredulity). In other words, if a subject cognizes that the relationship between A and B is not a good one, i.e., that it will not last very much longer (or that it never really existed), then he reduces his felt pressure toward congruity.

The present study will allow subjects to assess the "goodness" (or durability) of the relationship between A and B. If the association of A and B is congruent (A and B are equally attractive), there should be no pressure toward devaluing the relationship between A and B. If the pairing of A and B is incongruent (A and B are unequally attractive), then it would be possible that subjects would react to the incongruity by devaluing the relationship.

Hypothesis 4: Congruent pairs will be perceived as having more durable relationships (higher goodness of relationship scores) than incongruent pairs.

If a subject is asked to judge the relationship of an incongruent pair previously defined as steadily attached, he

will already have adjusted the individual member's desirability in order to make the pair congruent during the first viewing. The subject may, therefore, perceive the relationship to be durable. In contrast, if a subject is asked to judge the relationship of an incongruent pair previously defined as unrelated, he will not have adjusted either individual's desirability ratings during the first viewing because pressure towards congruity did not exist. He will, therefore, have to devalue the relationship in order to achieve congruence.

Hypothesis 5: Subjects who were previously told that incongruent pairs had been steadily attached (Related condition) will evaluate those pairs as more durable than subjects who were told that the partners were unrelated individuals (Unrelated condition).

Hypotheses 4 and 5 apply primarily to the opposite-sex pairings. Assuming that the congruity of physical appearance is unimportant for same-sex friendship pairs, it would be expected that Hypotheses 4 and 5 would not be supported for the same-sex pairings.

C H A P T E R I I

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 100 undergraduate students (50 males and 50 females) enrolled in the introductory psychology course at the University of Massachusetts. A subject's participation in this experiment partially fulfilled the experimental requirement of the course. Subjects took part in the study of small groups of no larger than ten subjects.

Design

Groups of subjects viewed photos of sixteen persons and made nine trait ratings of each individual. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions, Alone, Related, Unrelated, which differed in terms of how the slides were presented and described to the subjects.

The 20 subjects in the Alone condition viewed each of sixteen photographs singly before making their desirability ratings of the person depicted in each photo. The 40 subjects in the Unrelated condition viewed the same sixteen photos; this time the photographs were presented in pairs and the subjects were told that the paired photos depicted unrelated individuals, people who did not know one another. The Unrelated subjects made their (desirability) ratings of all stimulus persons; later they were shown the pairs again, this time being asked to imagine that the members of each pair were positively related. So doing allowed the subjects to make goodness-of-relationship ratings. The 40 subjects

in the Related condition also viewed the sixteen photos in pairs, but these subjects were told that the members of each pair were positively related. The subjects made their desirability judgments of each stimulus person and then viewed all of the pairs again to make their goodness-of-relationship ratings.

Materials

The stimuli were sixteen black and white slides, depicting head and shoulder images of eight males and eight females. The persons portrayed were pre-scaled for physical attractiveness. The mean physical attractiveness ratings for each of the stimulus persons are presented in Table 1. There were four physically "attractive" males, four "unattractive" males, four "attractive" females, and four "unattractive" females. Four of the male slides (two attractive and two unattractive) and four of the female slides (two attractive and two unattractive) were used exclusively for the opposite-sex pairings. The remaining eight slides were used exclusively for the same-sex pairings. It was impossible to get eight equally attractive male and female slides from the original pool of pre-judged slides, but it was possible to match four slides on attractiveness within the opposite-sex and within the same-sex conditions. Note that there were two stimulus persons at each level of physical appearance per sex, for both the same-sex and opposite-sex pairings. This replication was used as a control for the possible alternative explanation that a rating or a change in rating was due to an individual

Table 1

Mean ratings of physical attractiveness for the 16 stimulus person[a]

Stimuli	Condition	
	opposite-sex[b]	same-sex[b]
unattractive male$_1$	2.10	3.41
unattractive male$_2$	2.00	3.35
attractive male$_1$	7.50	7.10
attractive male$_2$	7.30	6.95
unattractive female$_1$	2.41	3.25
unattractive female$_2$	2.33	3.20
attractive female$_1$	7.70	7.71
attractive female$_2$	7.55	7.23

[a]measured alone on a nine-point scale; the higher the number, the more attractive the rated person.

[b]Eight separate stimulus photos were used in each of the two conditions.

stimulus person rather than to the more general factor of physical attractiveness.

In the Alone condition, the slides were presented individually in a random order by a carousel slide projector. In the Related and Unrelated conditions the four male-female pairs were presented first followed by the four same-sex pairs (or vice versa). Pairs of stimuli were presented by using two slide projectors simultaneously.

In all conditions, subjects used the same paper and pencil scales to make their desirability ratings of each stimulus person. This dependent measure consisted of nine bi-polar adjective scales (see appendix). The adjectives (and their opposites) chosen for this scale were those shown to be measures of social desirability (Rosenberg, Nelson, Vivekananthan, 1968). Subjects in the Related and Unrelated conditions also made judgments of the relationship between paired stimulus persons on the "goodness-of-relationship" scale constructed by the author for this study. There were four forms of this scale, one for each of the following: opposite-sex Related pairings, opposite-sex Unrelated pairings, same-sex Related pairings, and same-sex Unrelated pairings. The bi-polar adjectives for the four forms were the same, but the instructions had to be different (see appendix). All subjects filled out a post-experimental questionnaire to check on their awareness of the hypotheses of the study.

Procedure

In the Alone condition where the subjects viewed each

of the sixteen photographs singly and made desirability ratings of each, a "base-level" desirability score for each stimulus person was established. In the Related and Unrelated conditions, the stimuli were paired and presented to the subjects for judgments. Any change in the desirability score of a stimulus person, presumably due to the pairing of one stimulus person with another, was measured from the base-level established in the Alone condition.

In the Related condition, subjects were told that the opposite-sex pairs had been dating steadily for three months and that the same-sex pairs had known each other (had been friends) for three months. In the Unrelated condition, subjects were told that the two paired stimulus persons, both opposite-sex and same-sex pairs, did not know each other. It was assumed that in the Related condition, information was being conveyed to the subjects about A by the appearance of A's dating partner or friend B. It was clear to the subjects that A and B were positively related to each other. In the Unrelated condition, it was assumed that no information was being conveyed to the subjects about A by B because A and B were unrelated. This condition was to control for the effects of merely pairing any two stimulus persons (pure context effect).

All subjects in the paired conditions judged four opposite-sex pairs and four same-sex pairs (order of presentation was counterbalanced). This meant that each subject did not see all possible combinations of the stimulus persons, but only a subset of combinations. In order to have shown each subject

all combinations, it would have been necessary to pair each stimulus person with more than one other stimulus person. This would have ruined the cover story that each couple shown had been dating steadily for three months. Therefore, a pairing arrangement was employed for both same-sex and opposite-sex pairs such that no stimulus person would be seen more than once by any given subject. This arrangement also allowed each subject to view two congruent pairs (unattractive paired with unattractive and attractive paired with attractive), and two incongruent pairs(unattractive matched with attractives).

In both the Related and the Unrelated conditions, there were four groups with ten subjects in each group. All possible pair combinations of the stimuli were judged by subjects in each condition, while any one group of ten subjects judged only a subset of combinations. The pairs were presented to subjects in a random order with the position (left, right) of A and B counterbalanced for sex, level of physical appearance, and type of pairing.

Subjects first made their judgments of the individual members of a pair for either all of the opposite-sex or same-sex pairings (whichever came first for that group), and then the pairs were presented again so that subjects could make relationship ratings. This procedure was then repeated for the remaining pairings (opposite-sex or same-sex).

For the goodness-of-relationship ratings, subjects in the Related condition were simply asked to make some judgments about the relationship that they thought existed between A

and B after the pair had dated (or been friends) for three months. Subjects in the Unrelated condition were asked to imagine that A and B did in fact know each other and had been dating (friends) for three months. Their judgments were to be made on the basis of what kind of relationship they thought would exist between A and B.

Subjects lastly filled out a post-experimental questionnaire which contained a manipulation check (see appendix). They were then debriefed and dismissed.

C H A P T E R I I I

RESULTS

Overview

The data failed to support significantly the hypotheses that an unattractive individual would be rated as more desirable as a result of being romantically related to an attractive individual, or that the attractive individual would become less desirable as a result of such a pairing. The overall trends, however, were in the predicted direction. While these "convergence" hypotheses were not significantly supported, the hypotheses pertaining to the durability of the A-B relationship were strongly supported. Subjects judged congruent relationships to be significantly more durable than incongruent relationships; subjects who were told that incongruent pairs had been "steadily attached" gave those pairs higher durability-of-relationship ratings than those subjects who had previously viewed the two partners as unrelated individuals.

Preliminary Analyses

The manipulation check on the post-experimental questionnaire (for subjects in the paired conditions only) asked subjects "How much did the presence of the first stimulus affect your ratings of the second stimulus person?" The responses indicated that subjects in the Related condition were significantly more apt to have their judgments of the second stimulus person affected by the presence of the first stimulus person than were those subjects in the Unrelated condition. The mean response for the Related condition was 7.55 and the

mean for the Unrelated condition was 4.13 on a nine point scale ($t=9.05$, $df=78$, $p<.001$). These results indicated that the manipulation of the Related versus Unrelated conditions had the desired effect: when A and B were related, A's partner conveyed information to the subjects; when A and B were not related, little information was conveyed.

The sex of the subjects was not found to be a significant variable in the study. No significant main effects or interactions involving sex of the subjects were found. Therefore, the subsequent analyses have been collapsed over this variable. It was noted, however, that females tended to be consistently (but insignificantly) more positive raters than males.

On the basis of previous findings, it was assumed that attractive people would be perceived as more desirable than unattractive people. The data from the Alone condition revealed that only one (popular-unpopular) of the nine bipolar adjectives conformed significantly to this assumption: that is, popularity was the only trait on which attractive stimulus persons were rated as significantly more desirable than unattractive stimulus person. The means for all nine adjectives are shown in Table 2. It can be seen that three other adjectives conformed non-significantly to the prediction; the remaining five traits were non-significantly in the opposite direction with unattractive persons being rated more reliable, honest, etc., than attractive person. Since confirmation of this assumption was crucial to the hypotheses, the subsequent relevant analyses had to be performed on the

Table 2

Mean ratings for nine bi-polar traits for photographs of attractive and unattractive stimulus persons[a]

Traits[b]	Stimuli	
	Attractive	Unattractive
Popular	7.31	5.16*
Sociable	7.22	5.93
Happy	6.68	6.18
Intelligent	6.64	6.39
Humorous	6.30	6.68
Warm	6.30	6.68
Good-Natured	6.38	6.90
Honest	6.88	7.41
Reliable	6.44	7.23
Mean	6.88	6.51

[a]On this and all subsequent tables, each trait was rated on a nine point scale: the higher the mean, the more positive the rating.

[b]The listed adjectives refer to the positive end of each rating scale.

*$p < .05$ by Tukey (a) hsd test.

dependent variable popular-unpopular.

No significant differences were found between the same-sex stimuli of the same level of attractiveness, i.e., unattractive male$_1$ = unattractive male$_2$, etc. The remaining analyses were therefore collapsed over the replicated stimuli allowing comparisons to be made between unattractive males, attractive males, unattractive females, and attractive females. It was consistently found, however, that the attractive females were judged more desirable than the attractive males. This occurred for both the same-sex and opposite-sex stimuli. The trend was significant only for the trait sociable-unsociable.

Ratings of Individuals

Hypothesis 1a: A's romantic association with a B of about equal physical attractiveness will not affect judges' ratings of A's desirability (averaging effect); versus

Hypothesis 1b: A's romantic association with a B of about equal physical attractiveness will raise a judge's ratings of A's and B's desirability if they are attractive, and lower their desirability if they are unattractive (summation effect).

These hypotheses were relevant to the congruent pairings in the Related condition (romantic association) as compared to their appropriate Alone scores. Hypothesis 1b was not supported; no significant differences were found between a stimulus person's alone score and his score when congruently paired with another stimulus person. Therefore, Hypothesis 1a (the averaging and null hypothesis) appeared to be the most

appropriate predictor of the data. The means are shown in Table 3.

Hypothesis 2a: A's romantic association with a B more physically attractive than A, will raise judges' ratings of A's desirability.

Hypothesis 2b: A's romantic association with a B less physically attractive than A, will lower judges' ratings of A's desirability.

Neither Hypotheses 2a nor 2b was supported by statistically significant differences. The relevant comparisons were between the incongruent pairings in the opposite-sex Related conditions and their appropriate Alone scores. Inspection of Table 3 reveals, however, that the predicted trends were present. Thus when an unattractive male was romantically paired with an attractive female, his perceived popularity increased (non-significantly) and hers decreased (non-significantly), etc.

Hypothesis 3: The observation of an unrelated A and B will not affect a judge's ratings of A's or B's desirability (as contrasted with their alone scores).

No significant differences were found between the Unrelated and Alone means for all stimulus persons. It was very difficult, however, to interpret this finding as support for Hypothesis 3 because the predicted differences of Hypotheses 2a and 2b were not significant in the Related condition either. Inspection of Table 3 shows, though, that the trends for the Unrelated condition were not even in the direction predicted by Hypotheses 2a and 2b. An unattractive male paired with

Table 3

Mean popularity ratings of photos used for opposite-sex pairings over context of presentations

Context of Presentations	Male Photos		Female Photos	
	unattrac-tive	attrac-tive	unattrac-tive	attrac-tive
Related Congruent[a]	4.50	7.23	4.45	7.20
Related Incongruent[b]	5.67	6.85	5.35	7.08
Unrelated Congruent	4.48	6.85	4.50	7.00
Unrelated Incongruent	5.00	6.85	5.00	7.45
Alone	5.18	6.95	5.15	7.55

[a]A congruent pairing involved either an attractive paired with an attractive or an unattractive with an unattractive.

[b]An incongruent pairing involved an attractive paired with an unattractive.

an attractive female was rated as somewhat less popular than when seen alone. The same was true for an unattractive female paired with an attractive male. The magnitude of the differences in the Unrelated condition, even when in the directions predicted by Hypotheses 2a and 2b, was also smaller than in the Related condition.

No significant differences were found for the same-sex friend pairs for any of the above hypotheses either. Again, this finding was difficult to interpret and inconclusive at best in terms of support for the prediction of no differences. The means for the same-sex stimuli may be seen in Table 4. Note that the trends in the same-sex data were less consistently in the predicted directions (of Hypotheses 2a and 2b) for the Related condition than the opposite-sex pairings. The Unrelated condition for the same-sex pairings also revealed insignificant variations with no apparent trends.

It might be noted at this point that no systematic or significant trends in the data were noted for any of the other eight traits used on the bi-polar adjective scale. The only systematic (yet non-significant) differences between a stimulus person's Alone score and paired score were found in the Related condition opposite-sex pairings.

Ratings of Relationship

Ratings of the "goodness-of-relationship" conformed significantly to all of the predictions. All nine of the items which went into the scale intercorrelated highly. Therefore, a sum of the nine scales was used as the dependent variable

Table 4

Mean popularity ratings of photos used for same-sex pairings over context of presentations

Context of Presentations	Male Photos		Female Photos	
	unattrac-tive	attrac-tive	unattrac-tive	attrac-tive
Related Congruent	5.57	6.38	4.57	7.73
Related Incongruent	5.70	7.20	5.53	7.45
Unrelated Congruent	4.73	5.88	4.68	7.30
Unrelated Incongruent	5.18	6.85	4.80	7.88
Alone	5.28	6.73	5.03	8.00

for testing the hypotheses. A correlation matrix of the nine items on the goodness-of-relationship scales can be seen in Table 5.

Hypothesis 4: Congruent pairs will be perceived as having more durable relationships (higher goodness-of-relationship scores) than incongruent pairs.

Hypothesis 4 was strongly supported for both the opposite-sex and same-sex pairings (support was not expected for the same-sex pairings). The overall mean for congruent relationships was 6.70 (on a nine point scale) and for incongruent relationships, 4.99 ($F=157.18$, $df=1, 156$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, no significant difference was found between congruent relationships composed of two unattractives (Mean=6.71) and two attractives (Mean=6.69, $F < 1$, $df=1, 78$). This finding supported the notion that congruence was the important variable for predicting the goodness of a relationship.

Hypothesis 5: Subjects who were previously told that incongruent pairs had been steadily attached (Related condition) will evaluate those pairs as more durable than subjects who were told that the partners were unrelated individuals (Unrelated condition).

The relevant means for testing Hypothesis 5 are shown in Table 6. While the congruent relationships were judged equally durable in both the Related and Unrelated conditions (Means for both conditions = 6.83), the subjects in the Unrelated condition judged the incongruent relationship as significantly less durable (Mean = 4.12) than did subjects in the Related condition

Table 5

Correlations of the nine bi-polar adjective ratings from the goodness of relationship scale

Adjectives[a]	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Intimate	.78	.75	.83	.89	.88	.78	.68	.73
2. Mature	--	.85	.86	.93	.83	.81	.84	.86
3. Likely		--	.81	.95	.80	.98	.79	.81
4. Happy		--	--	.88	.86	.81	.78	.78
5. Stable			--	--	.71	.78	.83	.81
6. Warm					--	.83	.79	.80
7. Probable						--	.78	.76
8. Strong							--	.91
9. Good								

[a]The listed adjectives refer to the positive end of each rating scale.

Table 6

"Goodness of relationship" ratings for opposite-sex pairs (average over nine scales)

Nature of Pairing	Congruent	Incongruent
Related	6.83	5.18*
Unrelated	6.83	4.12**
Mean	6.83	4.65*

*$p < .001$

**overall interaction significant, $p < .025$

(Mean = 5.18; F for the overall interaction = 6.04, df=1, 156, $p < .025$).

Incongruent relationships involving attractive males (AM) and unattractive females (UF) were judged significantly more durable than incongruent relationship involving attractive females (AF) and unattractive males (UM). The mean evaluation of the AM-UF relationship was 4.88, and the AF-UM was 4.29 ($F=9.11$, df=1, 78, $p < .005$).

The same-sex pairings revealed smaller but still significant differences between congruent and incongruent relationships than the opposite-sex pairings. The mean evaluation of the congruent pairs was 6.57, and for the incongruent pairs it was 5.33 ($F=53.58$, df=1, 156, $p < .001$). Based on the assumption that physical appearance was not important for same-sex pairs, it was predicted that this difference between congruent and incongruent relationships would not occur. The prediction of no difference was not supported, but there was evidence that the congruence of physical appearance was more important for opposite-sex pairings than for same-sex pairings. The same-sex incongruent relationships were judged more durable (Mean = 5.33) than the opposite-sex incongruent relationships (Mean = 4.65), while the evaluations of the opposite-sex congruent relationships (Mean = 6.83) were more nearly equal (but still higher) to the evaluations of the same-sex congruent relationships (Mean = 6.57). This interaction was significant at better than the .025 alpha level (F for overall interaction = 6.13, df=1, 156).

Hypothesis 5 was not supported by a significant interaction for the same-sex pairings. The relevant means are shown in Table 7.

Incongruent relationships involving attractive males (AM) and unattractive males (UM) were judged significantly more durable than incongruent relationships involving attractive females (AF) and unattractive females (UF). The mean evaluation of the AM-UM relationship was 5.52, and the AF-UF was 5.07 ($F=4.33$, $df=1, 78$, $p < .05$).

Table 7

"Goodness of relationship" ratings for same-sex pairs (average of nine adjectives)

Nature of Pairing	Congruent	Incongruent
Related	6.77	5.51*
Unrelated	6.36	5.14*
Mean	6.57	5.33*

*$p < .025$

C H A P T E R I V

DISCUSSION

The essential findings of the study were as follows. First, attractive individuals when presented singly were rated as more desirable than unattractive individuals on some traits but not for other traits. When photos of the same individuals were paired with photos of other individuals of varying levels of physical appearance, there were no instances of significant changes in these trait ratings, but in some cases there were interesting trends. Photos of unattractive individuals romantically associated with attractive individuals were seen as more popular than when alone or paired with other unattractive photos.

The results for the individual ratings were weak, in contrast with the findings of the relationship ratings. When subjects were asked to judge the strength of the bond between individuals, rather than the desirability of the individuals, then pairs congruent in physical appearance were judged as more durable than pairs which were incongruent in physical appearance. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that the tendency to rate congruent pairs as more durable than incongruent pairs was less for "related" pairs than for previously unrelated pairs. In other words, if the rater had previously judged two incongruent photos as members of a dating couple, he gave a significantly higher goodness-of-relationship rating than if the same two photos were previously presented as unrelated. This effect occurred for dating pairs

and not for same-sex friendship pairs.

The results of this study could lead one to the conclusion that subjects were reluctant to make negative judgments about others on the basis of physical appearance. A comparison of the mean individual ratings with the relationship ratings showed that subjects made more polarized judgments (utilized more of the scale) for the relationship ratings. For example, the mean evaluation of an unattractive stimulus person over the nine traits was 6.74. This was well above the mid-point of the nine point scale and therefore was not even a negative evaluation. The mean evaluation of an incongruent relationship was 4.99, or just about at the mid-point of the scale. The lowest mean evaluation of an (unattractive) individual was found for the trait popular (Mean = 5.16) and was still above the mid-point of the scale. The lowest mean evaluation of a relationship was found for the incongruent opposite-sex pairs in the Unrelated condition (Mean = 4.12) and was a truly negative rating in that it was below the mid-point of the scale.

Subjects were also reluctant to make discriminative judgments about others on the basis of physical appearance. For only one of the nine traits (popular-unpopular) did subjects judge attractive stimulus persons as significantly more desirable than unattractive individuals (the remaining traits showed only random fluctuation in that they failed to reach statistical significance). This was puzzling because all nine of the traits used for the desirability dependent measure

were shown to be highly intercorrelated (Rosenberg, Nelson, Vivekananthan, 1968). It was therefore expected that if a stimulus person was rated highly on one trait, he would be rated highly on the rest of the traits.

It does not appear unreasonable, however, that popularity was the only trait on which attractive individuals were judged significantly more desirable than unattractive individuals. After all, the only information that the naive observers had about an individual was a photo. On the basis of only a photo it should be rather difficult to differentiate among individuals on such traits as honesty, reliability, intelligence, and good-naturedness. But to say that one individual is more popular than another implies that he is chosen more frequently by others, and a naive observer is in a better position to judge whether or not he would choose another for a friend or a date (and whether other people similar to the judge would choose the same person) than to assess another individual's reliability. Therefore, subjects were simply saying that attractive people are chosen more frequently than unattractive people, which, of course, was one of the basic premises of the study.

Although the predictions that an individual would become more desirable as a result of being romantically associated with an attractive partner and less desirable as a result of being romantically associated with an unattractive partner were not significantly supported, the appropriate trends in the data were present. Perhaps a few more subjects and consequently

a little less variability would have provided statistically significant support for these hypotheses. All of the differences were in the predicted directions, but more importantly in the right conditions as well. The hypotheses predicted that an unattractive individual would gain and an attractive individual would lose desirability if a romantic relationship was thought to exist between them. This prediction, then, was pertinent for the Related, opposite-sex pairings condition, and that was the only condition where the predicted trends occurred. None of the other conditions revealed any consistent systematic trends at all.

The relationship ratings provided evidence that the manipulation of congruity based on physical appearance was a strong variable. Subjects apparently were not uneasy about making discriminative judgments about the relationships. The relationship ratings were sensitive to very small and insignificant discrepancies in physical attractiveness and social desirability as was evidenced twice in the results as follows:

(1) First, the interaction predicted by Hypothesis 5 was significant. While congruent pairs were judged equally durable in both the Related and Unrelated conditions, the incongruent pairs were devalued more by subjects in the Unrelated condition, who had not had a chance to react to the incongruity previously. This interaction occurred despite the fact that no significant resolution of the incongruity was found for subjects in the Related condition via the distortion of individual's desirability ratings (the predictions of Hypothesis 5 were based

on the assumption that this distortion would occur). It could be reasoned that there were consistent trends in the direction of the resolution of some incongruity for the opposite-sex Related condition, and that these insignificant differences within the trends were apparently enough to result in the interaction by the relationship ratings. This reasoning is bolstered by the fact that there were no consistent trends toward the resolution of incongruity for the same-sex pairings and no interaction was found in the relationship ratings.

(2) The second finding which demonstrated the sensitivity of the relationship ratings was that incongruent relationships involving attractive males and unattractive females were rated significantly more durable than incongruent relationships involving attractive females and unattractive males. This finding also occurred in the same-sex pairings where incongruent male relationships were judged significantly better than incongruent female relationships. It was noted earlier that attractive females were judged insignificantly more desirable when alone than attractive males. This difference in desirability would make any relationship involving an attractive male and an unattractive other (insignificantly) more congruent than a relationship involving an attractive female and an unattractive other. The discrepancy in desirability between the two partners is less for a relationship involving attractive males than a relationship involving attractive females; thus the former relationship is more congruent than the latter. Even though the difference in discrepancy was insignificant,

the relationship ratings showed significant differences in a predictable direction.

Alternative Means of Reacting to Incongruity

There has not been an abundance of research which has allowed subjects an alternative mode of reacting to incongruity, dissonance, or whatever dynamic concept was being tested. In fact, the strategy of most of this kind of research has been to limit the subject to just one mode of reactance. This, of course, does not stop the subject from covertly utilizing an alternative method. It seems logical, as Abelson (1968) has pointed out, that an individual chooses a method of resolving an imbalanced situation which is the easiest. In the case of this study, it might have been easier to respond to an incongruent pairing by reasoning that the relationship was unstable and not likely to continue than to say that person X was a cold, humorless, unreliable, unpopular individual. It might have been easier because there are fewer potential negative outcomes for the members of a pair should their relationship (as posited in this study) end. If the couple or pair broke up, they would probably find other mates. There was nothing visibly binding a pair together: neither partner had made a permanent commitment to the other. They simply had been dating or friends for three months. The alternative response to the incongruity, that of distorting the desirability or character of an individual, might have been more difficult because the consequences for the judged individual were more permanent in that they involved his personality characteristics.

In other words, if a subject judged a relationship as unstable, and in fact it was unstable, the consequences for the individuals in that relationship were minimal. If a subject judged an individual as undesirable (and in essence said that he didn't like that individual), the consequences for that individual would be harsher. Chances are that he could not become a more desirable person as easily as he could find another friend or dating partner.

It would be rather interesting to see how subjects would respond in a similar experimental situation if the relationships judged were more clearly stable ones. Suppose A and B had made a permanent commitment to each other, e.g., they were engaged to be married. Judging such a relationship as unstable would imply more negative outcomes for both partners than in the present study. In the case of an engaged couple, it might be relatively easier for the judge to respond to the incongruity by converging A's and B's desirability than by devaluing their relationship in order to achieve congruence.

The comparisons between the same-sex and the opposite-sex pairings showed that the congruence of physical appearance was a more important variable for the opposite-sex pairs. The incongruent same-sex relationships were significantly more durable than the incongruent opposite-sex relationships. Nevertheless, there were significant indications that incongruent same-sex relationships were less durable than congruent ones when congruity was based on physical appearance. This latter finding failed to support the assumption that the

congruence of physical appearance was unimportant for same-sex pairs. Perhaps there are additional perceived differences between attractive and unattractive individuals which were not considered in this study but could account for the finding that the congruence of physical appearance was considered important for the durability of a same-sex relationship. Is it possible that we attribute not only differences in popularity, but also differences in attitudes or values, to individuals on the basis of their physical appearance? If value X was attributed to an unattractive individual but not to an attractive individual, it might be concluded that the two of them are unlikely to be good friends because they don't share similar values. Therefore a same-sex friendship relationship which was incongruent on the basis of physical appearance might also be incongruent on the basis of attitudes or values as well. It could then be understood why such relationships would be judged less durable than congruent relationships even for same-sex friends. Although this sounds plausible, it is mere speculation until future research determines that different values are attributed to individuals of varying levels of physical appearance.

The central aim of this study was to help explain why people tend to choose persons who are physically attractive as dating partners. Would a person's romantic association with an attractive other enhance his desirability as judged by neutral observers? Only partial indications of such enhancement were found. It was clearly established, however,

that relationships between equally attractive partners were judged as more durable than those between unequally attractive partners.

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A P P E N D I X

Place a check on the line (:_✓_:) which best describes your assessment of this person.

intelligent	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unintelligent
irritable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	good natured
warm	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	cold
humorless	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	humorous
unreliable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	reliable
sociable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unsociable
honest	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	dishonest
unhappy	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	happy
popular	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unpopular

Place a check on the line (:✓:) which best describes your assessment of the relationship between these two people.

intimate	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	superficial
mature	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	immature
likely	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unlikely
unhappy	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	happy
stable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unstable
cold	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	warm
probable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	improbable
weak	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	strong
good	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	bad

Estimate the probability that this couple will get married.

(From 0 to 100%)_____

Place a check on the line (:__✓__:) which best describes your assessment of the relationship between these two people.

intimate :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: superficial

mature :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: immature

likely :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: unlikely

unhappy :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: happy

stable :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: unstable

cold :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: warm

probable :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: improbable

weak :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: strong

good :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: bad

Estimate the probability that this pair will become life-long friends. (From 0 to 100%)_____

Place a check on the line (:✓:) which best describes your assessment of the relationship that would exist between these two people if they had been dating steadily for three months.

intimate :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: superficial

mature :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: immature

likely :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: unlikely

unhappy :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: happy

stable :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: unstable

cold :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: warm

probable :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: improbable

weak :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: strong

good :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: bad

Estimate the probability that this couple would get married.

(From 0 to 100%)_____

Place a check on the line (:___:) which best describes your assessment of the relationship that would exist between these two people if they had been friends for three months.

intimate	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	superficial
mature	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	immature
likely	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unlikely
unhappy	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	happy
stable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	unstable
cold	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	warm
probable	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	improbable
weak	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	strong
good	:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:	bad

Estimate the probability that this pair would become life-long friends. (From 0 to 100%)_____

What do you believe were the hypotheses of this study?

In rating each of the sixteen individuals, how much did the presence of the second individual affect your rating of the first?

Not at all :___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___:___: Very much so

Additional comments: