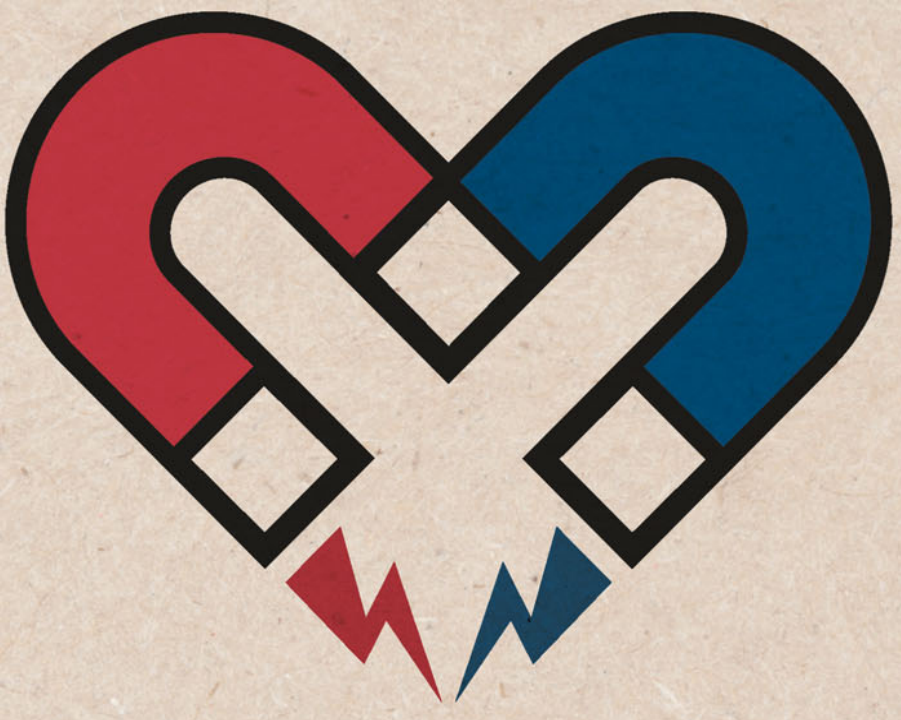

the Social Psychology *of* Attraction & Romantic Relationships

Madeleine A. Fugère
Jennifer P. Leszczynski
Alita J. Cousins

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For D. F. and R & R. Your daily love and support mean so much to me. Special thanks to Mom and Dad. M. A. F.

To my husband and children whose love and support inspire me every day. J. P. L.

To my children, who inspire me to write and provide me with many great stories. A. J. C.

Contents

Preface

Throughout my teaching career I have taught countless sections of Social Psychology. Throughout the course, I use so many examples related to human attraction and romantic relationships that the course could be subtitled "The Social Psychology of Attraction and Romantic Relationships." Over the past eight years I have also been fortunate to teach a variety of first-year, upper-level, and honors seminars on attraction and romantic relationships. When planning my first attraction course, my colleagues Alita Cousins and Jennifer Leszczynski (both professors of Social Psychology and experts in evolutionary theory and gender research, respectively), and I attended a faculty meeting. At this meeting we discussed my new attraction course and also discussed the possibility of writing a book on the Social Psychology of "Dating and Mating." Eight years later, we have written that book for readers interested in learning how social psychological theory and research apply to attraction and romantic relationships.

The purpose of this book is to synthesize the social psychological theory, research, and concepts that can be applied to attraction and romantic relationships. Principal themes of the current book include first impressions of physical and non-physical characteristics, attitude formation and attitude change, perceptions of the self and others, attraction research, relationship research, love, sex, evolutionary theory, and gender. In each of these areas, we discuss the research related to each domain and provide examples from the media and/or from real life to illustrate the concepts.

My interest in Social Psychology began when I took my first Social Psychology class with my favorite professor, Dr Susan Rakowitz, at Fairfield University. Dr Rakowitz was also the first to apply Social Psychology to "dating and mating" for me. In one of our in-class exams, she posited the following question (which I had the good fortune to find in an instructor's manual she authored), "Imagine that you are a fairly boring person. Somehow you manage to get someone to invite you out for dinner. According to cognitive dissonance theory, which would improve your chances of having a second date – getting your date to pay for a really expensive meal at a fancy French restaurant, or a cheap one at the local burger joint?" (Rakowitz, 1995, p. 204). I was hooked! In fact, I still use this question to begin discussion on the first day of my Social Psychology classes.

In preparing to write this book, I perused my favorite Social Psychology textbook (Kassin et al., 2011) and then researched all of the theories, research, and concepts that I illustrate using examples related to attraction and romantic

relationships. That initial research led to a deluge of supporting research articles. (Every time I read an article I find at least three more articles I want to read!) I have compiled summaries of the most interesting and relevant research and how it can be applied to the realms of human attraction and romantic relationships. In some cases, I present more comprehensive detail about a particular study. Look for these more detailed summaries in the sections labeled "What the research says." These sections are intended to aid the reader in critically evaluating the research by reviewing both what the research *does* say and what it *doesn't* say. Throughout the book you will see that the results of research can change depending upon factors such as demographic variables (e.g. the age, gender, ethnicity or cultural background of the participant or the target person), hormonal variations (e.g. which phase of the menstrual cycle a woman is in), chemical factors (e.g. whether the participants are exposed to certain chemical compounds), or methodological modifications (e.g. how the researchers manipulated the independent variable, how they measured the dependent variable), etc. Keep these factors in mind as you critically evaluate the research that is described in this book.

In many cases I have provided summaries of the earliest social psychological research. Although some of the original research is quite old, I felt it was important to reference the original research for several reasons. First, I am hoping that you will become interested in the research and choose to examine some primary sources on your own. The original research is often (but not always) shorter and easier to read than some more recent research. (At the end of each chapter I present some suggestions for further reading.) Second, the original research often addresses more global issues rather than the more molecular issues typical in more current studies. Throughout this book you will find a nice balance between classic and current social psychological research.

A few caveats: first, this book is by no means an exhaustive summary of all the research related to attraction and intimate relationships. There is more relevant research available for those who are interested in delving deeply into the topics presented in this book. It was freeing to us to not begin with the goal of presenting an exhaustive summary of this research, in that way we were able to organize the book on the basis of social psychological theory and research, as well as to focus on the research that was the most interesting to us and the research that we thought would be the most appealing to readers. For this reason in this book you will see a slightly stronger focus on attraction than on romantic relationships. Second, you will find that the majority of research cited within this book addresses heterosexual attraction and relationships. As reviewed by Kassin et al. (2011), much of the research investigating attraction and romantic relationships among gay men and lesbians shows similar processes to those which operate in heterosexual relationships. However, in the future, more research is needed to specifically address attraction and romantic relationships among gay and lesbian adults as well as those adults who identify with alternative sexual orientations. Third, this book does not contain dating or relationship advice and some of it is written with the intent to be humorous,

so please do not make any dating or relationship decisions based upon what you read in this book! Do feel free to interpret events in your dating life and relationships as consistent or inconsistent with the research reported in this book. Relating the theories and research to your own life is a great way to learn, understand, and apply the concepts.

Before you begin reading the content of this book, we should define a few of the terms that we use throughout the text. First, we talk a lot about "dating" and "mating." When we refer to dating, we usually mean the process through which potential romantic partners choose to get to know one another better and to court one another. When we refer to mating, we usually mean the process of choosing a "mate" or a partner, for either a long-term or short-term relationship. Although both dating and mating may involve the physical act of mating (i.e. sexual intercourse) when we discuss sexual relationships, we will refer to those specifically as such. Furthermore, the major emphases of this book are human attraction (although occasionally we review research related to other animals) and romantic relationships (although occasionally we present research related to friendships or other types of relationships as well).

In order to provide real-life examples of the social psychological phenomena we review in the text, you will find that my colleagues and I rely upon the experiences of our friends and relatives, and sometimes our own experiences as well. We refer to these anecdotes as "Personal moments" throughout the text. These anecdotes are not intended to be scientific evidence for a particular phenomenon; they are only intended to provide real-life illustrations of the theories and research presented in the book. I have found these anecdotes to be particularly helpful for my students in understanding, remembering, and applying the material. Similarly, we provide some media examples as well, referring to these as "Media moments" throughout the text. These anecdotes are also not intended to be evidence for these phenomena, merely illustrations presented in the media that are relevant to the particular theories and research. The real evidence of the phenomena described in this book is presented in the discussion of the empirical research cited throughout the book. Also, although I have presented the media portrayals faithfully, I have changed the names of my loved ones to protect those innocent friends and family members who have unwittingly appeared in this manuscript. (If you are a friend or relative of mine and you are reading this book, don't worry, if you don't like what you are reading, I'm not talking about you.) Dr Leszczynski is the primary author of the gender chapter and Dr Cousins is the primary author of the evolutionary theory chapter, therefore, all first person references in those chapters refer to the respective primary authors. Just to keep you on your toes, Dr Leszczynski and I co-wrote the chapter on sex and love. In that chapter we have indicated to whom the first person references refer.

Lastly, when presenting hypothetical examples or questions I often switch between the masculine pronoun (he) and the feminine pronoun (she) in order to avoid a gender bias and in order to avoid the grammatically incorrect "they" for the singular case.

I would like to thank my family, especially my amazing (and attractive, tall, slightly older, symmetrical, intelligent) husband, my mother, and my two wonderful boys. Without the support of my family I could never have accomplished the writing of this book. I would like to thank my father for all of his love, support, and encouragement throughout his lifetime; everyone should have a person like my father in their lives for unconditional love and support. I would like to thank my colleagues Alita Cousins and Jennifer Leszczynski for their invaluable contributions to the manuscript; my mentors Susan Rakowitz, Skip Lowe, and David Kenny for their inspiration in the classroom as well as their support and encouragement through the years hence; Eastern Connecticut State University for supporting this project through sabbatical leave as well as through research reassigned time; my research assistants (especially E.G. and J.P.). Most of all, I would like to thank Paul Stevens and Jenny Hindley for their interest in and support of this project. I couldn't and wouldn't have written this book without their support. In particular Paul's early feedback was essential to the development of this book.

By now I imagine you are dying to know the answer to the question about the restaurant and who should pay, so read on! And enjoy!

Part I
Attraction

Forming Attitudes toward Potential Partners: First Impressions of Physical Characteristics

1

First impressions

Imagine that you are ready to start dating (the process through which potential romantic partners get to know one another better) and/or mating (the process of choosing a "mate" or a partner, either for a long-term or short-term relationship). Where do you begin? When you meet a potential mate, you probably have an immediate reaction to that person, which we usually call a first impression. Much of social psychology is very intuitive and your intuition is probably correct on this topic; first impressions are very important.

Even though we can surmise that first impressions are important, a number of questions remain about the process. For example, how quickly do first impressions occur? Can you just look at a potential date and form an impression? Do you need to meet him in-person or will a photo suffice? Is physical attractiveness a necessity? Are first impressions accurate?

There are many ways to form first impressions, but there are a few commonalities across modalities. First, our impressions tend to form very quickly. Second, our impressions are often based on physical appearance, with some characteristics being more important than others. Third, our impressions tend to be fairly accurate, even when based upon very little information. In this chapter we discuss the research pertaining to first impressions of physical characteristics (for example, height, weight, and age). In Chapters 2 and 3, we discuss first impressions of non-physical characteristics (such as personality and behavior) as well as the importance of meeting in-person.

First impressions of physical appearance

A personal moment: A friend of mine, we'll call her Louise, is currently searching for a long-term mate. One day we talked about her experience with online dating. Louise recounts that on dating websites she can scroll through photographs of potential dates

as fast as her computer will display them. There is often very little information displayed in the initial profiles she encounters, just a photograph, possibly the age of her potential date, and an area in which he lives. As Finkel et al. (2012) review, more detailed information such as education, profession, and religion is accessible in the extended profile. Louise routinely scrolls through and quickly chooses or passes over potential dates based primarily on physical appearance, and sometimes only on facial appearance. Is choosing or foregoing a potential mate based on physical appearance a good strategy? Are we making good dating decisions? Or are we missing out on some wonderful people? It seems likely that we are doing a bit of both. But when making our mating decisions, we do not just aim to find *any* potential mate; we want to find the *best* possible mate. Physical appearance cues may be important when selecting the best possible mate. Below I review the research in this area which suggests that physical appearance may be a useful tool to use when looking for an ideal partner.

In this chapter we will consider various physical characteristics and how they impact our attraction to potential partners. If you were searching for a partner, which aspects of a potential partner's physical appearance would be most important to you? In evaluating a potential partner's physical characteristics, you can probably quickly and accurately ascertain information about that person's physical attractiveness, height, weight, age, and even voice and scent. These physical characteristics may serve as an important basis for our attraction to potential companions. Making mating decisions based upon these physical features may actually lead us to choose better partners. In this chapter, we explore the often-hidden benefits to mating with a physically attractive partner, from more pleasing personalities to more potent sperm.

Physical attractiveness

When you see a photograph of a potential mate, what kind of information do you glean from the physical appearance of the person in the photograph? One of the first things you might notice is whether you consider the target person to be physically attractive or not. When I sat down with my friend Louise to browse through photographs of potential dates, we were both strongly influenced by the physical attractiveness of the men pictured in the photographs. We would stop to view a profile in more detail if we considered the man to be "attractive" or "good looking."

Stereotypically, people assume that physical attractiveness is more important to men than women, and indeed, some research suggests that men more often state that physical attractiveness is important to them than do women (e.g., Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 2001; Feingold, 1990; Lippa, 2007; Smith et al., 1990). Evolutionarily, the physical appearance of a potential partner may be more important to men because attractiveness in a female partner may be more

strongly linked to reproductive ability than attractiveness in a male partner (Buss, 1989, see Chapter 4 for more information on evolutionary theory). Recent research investigating real-life and experimental preferences, however, suggests that physical attractiveness in a potential partner is equally important to both men and women (e.g., Eastwick et al., 2011; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Feingold, 1990; Luo & Zhang, 2009; Kurzban & Weeden, 2005; Sprecher, 1989; Thao et al., 2010; however, see also Li et al., 2013, as discussed in Chapter 4). Furthermore, research by Lenton and Francesconi (2010) suggests that when faced with a wide variety of potential partners (such as one might encounter on a dating website) both men and women are more likely to rely on physical attractiveness when making dating decisions.

The influence of physical attractiveness

Physical attractiveness is not perceived in isolation. When we perceive a potential partner as physically attractive, that might prompt other positive perceptions beyond perceptions of physical characteristics. In a classic study performed by Dion et al. (1972), the researchers manipulated the physical attractiveness of men and women presented in photographs. The researchers presented participants with photographs of attractive, average, and unattractive targets and asked the participants to rate the targets on a variety of traits. Consistent with the authors' expectations, they found that attractive targets were assumed to have more positive characteristics such as better personalities, better jobs, and more rewarding life experiences. Attractive targets were also expected to be happier. This tendency to expect positive qualities from attractive targets is equally evident in undergraduates from the United States and from Taiwan (Shaffer et al., 2000). Moreover, Zebrowitz et al. (2012) found these same expectations among Tsimané men living in an isolated area of Bolivia. This trend may be especially true for female perceivers: women who perceive male targets as physically attractive are more likely than their male counterparts to perceive other positive qualities in the target person (Levesque et al., 2006). So when we consider an attractive person as a potential date, we may be reacting favorably not only to his physical attractiveness, but also to the expectation that he may possess other positive qualities.

Dion et al. (1972) characterized their results as confirming the "what is beautiful is good" (p. 289) stereotype. A vast body of literature supports their findings (see Griffin & Langlois, 2006, for a review). Interestingly, Langlois et al. (2000) report that attractive individuals even rate *themselves* more favorably than unattractive individuals do. However, Griffin and Langlois question whether Dion et al.'s results actually indicate that those who are perceived as *attractive* are expected to have *positive* qualities or, rather, the results indicate that those who are perceived as *unattractive* are expected to have *negative* qualities. In Dion et al.'s research, unattractive targets were rated less favorably than their attractive and average counterparts in almost all categories. Indeed

both processes of choosing an attractive mate and avoiding an unattractive mate may help us to make better mating decisions.

What the research says

In Griffin and Langlois's (2006) research, the researchers manipulated the physical attractiveness of women presented in photographs (no photographs of men were presented in this study). Photographs of young adult Caucasian women were pretested and selected to represent highly attractive, moderately attractive, and unattractive women. These photographs were rated by both young adults (college students) and children (elementary school students, between the ages of seven and nine) from the United States. Although the adults performed their ratings via computer while the children performed theirs on paper, both the adults and children made negative ratings of the unattractive women on attributes such as sociable, helpful, and smart relative to the moderately attractive women. However, the moderately attractive and highly attractive women only differed on the attribute "sociable." Therefore, the physical attractiveness of women does seem to enhance perceptions of sociability, but not necessarily other positive attributes. These results suggest that rather than attractiveness being advantageous per se, it might be particularly *disadvantageous* to be unattractive. Because the targets featured in this research were limited to Caucasian women, the authors stress that future research assessing "perceptions of male and ethnically diverse faces is essential" (p. 202).

Think critically

Griffin and Langlois (2006) critically examined the notion that "what is beautiful is good." Instead the authors posited that unattractive stimulus persons might be expected to possess negative qualities. Their sample involved both college-aged students and young children as participants, suggesting that these effects occur in perceivers of different ages. Do you think the same results could be expected if the authors used older adults as participants? How do you think the results might differ if the authors tested their hypotheses with a sample of older adults? (Hint: look for research cited elsewhere in this manuscript to inform your opinion.)

Facial attractiveness

When Louise and I perused photographs of her potential dates, most photographs included facial appearance. Indeed it was extremely rare to encounter a photograph of a potential mate that did not include his face; however, it was common to encounter a photograph of a potential mate that did not include the rest of his body. Obviously, facial appearance is an important determinant of physical attractiveness, perhaps even more important than other physical characteristics. So what kind of information does facial appearance convey? And what types of facial features are considered attractive?

First, we will consider perceptions of women's faces. Perceptions of the youth and femininity of a female face are significantly positively correlated

with perceptions of women's attractiveness (Weeden & Sabini, 2005). In cross-cultural research assessing the preferences of participants from the United States, Brazil, Paraguay, Russia, and Venezuela, Jones and Hill (1993) found that across cultures men and women rated youthful, feminine women as more attractive. Similarly, in research assessing the preferences of respondents from the United Kingdom and Japan, Perrett et al. (1998) found that men and women from both cultures preferred more feminized female faces (both in Caucasian and Japanese target faces). Moreover, Cunningham et al., (1995) asked US and international students from both Western and Eastern societies to evaluate facial photographs of college-aged target women from the United States and other nations. These authors found that women's faces were rated as more attractive if they had "large eyes ... small noses ... smaller chins ... higher eyebrows ... larger smiles ... full hair" (p. 268).

Preferences for male faces are a little less straightforward. Cunningham et al. (1990) reported that men were perceived as more attractive when they had large eyes, a small nose, a large chin, prominent cheekbones, and a broad smile. However, some studies show a preference for femininity in a male face, whereas some studies show a preference for masculinity in a male face (see Weeden & Sabini, 2005). For example, the cross-cultural research performed by Perrett et al. (1998) referenced above revealed that men and women from both Eastern and Western cultures preferred more feminized male faces. According to the authors, the more masculinized faces were perceived as more dominant and older, but less warm, honest, and cooperative. (See Chapter 4 for a longer discussion of preferences for feminized male faces.)

Other studies show that women's preferences for male facial characteristics change based upon their menstrual cycle. For example, Johnston et al. (2001) asked women (at different times throughout their menstrual cycle) to scroll through a video segment which changed from a masculine-looking face to a feminine-looking face. These authors found that women tended to choose a more masculine-looking face as most attractive during the most fertile phase of their menstrual cycles. Little et al. (2008) corroborated this result with photographs of real men. Once again, women preferred images of more masculine men when their chances of conception were the greatest.

Despite the findings, discussed above, suggesting that perceptions of attractiveness are not always consistent, there is widespread agreement about physical attractiveness, both within cultures and across cultures. Cunningham et al. (1995) showed cross-cultural consistency regarding perceptions of the attractiveness of women. The researchers asked US and international students to evaluate facial photographs of target women, some of whom had been involved in an "international beauty contest and, as such, had been selected by members of their own culture as being attractive" (p. 265). The results showed that regardless of the ethnic background of the participants or the targets, the raters tended to agree about the attractiveness of the female faces. Jones and Hill (1993) also found significant

agreement across cultures in perceptions of attractiveness based upon facial photographs of men and women. Similarly, in a meta-analysis conducted by Langlois et al. (2000), these authors reported a great deal of agreement both within cultures, across ethnic backgrounds, and across cultures with regard to perceptions of physical attractiveness.

Preferences for attractive faces persist across the lifespan. In an intriguing study, Langlois et al. (1991) found that six-month-old infants from the United States preferred to look at photographs depicting attractive faces (versus unattractive faces) belonging both to other babies and to adults. Moreover, Zebrowitz et al. (2013) found that while older adults and undergraduates tended to agree with one another in their impressions based upon facial photographs, older adults generally rated the stimulus persons even more positively than did their younger counterparts.

Symmetry

In addition to facial attractiveness, photographs can reveal information about facial symmetry. Although people tend to prefer facial symmetry (the left and right sides of the face match one another) to asymmetry, this preference is not usually a conscious one. (I have never heard Louise mention that she is looking for a partner whose left and right sides of the face are identical.) Yet, facial symmetry does influence our perceptions of physical attractiveness; participants prefer both male and female faces that are more symmetrical (see Weeden & Sabini, 2005 for a review). For example, Japanese participants preferred modified symmetrical faces to naturally unsymmetrical faces (Rhodes et al., 2001). Similarly, Càrdenas and Harris (2006) found that men and women both preferred symmetrically manipulated faces to asymmetrical natural faces. Remarkably, Càrdenas and Harris also found that faces painted with symmetrical designs were judged as more attractive than faces painted with asymmetrical designs. Why is symmetry so attractive?

Perilloux et al. (2010) discuss the reasons why symmetry strongly influences attraction. The authors state that "most organisms are genetically programmed to develop identically on the right and the left. Thus, deviation from perfect bilateral symmetry is believed to reflect the degree to which an individual's genotype is unsuccessful at buffering it from the developmental assaults of parasites, pathogens, and other environmental stressors" (p. 34). The ability to withstand these environmental insults indicates better genetic quality. Not surprisingly, more symmetrical humans are also generally healthier, live longer, and are more intelligent (Perilloux et al.). In fact, Luxen and Buunk (2006) estimated that 20% of the variation in intelligence could be explained by symmetry (with the relationship between the two variables slightly stronger in men than women).

Likewise, Manning (1995) also suggests that facial symmetry may be attractive because it indicates that a target possesses "good genes." Manning found that symmetry in men (assessed in a variety of ways including symmetry of ear height) was positively related to body weight and size, suggesting a link

between male symmetry and height. Manning states that "male body weight is condition-dependent in that it is only individuals with the best genes who are able to develop and maintain large size" (p. 145). Moreover, Manning also found that symmetry in women was negatively related to body weight. Therefore facial symmetry can signal not only that a partner is healthy but also that future offspring might be healthier as well if we choose symmetrical partners as mates.

Averageness

Another facial feature that can enhance perceptions of attractiveness is "averageness." This possibility sounds counter-intuitive; when we think of attractive exemplars (such as celebrities), we rarely think that those exemplars are average. However, like facial symmetry, the preference for averageness is another unconscious preference which may steer us toward better partners. Average faces are preferred by members of both Western and Eastern cultures. For example, Rhodes et al. (2001) showed a preference for average faces in Chinese and Japanese participants. The researchers manipulated photographs via computer to make them look more or less like an averaged composite face. Making the photographs look more average increased their attractiveness to both Chinese and Japanese participants, while decreasing their averageness decreased their attractiveness. Photographs of real faces with closer to average proportions are rated as more physically attractive by members of different cultures as well (Jones & Hill, 1993). Less distinctive faces are consistently perceived as more attractive, whether they are computer-generated or naturally occurring (Rhodes, 2006).

As with symmetry, averageness may also be a cue to a healthy mate. Rhodes (2006) states that average or typical faces may be seen as more attractive because they may signal good genes or optimal functioning (e.g., the author states that an "average" nose may be optimally shaped for breathing). Similar to the benefit of symmetry discussed above, Rhodes posits that average features may reflect the "ability to withstand stress during development" (p. 203). Rhodes et al. (2005) suggest that average faces may also be perceived as more symmetrical, youthful, and pleasant, thus explaining our attraction to them. Surprisingly, Halberstadt and Rhodes (2000, 2003) showed that averaged dogs, wristwatches, birds, fish, and automobiles were also rated as more attractive than individual stimuli. (I am assuming that at least the wristwatches and automobiles were not rated more favorably because they make better mates.) Rhodes et al. (2005) suggest that averaged stimuli may be seen as more attractive because they are also perceived as more familiar. (As we will discuss in Chapter 5, increased familiarity is associated with liking.)

Health

Both the research regarding symmetry and the research regarding averageness reviewed above suggest that facial attractiveness may be linked to good health.

Weeden and Sabini (2005) state that individuals tend to assume that both men and women with attractive facial features are healthier. However, according to these authors, the actual relationship between facial attractiveness and health is very small for women and not reliable at all for men. Interestingly, although men's facial attractiveness may not be related to their overall health, Weeden and Sabini review research by Soler et al. (2003) which suggests that ratings of male facial attractiveness are correlated with semen quality; more attractive men had sperm which were more likely to be able to fertilize an egg. (It is a little unsettling to think that Louise could be sorting through photographs of potential mates based upon facial attractiveness and what is really underlying her judgments may be whether the men have good sperm quality. I have decided not to share this bit of research with Louise; I do not want to distract her while she is perusing photographs of attractive men.)

Height

Height may be an important influence on initial human attraction, especially for potential male partners. Height may serve to indicate that men possess good genes, and tall men may be perceived as more physically dominant (Buunk et al., 2008). Interestingly, in most birds and mammals, the male mates are larger than the female mates as well, possibly due to females choosing to mate with larger males or due to males competing for access to females, with the larger males more likely to triumph (Stulp et al., 2012).

What the research says

In their research, Stulp et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between men's height and reproductive success (as measured by their total number of children as well as the number of children living to reproductive age). Their sample consisted of men over the age of 64 from the United States. These authors found a curvilinear relationship between height and number of surviving children. Men of average height (in this study, 179.21 cm or roughly 5 feet, 10½ inches tall) tended to have the most surviving children relative to both shorter and taller men. Stulp et al. also found that taller men tended to earn more money and attain a higher educational level (although the authors do acknowledge that their sample was collected from a population of high school graduates, and therefore biased toward a more educated sample). Moreover, although for this sample the effect of height was not as strong as the effect of income or education, the authors emphasized that the effects of education and income were not strong enough to make up for being too short or too tall in terms of reproductive success. Another important finding was that men of average height tended to marry at a younger age, potentially explaining that they might have more children because they began their reproductive "careers" earlier.

Think critically

Stulp et al. (2012) examined the relationship between height and reproductive success, as measured by the men's total number of children. Do you think that this is the best way to operationally define "reproductive success?" What are some problems with using the number of children as a measure of reproductive success? In what other ways could reproductive success be measured (for example: number of sexual partners)? Are there problems with the alternative measures as well?

Consistent with the research presented above, Kurzban and Weeden (2005) found that men who were taller were chosen more often as a potential future dating partner at a speed-dating event. (In accordance with previous research, another important predictor of men's dating desirability in Kurzban and Weeden's research was facial attractiveness.) Similarly, Pawlowski and Koziel (2002) found that men who were taller received more responses to their personal ads placed in a newspaper relative to men who were shorter. (Interestingly, the factor leading to the highest increase in responses to men's ads was education, with more highly educated men receiving more responses to their ads.) Likewise, Salska et al. (2008) analyzed height information as well as height preferences provided by individuals using an online dating site. These authors found that women preferred men who were taller than average.

Another potential advantage to height for men might be decreased jealousy. Buunk et al. (2008) found that taller men were less jealous. These authors suggested that because taller men are often perceived as more physically attractive, their partners might be less likely to cheat, thus reducing tall men's feelings of jealousy. Alternatively, the authors suggested that because taller men are also perceived as more physically dominant, these men may be more intimidating to potential male rivals, thus also reducing tall men's feelings of jealousy. Jealousy has been linked to partner violence (e.g., Kaighobadi et al., 2009, see Chapter 4) and thus avoiding a jealous partner may be particularly beneficial to women.

Relative partner height

Think about a few heterosexual couples you know. In each couple, who is the taller partner, the man or the woman? Do you know any couples in which the woman is the taller partner? Relative partner height can be another important influence on our mate preferences. Most research shows that men and women prefer romantic partnerships in which the man is taller and the woman is shorter (e.g., Re & Perrett, 2012; Salska et al., 2008). According to Re and Perrett, the preference for a taller male partner is clear (although women do not necessarily prefer an *extremely* tall partner), but the association between height and attraction for a female partner is less clear. Some men prefer shorter

partners, some men prefer women of average height, and some men prefer taller partners (relative to other women, not relative to themselves). One exception to this tenet involves shorter men, who may be willing to consider women taller than themselves as partners in order to increase their overall pool of potential partners (Salska et al., 2008).

As one might expect, preference for a partner's height is related to one's own height (Fink et al.,2007; Mautz et al., 2013; Pawlowski and Jasienska, 2005) with shorter women preferring a relatively larger difference between her own height and her male mate's height, and taller women preferring only a slightly taller male mate. Evidence for this effect was found in four different Western countries (Poland, Germany, Austria, and the United Kingdom). Interestingly, according to Pawlowski and Jasienska, a woman's preference for height also varies along with her menstrual cycle. These authors found that taller men were preferred when women were more fertile. Women's preferences also varied by the type of relationship they were asked to consider. Women were more likely to prefer taller mates for a short-term relationship than for a long-term relationship (Pawlowski & Jasienska, 2005).

Weight

Weight may be another important determinant of the physical attractiveness of a potential partner. Most of the research in this area focuses on women's weight, and more specifically, women's Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), although a few studies have investigated perceptions of men's bodies (e.g., Swami et al., 2007; Swami & Tovée, 2008). Body Mass Index refers to a measure of body fat and can be calculated in different ways, but a simple method for calculating BMI is to divide weight in kilograms by height in meters squared (Carmalt et al., 2008). To measure waist-to-hip ratio, measure the circumference of the waist and divide by the circumference of the hips (Furnham et al., 2005). Body weight may impact our perceptions of women's physical attractiveness because both BMI and WHR are related to women's health and fertility (Perilloux et al., 2010; Singh et al., 2010).

Much of the research on body weight reveals that individuals prefer mates with average weight. For example, Yanover and Thompson (2010) asked undergraduates from North America to rate the perceived health and attractiveness of drawings of both male and female body figures. This research revealed that for both male and female figures, individuals of average weight (compared with underweight and overweight) were perceived as the most attractive and healthy. Interestingly, these authors found that heavier, more muscular individuals were rated as more attractive and healthy as well. Paying attention to physical cues such as weight and muscularity may help us to identify a strong and healthy mate.

Perceptions of women's body size and shape

In their research investigating men's ratings of women's bodies, Furnham et al. (2005) manipulated drawings of female figures which varied in BMI and WHR simultaneously. These authors discovered that the female figure of average weight (rather than underweight or overweight) with a waist-to-hip ratio of 0.7 was considered most attractive and healthy by a sample of undergraduate men and women from the United Kingdom. (Other research also suggests that a WHR of 0.7 is rated as the most attractive, both by men, Dixson et al., 2011, and women, Cohen & Tannenbaum, 2001). Furnham et al. also reported that BMI was perceived as a stronger indicator of health and fertility than WHR.

Consistent with these findings based on drawings of hypothetical female figures, Kurzban and Weeden (2005) found that thin women with a lower BMI were rated as more desirable by their male counterparts at a speed-dating event. Correspondingly, women with a higher BMI as well as overweight and underweight men were less discriminating (more willing to say yes to potential dates) than their counterparts at a speed-dating event (Kurzban & Weeden). Moreover, Smith et al. (1990) found that men were more likely to request that thin or slim women respond to their personal ads. Body weight may therefore be a more important determinant of men's interest in women than women's interest in men.

Swami and more than 50 colleagues (2010) collected data regarding men's and women's perceptions of the ideal female body weight from individuals living in 26 different countries and 10 different global regions. The participants included more than 7,000 college students as well as non-student community members. In this research, although both men and women participated, men were asked to choose the drawing of the female figure that they found most attractive, and women were asked to choose the drawing they thought would be most attractive to men. The authors suggested that the current "ideal" body size for women is thin and possibly even underweight, especially in more socioeconomically developed nations. However, across cultures, men preferred a figure displaying a heavier body weight than women *thought* men would prefer.

Interestingly, Swami et al. (2010) also found the largest effects of body weight on perceptions of physical attractiveness within countries with both high and low socioeconomic status locations. The authors noted that in the more impoverished areas, both men and women seemed to prefer heavier body sizes, "possibly because of the association between body fat and resource security" (p. 319). Consistent with these results, Swami et al. (2011) found that men from a poorer socioeconomic environment in Indonesia (Lombok) preferred a heavier female figure than did men from a more affluent area in Indonesia (Bali) and men from the United Kingdom. Residents of Lombok also considered a larger range of body figures as attractive versus their more affluent counterparts. Perceptions of the ideal female body weight or shape may change not only with culture, but with socioeconomic status, with women of larger body sizes preferred in less affluent areas.

Perceptions of men's body size and shape

Although men's weight and body shape may not be as important a determinant of physical attractiveness as women's (see Kurzban & Weeden, 2005), Swami et al. (2007) investigated women's ratings of men's physical attractiveness in a cross-cultural study involving participants from Greece and the United Kingdom. The women were asked to rate a series of photographs depicting real men wearing form-fitting clothing and varying in waist-to-chest ratio (WCR) as well as BMI and WHR. In this research the faces of the men were obscured in order to isolate the effects of body size and proportion and to eliminate the potential confound of facial attractiveness. The authors stated that WCR was the strongest determinant of physical attractiveness ratings for both the Greek and the British samples. BMI was also significantly related to ratings of physical attractiveness, but less so than WCR, indicating that "men's upper-body shapes are more important for male attractiveness to women than overall body masses" (p. 23). Waist-to-hip ratio was not a significant predictor of women's ratings of men's physical attractiveness. The authors also specified that the Greek women seemed to find a more V-shaped torso (lower WCR) as more attractive than did their British counterparts while simultaneously preferring a slightly lower BMI than did their British counterparts. (The authors note the limitation that the men pictured in the stimulus images came from the United Kingdom and thus may not represent the body sizes of Greek men as well as they represented British men.)

Waist-to-chest ratio may be an important factor in men's physical attractiveness because it may signal increased physical strength, dominance, masculinity, or even heightened testosterone levels (Swami et al., 2007). Although waist-to-chest ratio may be one influence on women's perceptions of men's physical attractiveness, it does not appear to be as strong an influence as women's waist-to-hip ratio or BMI is for men's perceptions of the physical attractiveness of women.

Gay men's and lesbians' preferences for body size and shape

A personal moment: When I was in college one of my friend's boyfriends, Kyle, began seriously body-building. He became very muscular and he occasionally participated in body-building competitions. As a result of one of these competitions, he was invited to model for the magazine *Muscle Fitness*. While in the airport waiting for an international flight, I found the magazine with Kyle's layout. I purchased the magazine and talked with Kyle about it after I returned to the United States. Kyle told me that the magazine was targeted toward gay men, who tended to prefer more muscular men. Years later I found out that Kyle's assertion was supported by research (see below).

Swami and Tovée (2008) investigated the weight and waist-to-chest ratio preferences among gay and heterosexual men (in this study, the preferences of men indicating a bisexual orientation were not analyzed). Most of the men

involved in this project were Caucasian university students from the United Kingdom. The men evaluated photographs of real men varying in WCR as well as BMI. Although BMI was significantly related to men's ratings of the physical attractiveness of male targets, the data revealed that WCR was the most important predictor of the physical attractiveness ratings. Furthermore, the data also suggested that gay men prefer a lower WCR than their heterosexual counterparts, indicating that gay men's perceptions of physical attractiveness are more strongly influenced by a muscular upper-body.

Cohen and Tannenbaum (2001) explored perceptions of attractiveness for female figures varying in weight and waist-to-hip ratio among both lesbian and bisexual women. Respondents to this online survey were asked to rate drawings of the female figure for their physical attractiveness as well as other factors. These authors found that although lesbian and bisexual women tended to prefer the WHR of 0.7 as most attractive (similar to the findings discussed above for men and women whose sexual orientation was not specified; see Furnham et al., 2005), these women tended to rate the heavier figure (rather than the slender figure) as more attractive. Cohen and Tannenbaum posit that lesbians may prefer a heavier body weight because they themselves tend to be heavier than their heterosexual counterparts, thus preferring a partner resembling their own body weight. Alternatively, the authors suggest that lesbians may be more comfortable (or less dissatisfied) with a heavier body weight than heterosexual women.

Similarity of weight

Similar to the results with regard to height discussed above, preference for weight in a partner may be related to one's own weight; however, the results in this literature are mixed. For example, Swami et al. (2010) found a positive correlation between men's BMI and the body size they chose as most attractive; men with a higher BMI also preferred figures portraying a heavier female body weight. However, Kurzban and Weeden (2005) found that men preferred women with a dissimilar BMI to their own at a speed-dating event. Future research will be necessary to determine the strength and relationship of one's own body weight to an ideal partner's body weight. Future research should also examine whether this relationship changes across cultures or with variations in socioeconomic status.

Breast size and penis size

Breast size may be a relatively observable feature, whether conveyed through photographs or through an in-person meeting. In fact, in research recording men's eye movements, Dixson et al. (2011) found that men were more likely to look at a woman's breasts or waist first and spent more time looking at