

"The Effects of Appearance on Assistance at a University Setting"
An Experimental Study

NAME REMOVED TO PRESERVE ANONIMITY

Kyle W. McGregor 12/18/06 2:23 AM

Comment: Nice Title!

Introduction:

It seems that everyone wants to assume that if someone is in need of assistance that others will help regardless. This statement may not be completely true. There has been a rapidly increasing body of literature that indicates that physical attractiveness cues generate specific evaluations and impressions that could have an effect on if or how much help they might receive when in need (Benson, Karabenick, & Lerner, 1976). However, research on physical attractiveness and helping behavior has not clearly answered the question of whether attractiveness influences assistance (Wilson 1978). Hartz (1996) defines attractive characteristics as those that make one person appear pleasing to another. They include, but are not limited to, physical appearance. He goes on by saying that "the weight that society gives to each of the many characteristics that potentially contribute to attractiveness has profound implications for functioning of society" (Hartz 1996). All of this has alluded to the onset of this project to try to answer that question at Tarleton State University.

- **Introduction:** A
- **Hypothesis:** B
- **Methodology:** A-
- **Results:** B-
- **Discussion:** A+
- **Quality of Writing:** A

Overall Grade: 92%

Purpose:

The purpose of this study will be to determine if appearance has an affect on the number of people that will assist an individual at Tarleton State University.

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Comment: Nice Introduction!

Hypothesis:

There will be no significant difference between the number of people who help a girl who is dressed up compared the same girl who is dressed down at Tarleton State University.

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Comment: Not stated 100% correct.

Methodology:

The selected population for this project consisted of students, faculty, staff, and visitors at Tarleton State University on (Day 1) Tuesday November 21st from 9:30am to 12:15pm and (Day 2) Wednesday November 22nd from 9:30am to 12:15pm. A posttest-only control group design was used. Participants were assigned randomly exposed to one of two treatments. The first treatment (T1) was the girl dressed down and the second treatment (T2) was the girl dressed up. Treatment one was conducted on day one and treatment two was conducted on day two of the experimental study.

The research group was the A ED 598 graduate research class at Tarleton. A female was selected from the class using a panel of experts within the department. Her purpose was to carry out the two treatments of appearance which was the independent variable of the study. Next the researchers surveyed to campus for the high traffic areas during the time slots on day one and day two. Nine areas across campus were designated for the treatments to take place. To fulfill the need for assistance to those surrounding her she carried books and

common student paraphernalia that she casually dropped at each point to see how many of them would come to her assistance. At each point various researchers from the class were staged to evaluate the number of people in the 20 foot area of where she dropped the books. The number of those who stopped to assist her was the dependant variable.

The researches put much thought and caution into eliminating as many extraneous variables as possible. An effort was made to ensure that she carried and dropped the same items each day. Also the drop points were strategically selected to ensure that there were no repeat participants. For the same reason we spread the experiment over two days time due to the fact that the students have different class schedules on Tuesday than Wednesday.

To more clearly specify the two treatments the following is a more detailed description of the dress of the girl. Treatment one on day one the girl was dressed down wearing a loose fitting, mild colored sweat shirt and baggy sweat pants, no make-up, un-groomed hair, and no jewelry. Treatment two on day two the girl was dressed up in very classy, stylish feminine clothes that were form fitting, jewelry, make-up, and hair styled. To ensure that there was a clear significant difference between the two treatments a baseline survey was created and administered to random subjects that tested the perceived appearance of girl. They were allowed five seconds to observe the girl and then asked to fill out the questionnaire. Also note that different subjects were selected to observe each treatment.

On day two after the collection of all data (experimental and baseline) the researchers determined that an independent sample T-test would be an appropriate way to analyze the results. The T-test makes adjustments for small samples because distributions for smaller samples have a tendency to be higher. For that reason this test catered well to this experiment.

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Comment: A few small details missing, but a very nice methodology!

Results:

The results of the baseline data showed that solid trends of significant difference between treatment one and treatment two. This supports that idea that there was a clear difference in appearance, in the manner that the researchers wanted to accomplish.

Table #1: Baseline Data (Survey)

| Characteristics | Sig. |
|--------------------|------|
| Make-Up | .00 |
| Hair | .00 |
| Clothing | .00 |
| Body Type | .414 |
| Overall Appearance | .00 |

There was a significant difference on four of the five characteristics when comparing the two treatments. The data indicates that there is less than a 41.4% possibility that this happened by chance. The only characteristic where there was no significant difference was body type which was also good news because

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Comment: Not accurate.

the researcher did not attempt to change this characteristic, which also supports the validity of the survey. The key characteristic to this data was the overall appearance which did show significance based on the independent T-test statistical data analysis.

However, the results of the experimental data from the two treatments were different.

Table #2: Experimental Data (Number Helped)

| Treatment Group | Mean | Sig. |
|-----------------|------|-------|
| 1-Day One | 2.22 | 0.972 |
| 2-Day Two | 2.11 | 0.782 |

The difference in the means between the two treatments was only .11. This obviously meant that there was no significant difference in the number of people who assisted when comparing the two treatments of being dressed down and dressed up.

Discussion:

Once again the purpose of this study was to determine if appearance had an effect on being helped at the Tarleton State University Campus. The data clearly supported the researcher's hypothesis that appearance had no significant effect. Though this does not support many of the findings of previous research mentioned in the mind of the researcher this is an impressive finding at Tarleton. This finding supports that idea that people at this institution are willing to be helpful regardless of appearance. Even so, the reader should be cautioned because the results of this experiment pertain to this specific location and only involve the students, faculty, staff, and visitors on Tuesday and Wednesday, November 22 and 23 2006 from 9:30am to 12:15pm. Perhaps further research should be conducted at other higher education institutions and conducted over a longer period of time. Further more including the opposite sex could also bring a new outlook on this investigation. The researcher would like to close by thanking the faculty in the College of Agriculture for their cooperation and insight in conducting this research.

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Comment: AWESOME!

Works Cited:

Benson, P. L., Karabenick, S. A., & Lerner, R. M. (1976). Pretty pleases: The effects of physical attractiveness, race and sex on receiving help. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 12, 409-415.

Wilson, D. W. (1978). Helping behavior and physical attractiveness. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 104, 313-314.

Hartz A. J. (1996). Psych-Sociomics: Attractiveness Research from a Societal Perspective. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 11.4, 683-694.

