
The Power and Paradox of Physical Attractiveness

Gordon L. Patzer, Ph.D.

BrownWalker Press
Boca Raton • 2006

The Power and Paradox of Physical Attractiveness

Copyright © 2006 Gordon L. Patzer
All rights reserved.

BrownWalker Press
Boca Raton, Florida
USA • 2006

ISBN: 1-58112-443-0 (paperback)
ISBN: 1-58112-444-9 (ebook)

BrownWalker.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Patzer, Gordon L.

The power and paradox of physical attractiveness / Gordon L. Patzer.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-58112-443-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Interpersonal attraction. I. Title.

HM1151.P38 2006

302'.13--dc22

2006008534

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xiii
Preface	xv
Chapter 1 Far Beyond First Impressions	17
Introduction.....	17
Progression	20
Interpretations	25
Race.....	26
Gender.....	28
Age in the Twenty-First Century	29
Medical Professionals and Industries.....	33
Understated Uneasiness	36
Going Forward	41
No Age Spared	43
Mass Media Communications	44
Taking Actions.....	46
Summary.....	50
Chapter 2 Research Community	53
Introduction.....	53
Scientific Research	54
Longitudinal Expedition.....	56
Present Circumstances	60
Focus with Definitions.....	61
Appearance	61
Appearance Phenomenon.....	62
Physical Attractiveness.....	62
Physical Attractiveness Phenomenon.....	62
A Posteriori Conclusions.....	63
Inherited	63
Developed	64
Universal Phenomenon, Universal Values.....	66

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Circular Four-Stage Process	70
Theoretical Underpinning	72
Progression of the Research Field	74
Broader Research Framework	74
Beyond Usual Boundaries	77
Increasing Relevance	83
Summary	84
Chapter 3 Measurements and Determinants	85
Introduction	85
Measurements	86
Elusiveness	87
History	87
Eyes of Beholders	88
Measure Qualification	91
Self-Measures versus Measures by Others	93
Determinants	97
Permanency, Impermanency	98
Characteristics	101
Separate from Person Judged	105
Hierarchical Ordering, Body and Face	108
Complete Person Research	110
Summary	110
Chapter 4 Body Parts	113
Introduction	113
Component Dimensions	115
Body Size, Body Build	117
Adornments, Appendages	118
Height	119
Status	121
Prejudice	122
Adjustments	123
Perceptions, Attributions, Political Examples	124
Preferences for Height	126
Female Breasts	128
Face as Body Component	134
Hierarchy of Importance	137
Summary	139
Chapter 5 Face Values	141
Introduction	141

TABLE OF CONTENTS

History	142
Future	144
Uniqueness.....	146
Face-Specific Research	147
Beyond Adults	148
Recognition and Memory.....	150
Determinants	151
Tangential Face Components.....	157
Micro Face Components.....	159
Viewer's Biology	161
Research Methodology.....	164
Hierarchy of Importance.....	165
Narrative Descriptions	167
Summary.....	169
Chapter 6 Interactions: Strangers and Friends	171
Introduction.....	171
Cognitive Context	172
Contemporaneous Association.....	174
Earlier Context Exposure	174
Concurrent Context Exposure	175
Recurring Context Exposures	175
Pollution.....	176
Music.....	176
Time	177
People in Our Lives	178
Assumptions, Expectations, Attributions	178
Strangers.....	182
Friends.....	187
Persuasive Communication	190
Need.....	191
Primary Components	192
Summary.....	196
Chapter 7 Meeting-Dating-Mating	197
Introduction.....	197
Universal Exchange Currency	198
Equality of Genders	199
Finances, Status, Physical Attractiveness	200
Learned Behavior.....	203
Explanation via Theory.....	204
Context.....	204

TABLE OF CONTENTS

First Stage: Prior To, and At, First Meeting.....	209
Preferences and Desires	209
Matches and Mis-Matches.....	210
Second Stage: Getting Acquainted and Dating	215
Convergence of Data	215
Imbalanced Partners	216
Endings	217
Varying Interactions.....	218
Third Stage: Long-Term Spousal Partner Commitment.....	219
Satisfaction Spanning the Years.....	220
Satisfaction Spanning the Ages.....	221
Matching Hypothesis	222
Endings	224
Summary.....	225
Chapter 8 Today's Generations Tomorrow.....	227
Introduction.....	227
Actual Difference.....	228
Perceived Difference.....	229
Infants and Preschoolers	230
SchoolChildren	232
Preschool.....	232
Beyond Preschool	233
Reversing Directions	235
Elementary Students	235
University Students	236
Teachers.....	238
Student Teachers	239
Experienced Teachers	239
Ethnocentricity	242
Misbehavior	243
Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.....	244
Contrasting Environments	245
Expectations by Teachers	246
Positive Linearity	247
Immediate Display	248
Summary.....	250
Chapter 9 Future Trajectory.....	253
Introduction.....	253
Impact Lifelong.....	256
Technology and Biology, Surgeries and Non-Surgeries	256

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Psychology and Sociology	261
Impact Before and After Lifelong	263
Before Birth, Before Conception	263
Into Death	265
Life and Death	267
Cross-Culturally, Globally	270
Determinants	271
Ability Enhanced	273
Strangers Interacting	273
Legal Proceedings	274
Friends and Strangers	276
Meeting-Dating-Mating	276
Intrapersonal Reality	277
Formal Resistance	277
Legal Options	278
Support Options	280
Advocacy and Assistance	281
Merging the Current into the Future	283
Conclusion	287
References	289
Glossary	319
Index	327
About the Author	331

List of Tables

Table 1-1. Percentage of Men in the United States and Fourteen Other Countries Stating Whom They Would Like Most to Sit Beside on a Long Flight.....	28
Table 1-2. Percentage of Men and Women in Eighteen Countries Rating Specific Attributes as Most Seductive.....	35
Table 2-1. Self-Rating of Importance of Physical Attractiveness, Five Scale Statements.....	67
Table 2-2. Self-Rating of Physical Attractiveness, Six Scale Statements.....	67
Table 2-3. Statements Indicating Importance of Physical Attractiveness Phenomenon for Products and Business Strategies.....	79
Table 2-4. Appearance Dissatisfaction Expressed by Men and Women: Percentage Comparison Data Collected 25 Years Apart.....	84
Table 3-1. Mean Values for Physical Attractiveness Ratings Comparing Three Types of Measures/Ratings: Strangers, Self, and Spouse.....	97
Table 3-2. Determinants of Physical Attractiveness, Representative Sampling Overview of a Person in Total.....	104
Table 3-3. Determinants of Physical Attractiveness, Representative Sampling Overview of Body Components of a Person.....	105
Table 3-4. Determinants Cited Most Significant for Physical Attractiveness, Late-1970s/Early-1980s.....	109
Table 4-1. Agreement of Ratings from Cross-Cultural Judges Concerning Physical Attractiveness of Face, Front of Body, and Back of Body of Stimulus Persons.....	114
Table 4-2. Percentage of Men in the United States and Fourteen Other Countries Stating Their Body Part They Would Like Most to Be Perfect.....	117
Table 4-3. Factor Analysis Results for Importance of Body Components Using Others-Evaluation Data for Male and Female Gender Dyads.....	131
Table 4-4. Factor Analysis Results for Importance of Face Components using Others-Evaluation Data for Male and Female Gender Dyads.....	136
Table 4-5. Determinants of Physical Attractiveness: Rankings of Relative Importance of Body Components.....	139
Table 5-1. Neuroscience and Cognitive Neuroscience Research Pertinent to the Face, Titles of Illustrative Articles and Journals.....	146
Table 5-2. Determinants of Physical Attractiveness, Representative Sampling Overview of Face Components of a Person.....	152
Table 5-3. Permanent Static Components of the Face, Natural Changes.....	153
Table 5-4. Permanent Static Components of the Face, Unnatural Changes.....	153

Table 5-5. Face Physical Attractiveness as a Function of Early Mathematical Proportions.	155
Table 5-6. Descriptions of Face Components of Higher Physical Attractiveness, Research in 1970s and Prose in Medieval Times.....	160
Table 5-7. Faces of Morphed Stimulus Persons to Investigate Hormonal Theory of Physical Attractiveness.....	161
Table 5-8. Numerical Ranking of Relative Importance of Face Components Using Three Different Research Methodologies	166
Table 5-9. Narrative Descriptors of Face Components Rated Most Important to Determine Physical Attractiveness, Female Judges	168
Table 6-1. Impressions About Persons of Higher and Lower Physical Attractiveness Without Attention to Person's Physical Attractiveness	178
Table 7-1. Ratings by Females of Males and Females Paired with Opposite-Sex Partners of High and Low Physical Attractiveness.....	214

List of Figures

Figure 1-1. Circular Four-Stage Process of Physical Attractiveness Phenomenon	21
Figure 2-1. Physical Attractiveness Phenomenon Theory, Six Primary Stages	59
Figure 2-2. Hierarchical Pyramid Depiction of Maslow's Theory of Needs.....	73
Figure 3-1. Determinants of Physical Attractiveness, Characteristics	102
Figure 6-1. Persuasive Communication Effectiveness: Communicator Credibility Elements as a Function of Physical Attractiveness	194
Figure 6-2. Persuasive Communication Effectiveness: Belief and Tri-Component Attitude Elements as a Function of Physical Attractiveness.....	195

Preface

The Power and Paradox of Physical Attractiveness asserts that physical attractiveness is a phenomenon with far-reaching influences and contradictions. These influences and contradictions transcend surface looks whereupon physical attractiveness concurrently propels and connects to a phenomenal structure of hidden values. The phenomenon driven by physical attractiveness is universal and complex with undisclosed rules, which cause benefit for individuals whose appearance is higher in physical attractiveness and cause detriment for individuals whose appearance is lower in physical attractiveness. This book explores, discovers, and documents the theories, evidence, and circumstances in which physical attractiveness is a remarkable veneer with impacts that go considerably beyond skin-deep.

Physical attractiveness is both a power and a paradox. It triggers, exerts, and controls pervasive effects. These effects impact every individual throughout the person's life—from cradle (Oh, what a cute baby!) to casket (Doesn't he look good?) and everywhere in between. Despite the readily visible exterior of physical attractiveness, people seldom see, rarely recognize, and often deny its effects. Individuals of all ages, males and females, and ultimately entire populations, encounter realities that “beauty is ugly,” or, at least, “beauty can be ugly.”

The power and paradox of physical attractiveness are surprisingly consistent in every community across the United States and around the world. While many dimensions define appearance, physical attractiveness predominates. All people inherit and alter their physical attractiveness, comprised of a myriad of complex interdependent factors. The collective factors of physical attractiveness elicit or otherwise result in hidden values, orderings, dynamics, and consequences.

Out-of-sight is not out-of-mind for physical attractiveness. With vision more penetrating than generally employed, *The Power and Paradox of Physical Attractiveness* documents that despite professed ideals, people do judge people (as well as books) by their covers. One ramification is that physical attractiveness as part of a person's appearance is a more powerful determinant of a person's fortune and misfortune in life than people admit or realize. No matter the words, thoughts, and ideals proclaimed by overwhelming majorities of people, these same people judge, assume, infer, believe, act, treat, decide, accept, reject, and behave toward or against individuals in patterns consistent with a person's physical attractiveness, their own and that of others.

Physical attractiveness may look skin-deep as a surface aspect of appearance, but looks can be deceiving. Researchers from throughout the world collect empirical data complemented with anecdotal data to probe beyond the surfaces. Through investigations meeting meticulous scientific methodological procedures, acute observations reveal a deeper look at another side of physical attractiveness. It is a side ordered with rules leading to

significant benefits and detriments for every person caused by his or her respective level of physical attractiveness.

It is reasonable to identify the mid-1960s as the start of scientific research explicitly investigating physical attractiveness phenomenon. Probing researchers have since discovered a wealth of knowledge, as reported in thousands of directly and indirectly related reports published in scientific journals spanning wide-ranging disciplines. This collective research contains an impressive depth and breadth of investigations, robust research methodologies, and consistent discoveries about physical attractiveness. Continuing growth of this research embraces the previously unforeseen variables studied today and the investigations' robustness.

Pertinent research has grown to comprise robust scientific discovery and dissemination of knowledge about physical attractiveness in the lives of individuals and in the lives of groups of individuals. My perspective for this book has broadened accordingly, encompassing knowledge about new dimensions of physical attractiveness while reasserting the continuous significance of earlier research findings. Nearly thirty-five years ago, I began my investigations with formal scientific research and writings in exploration of hidden values of physical attractiveness. More than twenty years ago, in 1985, I published my first book on the subject, entitled *The Physical Attractiveness Phenomena* (New York: Plenum Press). More than ten years earlier, in 1973, I conducted my first documented scientific research project investigating physical attractiveness phenomenon.⁵²³

Permit me to mention here with humility, that Elliot Aronson served formally as the editor for my above book. As the publisher stated on the book cover, it was published by Plenum Press within its series titled, "Perspectives in Social Psychology, Edited by Elliot Aronson." Dr. Aronson, who holds his Ph.D. from Stanford University, is the only person ever to whom the American Psychological Association has awarded all three of its highest academic recognitions: distinguished writing, distinguished teaching, and distinguished research. The latter of these awards—Distinguished Scientific Contribution—is the highest recognition awarded to psychologists for a lifetime of research. Moreover, the American Psychological Association recognized Dr. Aronson in 2002 as "among the 100 most eminent psychologists of the 20th Century."⁶⁴⁸

A major reason for me to write this second book is that researchers across the United States and literally around the world have continued to conduct disciplined investigations into this topic. Greater data and findings than ever differentiate between what people know scientifically to be true and what people think, speculate, or hope to be true. Ongoing studies are continuously confirming and expanding earlier conclusions and inferences. Furthermore, populations worldwide, as well as in the United States, provide real-world confirmations to the scientifically collected empirical data. Thoughts and behaviors expressed by these populations match notably the revealing, often discomfoting, scientific research discoveries. Applicable manifestations within everyday life, combined with pertinent scientific findings, bring to light ever-expanding significance and understanding of physical attractiveness in the lives of all individuals, regardless where they might live or to where they might move. Accordingly, my anticipation of this book is that another look at earlier discovered premises, from the vantage point of the ensuing research and knowledge, will enhance the context of this scholarship for benefit of researchers and people in their real-world lives.

Chapter 1

Far Beyond First Impressions

For Lucy Grealy [well-educated, successful author of best selling “Autobiography of a Face” who had many friends, family, lovers, and mass media fame], beauty was a fantasy, a private wish fraught with shame. “Truth & Beauty” [a book written by her long-time friend Ann Patchett] provides glimpses of Grealy letting her guard down to obsess with Ann over her desire to be beautiful, but why she was never able to free herself of it remains a mystery.

Chicago Tribune review of book^{257, 516} about Lucy Grealy.⁵⁷⁷

Stricken with Ewing’s sarcoma at the age of 9, Grealy [who died at age 39] endured years of radiation and chemotherapy followed by a series of reconstructive operations, most of them unsuccessful. Yet it was the anguish of being perceived as ugly, and of feeling ugly, that she identified as the tragedy of her life. ...Grealy came to feel that her suffering as a cancer patient had been minor in comparison.

New York Times review of book^{257, 516} about Lucy Grealy, described as a survivor of cancer and recipient of 38 operations.⁵⁰⁶

Beauty [physical attractiveness for men and women, boys and girls] has become what our lives are about, not the clothes, and seasonal fashions, but the rage, grief, a terrible sense of isolation that we get when we don’t get back any good feeling from the money and time we invest in appearance. Appearance is everything...

Nancy Friday, *Women on Top: How Real Life Has Changed Women’s Sexual Fantasies*.²²⁷

INTRODUCTION

Physical attractiveness dominates the plethora of dimensions that define the appearance of a person. It impacts every individual throughout every community, across the United States and around the world. All people inherit and alter their physical attractiveness, and complex interdependent factors, physical and non-physical, determine physical attractiveness. Hidden and not-so-hidden values drive thoughts and actions that, when unchecked, produce significant consequences and realities whereby higher physical attractiveness is overwhelmingly beneficial and lower physical attractiveness is overwhelmingly detrimental.

The first two excerpts above, concerning a well-educated, successful professional with friends, family, lovers, and mass media fame, attest to the depth of physical

attractiveness that far exceeds first impressions, while the third excerpt provides a descriptive or explanatory context. Furthermore, while physical attractiveness phenomenon impacts every individual, it does so surprisingly consistently across the United States and around the world, regardless of community size, location, time in history, culture, race, ethnicity, nationality, geographical boundary, demographics, or other composition dimension. Reasonable projection about the future suggests that the physical attractiveness phenomenon will continue within future populations and likely even expand into increasing effects on individuals before birth.

Akin to perspectives about physical attractiveness held by Lucy Grealy, as stated in her 1994 autobiography, are perspectives expressed ten years later in the 2004 autobiography by Hope Donahue.¹⁸⁴ In one of her many pursuits to attain higher physical attractiveness, she visits a cosmetic surgeon promising quick, effortless beauty and thinks to herself, “How can I resist a delicious, illicit offer to become someone I am not? Does he know that, if I could, I would shed my face and body, my very self, on his table as nimbly as a snake sheds its skin, in favor of becoming a beautiful stranger?” Illustrating hidden values of physical attractiveness that extend far below surface appearances, Ms. Donahue, now 37, writes about “a mother increasingly jealous of her daughter’s good looks” and a country’s widespread support of the values of physical attractiveness translating into a corresponding obsession within herself. “It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty [physical attractiveness] is goodness,” expressed in the early 1890s by Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) in *The Kreutzer Sonata*.⁴⁵⁷ Certainly, physical attractiveness epitomizes the proverbial eye-of-the storm and, maybe more expressively, it represents the proverbial tip-of-the-iceberg connected to a phenomenon far beyond what meets the eye. Although often unrecognized and frequently denied, physical attractiveness phenomenon, and, therefore, physical attractiveness, is powerful and pervasive. It is comparably consistent for males and females of all ages; it contributes significantly to our truly globalized world as seen readily in one form or another in all cultures and all countries, domestic and international; and it extends from the past, present, and, assuredly, into the future. A reasonable representation of this phenomenon is a circular four-stage process capsulated in the illustration on page 21 (Figure 1-1) of this chapter.

Worldwide today, people appear not to embrace or even to consider the questioning words of Tolstoy in the above paragraph. They instead embrace the words of recognition and encouragement, expressed in the 1600s, attributed to French writer Madame de Sevigne (1626-1696): “There is nothing so lovely as to be beautiful [physically attractive]. Beauty [physical attractiveness] is a gift of God and we should cherish it as such.”⁴⁵⁴ As history has shown, what determines physical attractiveness changes, flexes, and yields while physical attractiveness phenomenon itself neither changes nor flexes nor yields. Also changing are some historical jokes, adages, and notions that beauty and brains do not accompany each other. In 2005, a United Kingdom newspaper, in the capital of Wales, published an article based on data from *Top Sante* magazine that reported, “More than 50% of women believe improved looks would help them speed up the career ladder. Growing numbers of cosmetically enhanced celebrities appear to be helping undermine the brains-over-beauty battle in the workplace, new research has found.”⁴⁷⁹

The Power and Paradox of Physical Attractiveness articulates physical attractiveness phenomenon. It ascertains a phenomenal structure with motivations, processes, and consequences connected to physical attractiveness. Although the surface appearance element of physical attractiveness is easily, readily, and immediately available when we see a person, the considerably greater ingredient of physical attractiveness that people regularly overlook is the conjoined phenomenon that is universally unseen, scarcely challenged, repeatedly denied, rarely spoken, deceptively harmful, and acutely promulgated.

The theory, research data, and knowledge presented in this book document physical attractiveness phenomenon and will lead some to conclude that “beauty is ugly” or, maybe better stated, “beauty can be ugly.” Experience shows that these individuals tend to, by and large, agree, accept, identify with, and think of themselves or others they know or have observed whose life experiences are congruent with physical attractiveness phenomenon. People, to whom information in this book is particularly meaningful or signifying, might be saddened, angered, or moved to converse about the topic. They might express opinions, take action, or, at a minimum, have increased awareness, understanding, conscientiousness, and empathy. They, possibly, may become more strategically proactive in their personal and professional lives toward themselves and the people with whom they interact, shun interaction, or even for whom they do and do not cast votes.

Others who read this information might take offense. These individuals might feel and/or express that it overstates physical attractiveness phenomenon because it references an overwhelming preponderance of substantiating documentation and very little accompanying documentation to the contrary. These individuals tend to assert that physical attractiveness is entirely in the proverbial eye of the beholder, followed by citing exceptions to the abundant documentation collected through objective scientific means. First, let me respond, what might feel like overstatement or understatement is not consistent with reality. While this book references scant findings to the contrary, the reality is that such research reported publicly in scientific journals is scant. This situation is probably due in part to a long-standing tradition in which scientific journals infrequently publish research findings that confirm insignificance.

Second, as throughout all other areas of life, exceptions to physical attractiveness phenomenon certainly do occur. Some individuals within the different physical attractiveness levels respond differently and have atypical life experiences than most other people in those groups. These exceptions are analogous to those in literally every group of people identified by scientifically reasonable, descriptive statements in every discipline and for every topic. One example is the medical sciences, where research might show some patients classified within the same group for a type of cancer respond very differently to a particular treatment than most others in that group. Another example is car accidents, where research might demonstrate some drivers of a certain age have very different accident rates than most others in their group. The examples are endless, including the political arena, in which certain groups of people comprising a particular party or cause include some individuals who differ. Still, some other people, on a very personal level, who themselves have life experiences congruent with physical attractiveness phenomenon or have loved ones with such life experiences, take offense, overtly denying the entire physical attractiveness phenomenon.

Third, for those who see the world of physical attractiveness phenomenon different from its reality, “I suggest they get a pair of glasses. You can see the absence of...” equal treatment, equal opportunities, and equal success of people across the United States and around the world for people whose physical attractiveness is unequal—that is, higher or lower in physical attractiveness. The introductory quote in this paragraph is from Gloria Steinem,⁶⁶¹ now more than 70 years of age. Her words were in response to a 2004 *Time* magazine interview question about people who cite exceptions as proof against the group movement message that she helped lead for nearly her entire adult life. That movement and message were to rectify unequal treatments, opportunities, and successes between particular groups of people. Although these words of hers did not refer to physical attractiveness, they did refer to issues concerning different and unequal treatment by individuals and society based on particular different physical appearances, which are issues and dynamics parallel and central to physical attractiveness phenomenon.

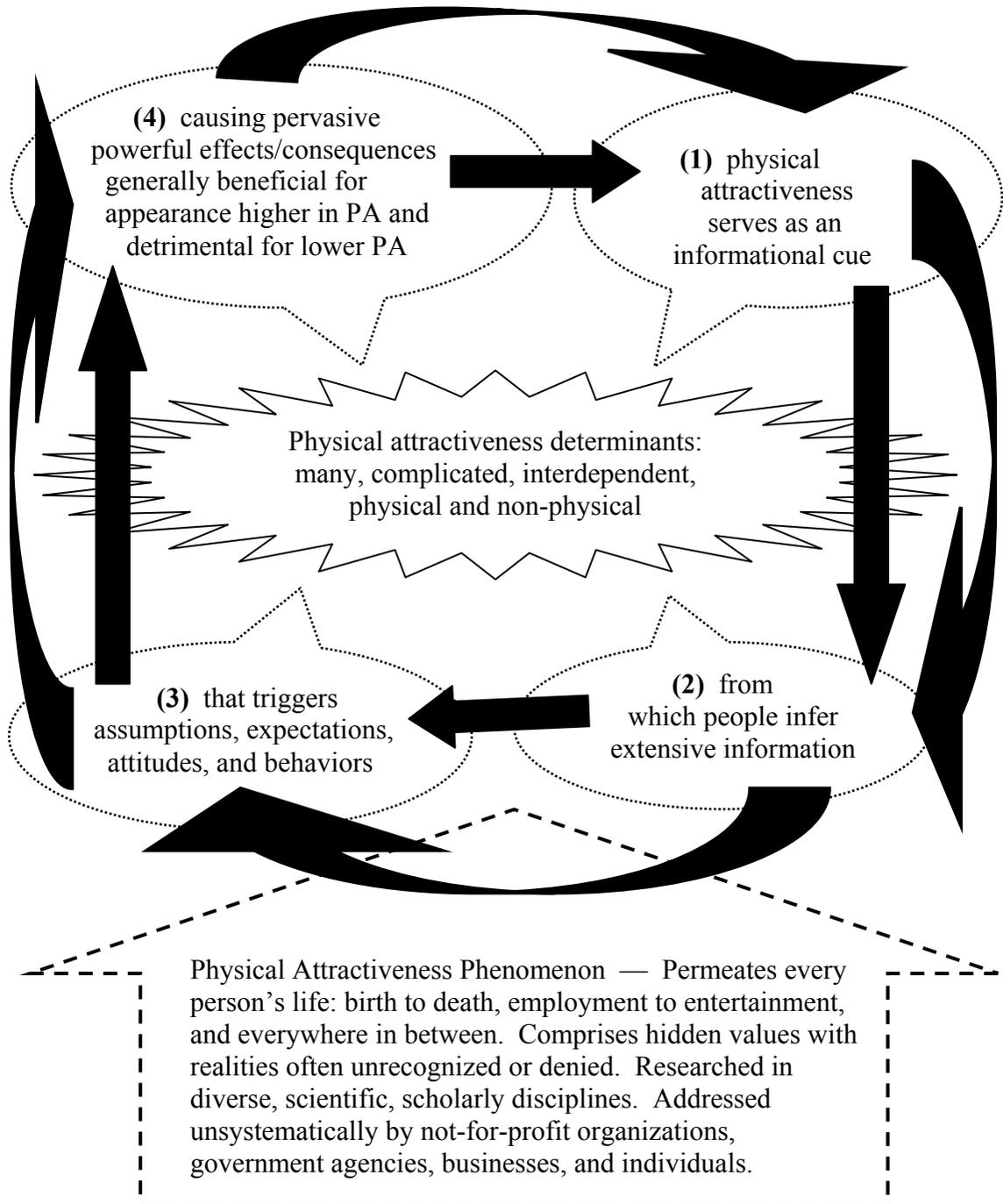
PROGRESSION

The Power and Paradox of Physical Attractiveness is another look at physical attractiveness, and it is an advanced step in my lifelong professional career investigating this topic. Investigations of mine have spanned a period of more than thirty years. In 1985, I published my first book in this field: *The Physical Attractiveness Phenomena*⁵³⁵ and, about ten years earlier, in 1973, I conducted my first documented scientific research project investigating physical attractiveness phenomenon.⁵²³

Since these 1973 and 1985 milestone dates early in my professional life, much has changed concerning physical attractiveness and physical attractiveness phenomenon, but, at the same time, much also has not changed. Knowledge has grown considerably about physical attractiveness phenomenon, and yet researchers continue actively to conduct research to advance this field of scientific inquiry that began formally in 1965. While visible displays by everyday people concerning the importance of physical attractiveness have grown considerably, less visible values that motivate people have remained constant. Furthermore, throughout all the progression and changes in knowledge provided by researchers and evidenced by actions of everyday people, physical attractiveness phenomenon, itself, has remained the same.

As summarized in the circular four-stage process of physical attractiveness phenomenon (Figure 1-1), physical attractiveness serves as an informational cue from which people infer extensive information, and/or misinformation. The information and inference triggers assumptions, expectations, attitudes, and behaviors, causing pervasive and powerful effects/consequences that are generally beneficial or more favorable for people whose appearance is higher in physical attractiveness and detrimental or less favorable for people whose appearance is lower in physical attractiveness. Chapter 2, specifically the section titled “Circular Four-Stage Process” that begins on page 70, discusses further this conceptualization of physical attractiveness phenomenon.

Figure 1-1. Circular Four-Stage Process of Physical Attractiveness Phenomenon



Throughout the progression, conflicts or contradictions about physical attractiveness have persisted. People generally express disapproval and even disdain toward those who take innovative steps in pursuit of higher physical attractiveness. These people tend also to speak rather negatively about others of high physical attractiveness and rather positively about others of low physical attractiveness. Conversely, consistent with the adage about actions speaking louder than words, people around the world strongly exhibit thoughts, decisions, and behaviors exemplifying physical attractiveness phenomenon. Individuals have long demonstrated contradiction between their words and actions concerning physical attractiveness. Today's increasing number of people availing themselves to the latest technological advancements in pursuits of greater physical attractiveness amplifies this contradiction of words and actions. As a result, the mass population has elevated physical attractiveness as connected with the appearance phenomenon to center stage importance.

Simply consider the messages of popular mass media—theater, advertising, print, and television. Public demands reflected by viewers and patrons have caused broadcast programs that range from indirect emphasis on physical attractiveness to explicit emphasis. Such broadcasts began to appear everywhere in 2004, including in the next-day conversations among office workers and mall shoppers. They range from *American Idol* in the United States and counterpart programs in other countries, to reality dating-marriage shows such as *The Bachelor* and *Average Joe*, to programs such as *Extreme Makeovers* and *The Swan*. Then, also, there is the annual televised *Victoria's Secret Lingerie Fashion Show*, with no focus other than the high physical attractiveness of their stereotypically beautiful participants. Likewise, mass media programs and magazines of all sorts feature appearance makeover segments focused on physical attractiveness, while cosmetic industries are selling all-time high volumes of products that temporarily enhance physical attractiveness. In addition, medical and dental professions are delivering unprecedented high-demand procedures to alter physical attractiveness permanently.

Akin to the entertainment media, the news media regularly report an increasing number of cosmetic surgeries for males and females of all ages, women who obtain surgery on their normal feet to shorten their toes to fit latest shoe styles, and the soaring popularity of irreversible stomach surgeries to reduce weight for appearance reasons. Despite high death rates associated with surgeries such as obesity stomach surgeries, the number performed continues to increase. A 2005 study by the American Medical Association found associated deaths within one year of surgery to be one in twenty for men (5 percent of men and nearly 3 percent of women) between ages of thirty-five and forty-four, with rates as high as 50 percent for men and 40 percent for women sixty-five to seventy-four years of age.^{34, 700} Yet, with more than 150,000 of these surgeries performed in 2005 in the United States, that number is an increase of more than 10 times the number performed seven years earlier, in 1998.^{34, 700}

Motivation to lose weight, we would hope, rests on health concerns. However, with the value placed on physical attractiveness, it is not surprising that 60% of Americans would like to lose 20 pounds or more,⁴⁹¹ and weight loss is at the top of annual lists of New Year's resolutions.³⁹⁵ In the opinion of at least one formerly overweight author, her weight was the reason for her lack of romantic partners, husband, and children.³⁷³ "In the United States, 40% of women and 25% of men are trying to lose weight at any given time, and approximately 45 million people begin a diet each year."¹⁷³ Accordingly, amounts spent on weight-loss

programs are ever increasing. Data in 2002 from the American Obesity Association showed approximately \$30 billion per year spent by people trying to lose weight or prevent weight gain.²³

People take actions today to enhance their physical attractiveness that in the recent past were unheard of, or at least unspoken of. Consider just one component of appearance, chest-size. Beyond attitudes and intentions that some research might reveal, actual purchases and actions reveal strong pursuits to increase chest-size that are limited neither to females nor to particular ages. The rate of women of all ages securing breast implants has increased steadily and this rate has increased at an accelerated pace during recent years. Citing safety concerns based on statistics that revealed significant health complications when the substance leaked from the implant into the person's body, in 1992 the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) imposed a legal ban on silicone breast implants in the United States.⁶⁰⁵

Popularity of breast implants remained strong, and the marketplace turned to saline breast implants as well as other substances, but these substances were less preferred because people considered them cosmetically inferior to silicone. Continuing strong demand for silicone breast implants forced their legalization again in 2003 on a limited basis, followed in 2005 when the FDA gave approval to make silicone breast implants again generally available and legal in the United States.⁶⁰⁵ The FDA made their 2005 decision to approve silicone breast implants, based on improved product safety features accompanied by respective safety data from at least two companies (Mentor Corporation and Inamed Corporation) and as advised by surgeons. With breast augmentation surgeries at an all-time high, a market has developed for breast enhancement surgeries as gifts for girlfriends or wives for special milestones in a relationship, for graduating high school students, and even for winning certain radio and television contests. A successful business founded in Vancouver, Canada, sells breast-augmentation gift boxes in four varieties comprised of items to assist post-surgery recovery.⁴⁸⁹

Gifts of cosmetic surgery are growing on all dimensions. A 2004 article in the *Chicago Tribune* about eyelid surgery among Asian Americans cited a family living Los Angeles.³⁶⁰ The mother, father, and grandmother had emigrated from China and, with great love for the happiness of their American daughter/granddaughter, "offered to get her plastic surgery, specifically, blepharoplasty, for her fourteenth birthday. Commonly known as Asian eyelid surgery, the procedure entails stitching a permanent crease into the eyelid." According to that *Chicago Tribune* article, "the fastest growing type of plastic surgery across the United States for Asians is eyelid surgery and, furthermore, "a rapidly growing number of young girls—both in Asia and the United States—are opting to have the crease surgically added, at a cost starting around \$2,000." For parents and children in India, a 2005 newspaper article reported "a major attitudinal change amongst the parents who are themselves keen to rectify flaws and scars that might exist in their children."⁶⁸⁸ One parent, Ajay Kumar, when interviewed, stated, "My daughter had a pointed nose so we decided to get a corrective surgery done last month."

Back to the topic of larger chests, males have not stood still in their own pursuits. As well as exercise and, at times, drugs, breast implants to enlarge chest size have entered the radar screen for men, as well as for women. This development for males to enhance their physical attractiveness comes in the form of pectoral muscle implants that augment male chest size.⁴¹⁸ Coinciding with this development is a report published in the late 1990s

revealing that during the past 25 years, dissatisfaction with their chests has increased 111% for men (18% to 38%), contrasted with dissatisfaction for women with their breasts that increased 31% (26% to 34%) during the same time.²³²

Efforts among males to increase their physical attractiveness have grown extensively. Adult males have gained a sizable portion of the cosmetic surgeries performed annually, while teenage males have demonstrated a serious motivation to enhance their physical attractiveness, often with dangerous means. A 2004 headline article published by *The Wall Street Journal* read “From Faux Clefts to Implants, [Cosmetic] Procedures for Men Surge; [Despite] The Risks of Nerve Damage.”⁶¹³ That article reports data from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, revealing that the number of males receiving cosmetic chin augmentations in 2003 was 600 percent more than 1992 and, in 2003 alone, the number increased 70 percent (to 9,583) from the prior year. Less perilous but equally permanent and nearly equal in popularity for males and females, the incidence of tattoos to enhance appearance has also soared in the United States. The change in frequency has accompanied a change in sizes of tattoos, their designs, their locations on the body, and societal acceptance. In 2004, 10 percent of Americans (one in every 10) bore a tattoo compared to 1 percent of Americans (one in 100) in the 1970s.³⁵⁹ Reports in 2005 indicate that some major American corporations, notably Ford and Wells Fargo, now have policies “that allow body art as part of their appearance codes.”⁵⁸⁰ More changes can be expected as younger employees advance into higher level positions, since, as revealed by a Harris Interactive study, the largest segment of the population with tattoos are 25- to 29-year-olds, with 36 percent of these individuals sporting at least one tattoo.⁵⁸⁰

Despite what they proclaim...or hope, actions of people clearly demonstrate their actual non-subscription to adages about beauty being only skin-deep. Their contrary beliefs are evident through their actions that ascribe the negative corollary “ugly as sin” to people whose appearance is lower in physical attractiveness. Based merely on physical attractiveness, people continue to formulate complex notions about an observed person regardless of any available information to the contrary about the person. These notions translate into different verbal expressions and nonverbal behaviors in the form of either positive or negative responses. Nonverbal responses usually include body language communicated through smiles and frowns, unambiguous facial expressions, head movements, and body gestures. These nonverbal factors seem to equate closely with actual social approval and disapproval, acceptance and denial, of a person. Formative experimental research demonstrates that persons of higher physical attractiveness receive significantly greater frequency of positive looks and smiles than do those of lower physical attractiveness.³⁵⁴ These facial gestures foretell non-visible feelings because more physically attractive evaluators tend to be liked more than their counterparts of lower physical attractiveness by persons being evaluated.⁶⁴¹ Accordingly, people are willing to expend greater effort when requested to perform work by a person of higher physical attractiveness compared to lower.⁶⁴³ Insight based on data from one research project led the researcher to state:

...a consistent pattern emerges of the [physically] unattractive person being associated with the negative or undesirable pole of the adjective scales and the

highly [physically] attractive person being judged significantly more positively.⁴⁵⁹

Why is it that when you change the way you look at things, the things change? Knowledge generated by research findings reveals that physical attractiveness plays a dramatic, but largely unexamined and automatic or involuntary, role in an individual's interpersonal interactions, in how others perceive and respond to the individual, and even in the individual's personality development. Generally, the more physically attractive an individual is, the more positively people perceive the person, the more favorably people respond to the person, and the more successful the person's personal and professional lives are presumed to be. Through self-fulfilling prophecy, also known as the Pygmalion Effect, some attributions convert into reality in the lives of people whose appearances differ in terms of higher and lower physical attractiveness. However, self-perception among some beneficiaries of higher physical attractiveness is not always in accord with the view from the outside. Even with perceptions, attributions, and realities in their favor due to their physical attractiveness, some among these beneficiaries continue to endure privately a sense of doubt, inadequacy, or even revulsion over their appearance to extents that affect everyday living and even life itself.

INTERPRETATIONS

Physical attractiveness phenomenon is universal. Therefore, reasons interpreted or offered to explain occurrences manifested in everyday life or identified in scientific research often go to the core of human existence. Among the different cultures between and within countries that translate physical attractiveness phenomenon somewhat distinctively, the similarities are overwhelming. Research projects designed explicitly to compare physical attractiveness phenomenon between countries complement the findings from projects conducted in particular countries that focus on the resident population. The data document that people worldwide favor, and treat accordingly, higher physical attractiveness over lower, and the accompanying phenomenon transcends time, geography, and culture. Findings reported by research projects conducted around the world consistently contribute to the growing, rather virtual, database that allows extrapolation and generalizations that attest to the robustness of physical attractiveness phenomenon.

Data interpretation that offers overarching explanations for physical attractiveness phenomenon relies heavily on the inherent essence of its surface appearance dimension. That essence is its conspicuous tangibility, providing unparalleled visibility and accessibility. Of course, at the same time, parents promulgate physical attractiveness phenomenon to their children in ways intended and not intended. In turn, these children further promulgate the phenomenon to their peers and, eventually, as they age and become parents themselves, to their children. Socialization or indoctrination of children with physical attractiveness phenomenon begins innocently with good, honorable intentions. However, lessons learned or otherwise embraced early about physical attractiveness extend far beyond childhood, as demonstrated lifelong in variant forms. As a result, people of all ages consciously and subconsciously demonstrate their beliefs: positive, favorable, and complimentary to