

What Makes a Man?: A Study of Male Attractiveness



Kristen Morgan & Caitlin Vandre-Schmidt ❖ Psychology ❖ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Abstract

- ❖ Socioeconomic status (SES), or income, plays a role when it comes to mate preference. This study analyzed how SES effects heterosexual female preferences in the likelihood of engaging in "hooking up" or a long-term relationship.
- ❖ Participants of this study consisted of 110 Midwestern college students ranging from ages 18 to 30 years old.

Deciding the topic of SES

- ❖ The researchers reasoning behind choosing socioeconomic status and the effect it has on mate preference is that it applies to a wide variety of people.
- ❖ Much of the intrigue for this study was developed out of the "Gold-digger complex," that is, the idea that women will be more attracted to men that have higher amounts of income.
- ❖ From this perspective the researchers wanted to discover if the SES of a male affects the process of heterosexual women's desire to have a "hook-up" or a long-term partner.

Questions

- ❖ Does socioeconomic status (SES) have a statistically significant effect on perceived male attractiveness when rated by females of two different age groups?
- ❖ Does SES have a statistically significant effect on the desire of females to engage in a short-term relationship?
- ❖ Does SES have a statistically significant effect on the desire of females to engage in a long-term relationship?

Hypotheses

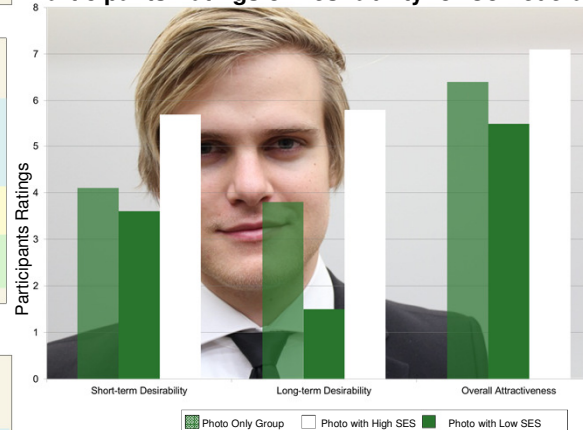
- ❖ Women ages 18 to 24 will rate a man with low SES more favorably than women of ages 25 to 30.
- ❖ When asked rated desirability to engage in a short-term relationship, women will rate a man with high SES favorably than a man with low SES.
- ❖ When asked rated desirability to engage in a long-term relationship, women will rate a man with high SES more favorably than a man with low SES.

Design & Method

3X2 Between-Subjects Design

- ❖ The participants were given a survey that was generated through Qualtrics, an online survey builder. Surveys were dispersed through the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire email and through Facebook, a social networking site.
- ❖ The requirements of the study were that the participant must be a heterosexual female older than the age of 18 and younger than 30 years old. Participants were divided into two age groups: Group 1 was ages 18 to 24 and Group 2 was ages 25 to 30. The survey was not altered on the basis of age.
- ❖ Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three groups:
 - ❖ Photo Only Group
 - ❖ Photo of the Confederate and a Low SES Description
 - ❖ Photo of the Confederate with a High SES Description

Participants Ratings of Desirability for Confederate



Picture by Caitlin Vandre-Schmidt

Survey Questions

- ❖ All participants were asked to rate the confederate on Overall Attraction, Short-term Relationship Desirability, and Long-term Relationship Desirability. Below are examples.
- ❖ "By using the slide feature below, please indicate how attractive you find the man in the picture.
0=Not at all attractive, 10= Very attractive"
- ❖ "By using the slide feature below, please indicate how desirable you would find a short term relationship with the man in the picture.
0=Not at all desirable, 10=Very desirable"
- ❖ A ten point Likert scale was integrated for all ratings.

Results

- ❖ There was no significant effect on perceived male attractiveness in correspondence to socioeconomic status (SES) when rated by the two female age groups, as indicated in $F(1, 110) = 20.07, p = .08$. The effect size was small, indicated by $\eta^2 = .03$.
- ❖ When rating the desirability to enter into a short-term relationship with the confederate of both high SES and low SES, there was a significant effect $F(2, 110) = 46.83, p = .02, \eta^2 = .09$ indicating a small effect size.
- ❖ Women rated the confederate with high SES consistently more desirable than the confederate with low SES as represented both the long-term and the short-term comparisons: $F(1, 110) = 87.31, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .19$ and $F(2, 110) = 46.83, p = .02, \eta^2 = .09$, respectively.

Discussion

- ❖ Women within the age range of 18 and 30 have similar viewpoints on preferences for men when it comes to SES.
- ❖ When looking for a short-term partner, heterosexual females prefer men with high SES rather than low SES.
- ❖ This also matches heterosexual women's preference for long-term partners, in that women prefer men with high SES in a long-term relationship than men with low SES.

Assertions & Limitations

- ❖ Males with high SES are overall most desirable when rated by heterosexual females for ages 18 to 30, short-term relationships, and long-term relationships.
- ❖ Due to the fact that the study focused on a relatively small range of women, the results are not a full portrayal of the female population.
- ❖ Women were the focal point of our study, and because of this, the male perspective on SES and attraction was not observed.

References

- ❖ Buunk, B. P., Dijkstra, P., Feltenhauer, D., & Kenrick, D.T. (2002). Age and gender differences in mate selection criteria for various involvement levels. *Personal Relationships*, 9, 271-278. doi: 1350-4126/02
- ❖ Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1966). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- ❖ Isaac, S., & Michael, W. B. (1971). Handbook in research and evaluation. San Diego: EdITS.
- ❖ Singh, D. (1995). Female judgment of male attractiveness and desirability for relationships: Role of waist-to-hip ratio and financial status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 1089-1101. doi:0022-3514/95/\$3.00
- ❖ Stewart, S., Stinnett, H., & Rosenfeld, L. B. (2000). Sex differences in desired characteristics of short-term and long-term relationship partners. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 17, 843-853. doi: 10.1177/0265407500176008
- ❖ Tadinac, M., & Hromatko, I. (2006). Strangers in the night or love forever: Characteristics and preferences of short vs. long-term relationship seekers. *Psychological Topics*, 15, 261-276.
- ❖ Urbaniak, G. C., & Kilmann, P.R. (2006). Niceness and dating success: A further test of the nice guy stereotype. *Sex Roles*, 55, 209-224. doi:10.1007/s11199-3006-9075-2
- ❖ U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Eau Claire, Wisconsin. U.S. Census Bureau.

We thank the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for supporting this research, and Learning & Technology Services for printing this poster.