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Beautiful People Are Better, At Least Online: Associations Between Photo Attractiveness and Text Attractiveness in Women's Online Dating Profiles

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Abstract

Do physically attractive individuals truly possess a multitude of better characteristics? The current study aimed to answer the age old question, "Do looks matter?" within the context of online dating and framed itself using cursory research performed by Brand and colleagues (2012). Good Genes Theory, Halo Effect, Physical Attractiveness Stereotype, and Social Information Procession theory were also used to explore what function appearance truly plays in online dating and how it influences a user's written text.

83 men were surveyed and asked to rate 84 women's online dating profiles (photos and texts) independently of one another to determine if those who were perceived as physically attractive also wrote more attractive texts as well. Results indicated that physical attractiveness was correlated with text attractiveness but not with text confidence. Findings also indicated the more attractive a woman's photo, the less discrepancy there was between her photo attractiveness and text attractiveness scores. Finally, photo attractiveness did not differ significantly for men's ratings of women in this study and women's ratings of men in the Brand et al. (2012) study.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2012, Brand, Bonatsos, D'Orazio, and DeShong performed a study to determine whether online dating would truly “level the playing field” for men deemed traditionally unattractive in face-to-face settings. Justification for the study came from numerous researchers, such as Levine (2000), who claimed the medium of online dating would give those “who do not fit a stereotypical model of human beauty, an equal opportunity to be found desirable” (p. 525) in the context of online dating. To examine this topic, Brand et al. (2012) asked 50 women to rate men's dating profiles and profile photos independently of one another. Contrary to Levine's (2011) beliefs, the researchers reasoned those who were deemed physically attractive would also have a more attractive profile, and hence, actually have more positive attributes than would less attractive men.

Brand et al.'s (2012) hypothesis proved to be correct and indicated that the overall attractiveness of a photograph was positively correlated with the overall attractiveness of a written profile, even though photographs and profile texts were rated independently of one another by different participants. The researchers explained that individuals who were rated as attractive “wrote texts that conveyed confidence, and it was perhaps this confidence which signaled a [higher] quality to the women” (Brand et al., 2012, p. 169). As such, confident-sounding profile texts and headlines appeared to play a mediating role between physical attractiveness and personality attractiveness, suggesting that physically

attractive men wrote more confident and appealing, if not “better” profiles, and consequently demonstrated a better personality. A variety of reasons were theorized to explain this phenomenon but results suggested that an individual's own awareness of their high evolutionary mate value, most likely due to a lifetime of experiencing preferential treatment and positive reinforcement (Brand et al., 2012; Rhodes, Simmons, & Peters, 2005), led to a higher level of self-confidence, as seen in their written profiles and profile photos.

Thus, if what is beautiful really is good as the previous research suggests (Brand et al., 2012), then attractive people are also likely to have attractive profiles that are socially adept, intelligent, warm, funny, and filled with confidence. As such, the current work reasons that those with the most appealing profiles (judged independently of photos) are likely to be those with the most appealing photos (judged independently of profiles). Moreover, with the evolution of new photo-based dating, neither the internet nor the medium of online dating sites seem to level the playing field for those less attractive. If anything, online dating and sites such as OkCupid support the stereotype that beautiful is better and increases the odds that those who actually count on their personality to get a date might have to work only that much harder.

Justification for the Study

Brand et al. (2012) were some of the first researchers to examine whether physically attractive individuals on dating websites also had other attractive qualities, in an attempt to answer the age old question, “Do looks matter?” Although most research corroborates the importance of appearance in attraction, some available scholarship

appears to conflict with the idea that appearance can influence other essential qualities, altering the age-old question to, “How do looks matter?” For instance, Levine (2000) claimed, “The beauty of the virtual medium is that it is based on words, charm, and seduction, not physical attraction and cues” (p.565). In contrast, Fiore, Lindsay, Mendelsohn, and Hearst (2008) claimed, “the attractiveness of [profile] photographs were the strongest predictors of whole profile attractiveness, but the free-text component also played an important role in predicting overall attractiveness” (p. 797). In 2002, McKenna and colleagues examined pairs of college students in a laboratory setting and found that participants liked each other more when they met in text-only chat-rooms compared to when they met face-to-face, thus reinforcing that the development of personal relationships is influenced by aspects of physical attractiveness, or a lack thereof. This research provides a snapshot of the numerous roles appearance can play when initiating relationships and demonstrates how appearance can alter the development of new interpersonal relationships.

Although previous research has the potential to be perceived as inconsistent when examining the exact role appearance plays in online dating, especially when competing with text-based or face-to-face media, it could be argued that enough scholarship has been performed to support the notion that physical appearance and attraction play a sizable role in the initiation of romantic relationships, especially online. Unfortunately, gaps in the research still exist with consideration to an exact link that can be made between physical appearance/attraction and positive personality traits found on online dating media. For example, with the exception of Brand et al.'s work in 2012, little

scholarship has been performed to determine whether physical attributes are unrelated to personality characteristics or similarly, whether attractive people actually have more attractive personality characteristics.

Because previous literature has illustrated qualities associated with appearance as an important factor in developing new interpersonal relationships and Brand et al.'s (2012) previous research laid the foundational work needed to understand that a link, however strong, exists between physical attractiveness and other attractive traits, the current scholarship will utilize several components of Brand et al.'s (2012) original methods with various manipulations, a key focus being sex differences.

Because Brand et al.'s (2012) original work included only male profiles and female participants, it is important to manipulate this variable and have males evaluate female profiles for several reasons, first and foremost because Brand et al. (2012) recommended it be done, explaining, "The self-fulfilling nature of the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype presumably applies equally to men and women. Thus, attractive men and women might write confident, competent texts as result of being treated well due to their looks" (p. 169). Thus, by comparing the current works findings with Brand et al.'s (2012) past results, perhaps the viability of the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype, Social Information Processing Theory, the Halo Effect, and Good Genes theory can be further developed. Additionally, by examining female profiles, a more critical lens can be applied and the current work has the ability to examine gender stereotypes and inequalities between the two studies. Finally, because Good Genes theory is rarely applied to men, let alone men's perceptions of women's overall attractiveness,

the current work appears to be a perfect platform to examine what function appearance truly plays in online dating and how it differs between the sexes.

Literature Review

Jess: If she's so great why aren't you taking her out?

Harry: How many times do I have to tell you, we're just friends.

Jess: So you're saying she's not that attractive.

Harry: No, I told you she *is* attractive.

Jess: Yea but you also said she has a good personality.

Harry: She *has* a good personality. What?

Jess: When someone's described as not that attractive, they're always described as having a good personality.

Harry: Look, if you had asked me what does she look like and I said, she has a good personality, that means she's not attractive. But just because I happen to mention that she has a good personality, she could be either. She could be attractive with a good personality, or not attractive with a good personality.

Jess: So which one is she?

(Reiner, 1989)

The above excerpt from the 1989 film *When Harry Met Sally* details two points. First, although there are multiple types of attractive qualities, both physical and personality, frequently books and individuals are both judged by their cover, an idea supported by Social Information Processing Theory (SIP) and the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype. Second, concerns of physical attractiveness are inherently rooted deep within

our society and are frequently believed to be mutually exclusive to positive personality characteristics, an idea shamelessly depicted above.

The Art of Attraction

What role does physical appearance play and what do one's looks convey to potential mates in the initial stages of a relationship? Common factors perceived to be attractive among both sexes include appearing genuine, trustworthy, kind, warm, and, most importantly, confident. Conversely, with consideration to the type of relationship a man or woman is seeking at the time of log-on, the value of each quality has the ability to change as do an individual's perceptions of another's overall attractiveness. For instance, in one study (Gangestad, Garver-Apgar, Simpson, & Cousins, 2007) women seeking men for a long-term relationship were found to be more attracted to men who exuded kindness and warmth in their profile photos. Conversely, women seeking a man for a short-term sexual encounter were found to be more attracted to men who exuded higher levels of masculinity in their photos (Gangestad et al., 2007). Thus, physical attractiveness almost appears to be fluid as is based on a multitude of factors including but not limited to defined physical and personality characteristics, gender, environment, the type of a relationship an individual is seeking, and how all of these characteristics are perceived by an interested other.

Finally, literature stemming from interpersonal communication lists the key role of confidence as a contributing factor to developing a variety of attractive characteristics such as a high self-esteem, warmth, and an extroverted personality (Brand et al., 2012; Fiore et al., 2008). Thus, it would seem that by developing self-confidence, a multitude of

other attractive qualities would follow suit, or as Brand et al. (2012) theorized, those already self-aware and self-assured would have likely already experienced preferential treatment and positive reinforcement throughout their lives and developed these additional positive qualities along the way (Brand et al., 2012; Rhodes, Simmons, & Peters, 2005).

Extensive research suggests the importance of examining the role of attraction within the context of interpersonal relationships in addition to how these attributes of attraction may differ between the sexes. For instance, research in human mating habits suggest that while both men and women seek out partners that will enhance their reproductive successes, as the current work will discuss with regard to Good Genes theory, numerous scholars suggest that men will seek out young and physically attractive women, while women will seek out a man with broad shoulders, an overall muscular body, a high social-status, and good genes for reproducing (Ahuvia &Adelman, 1992; Hirschman, 1987; Hitsch, Hortacsu, & Ariely, 2004; Jagger, 2001; Lynn & Bolig, 1985; Nevid, 1984; Thornhill & Gangestad, 208; Woll & Cozby, 1987). Both sexes, however, desire bilateral symmetry, that is, evenness of right-and left-side characteristics, in potential mates (Little, Penton-Voak, Burt, & Perrett, 2002), although research did indicate that men value the need for their partner to be physical attractive significantly more than women (Buss, 1988).

What is more, Scheib, Gangestad and Thornhill (1999) found that men prefer youthful and thin women who have symmetrical and prominent facial features (e. g. cheek bones, large eyes, full lips) and clear and smooth skin while Kanazawa and Kovar

(2004) found that “higher-status men are more likely to mate with more beautiful women than lower-status men” (p. 227). These ideas were supported through years of literature stemming from the field of evolutionary psychology which states clear skin, symmetry of the face and body, hormonal changes and pheromones, as well as a smaller waist to hip ratio are all features men find attractive in women (Little et al., 2006; Rubenstein et al., 2002; Scheib, Gangestad & Thornhill, 1999).

Furthermore, men who are more intelligent are more likely to attain higher status than men who are less intelligent (Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004). As such, it could be argued that in addition to social status, good genes, etc., women may be more attracted to high levels of intelligence by way of being attracted to higher-status men. Moreover, past studies have demonstrated that individuals expect physically attractive others to be smarter and more competent than less physically attractive others (Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995; Zebrowitz, Hall, Murphy, & Rhodes, 2002). Thus, individuals may perceive attractive others not only to be more intelligent in a general, but also more competent in seemingly unrelated tasks (Webster & Driskell, 1983).

Finally, several recent research studies have found significant data detailing beauty as an indicator of genetic and developmental health. Thus, there is actually some evidence that attractive people are healthier than unattractive people (Langlois et al., 2000; Shackelford & Larsen, 1999; see Kalick, Zebrowitz, Langlois, & Johnson, [1998] for counterevidence). Furthermore, at least three studies have found evidence of attractive people possessing a host of other desirable qualities (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992; Langlois et al., 2000). Therefore, it would seem that those

with dating profile photos that are perceived as more attractive would also have more attractive text profiles and vice versa. Moreover, given a man's preference for a physically attractive mate, it would appear then that men would "check-out" or "judge" women's physical appearance with a closer lens than women might do to men.

The Physical Attractiveness Stereotype and Halo Effect

One possible explanation for the positive association between physical attractiveness and other valued traits is that the link is a matter of perception. The Physical Attractiveness Stereotype contends that those who are perceived as physically attractive will also be perceived as possessing a host of other desirable attributes (Dion, Bersheid, & Walster, 1972; Eagly, 1991). For instance, if an individual has large biceps, he may be perceived as being intelligent, confident, or outgoing. If a woman is blonde, the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype claims that she is obviously going to be perceived to be more fun. To illustrate these ideas, Feingold (1992) performed a study that found attractive people were in fact more popular and socially adept than unattractive people. Similarly, meta-analyses by Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, and Longo (1991) as well as Feingold (1992) found that attractive people are typically perceived as being more competent and intelligent than those perceived as unattractive. Analysis by Fiore, Lindsay Taylor, Mendelsohn, and Hearst (2008) showed that online dating profiles with attractive photos are judged as more attractive overall, with higher ratings of both physical attractiveness and personality attributes. Furthermore, these same scholars (Fiore et al., 2008) showed that the attractiveness of a profile photo was the strongest predictor of overall desirability.

Supporting this claim, during an Australian study performed by Whitty and Carr (2006), 85 percent of online dating users said they would not contact someone without a photo on their profile, thus illustrating that attractiveness is the strongest predictor of appeal in the world of online dating, if not dating in the non-virtual world. Reviewing the scholarship above, it is easy to note a pattern arising, one that puts preference on the physically attractive, and whether intentionally or not, a cognitive bias taking place. This bias is called the Halo Effect (Landy & Sigall, 1974).

The Halo Effect states that attractive individuals will receive a superior evaluation for the exact same task done by a less attractive individual. In Landy and Sigalls' 1974 study, the investigators asked men to rate well-or poorly-written college essays. Attached to each essay was a photo of the woman, either attractive or unattractive, who purportedly wrote the essay. The researchers found that the essays attached to the more attractive authors were consistently rated higher, even when the papers were of lower quality, than those attached to less attractive authors.

In the same vein, Miller (1970) found good-looking people to be attributed to have more favorable qualities than unattractive people, and Dion et al. (1972) found that male and female college students held expectations for physically attractive men and women to possess more socially desirable traits such as higher levels of sensitivity, modesty, and strength than those they deemed as unattractive. Furthermore, these same students expected the same attractive men and women to have more good things in store for their future such as more prestigious jobs, happier marriages, and overall life opportunities than those they rated as physically unattractive.

Clearly the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype and Halo Effect play a large role within the confines of society, however what role do they play within the context of online dating, especially on a site like OkCupid or Tinder where the physical attractiveness of a photograph is a user's main "bait, hook, and lure"? To elucidate, a user only has so many opportunities to "catch" a potential match's interest: a profile photo, a short-headline text, and an "About me" section. Although a user can spend time developing the verbal portion of their profile, it is frequently the photographs that gets them to the next step, that first date. Furthermore, because a user's photo is the strongest predictor of a profiles overall desirability (Fiore et al., 2008), it would seem to reason that users without profile photographs could be overlooked completely (Whitty & Carr, 2006). Given this circumstance, photographs are truly a users' main allure and often all they have to get them past that initial step.

Supporting this idea, theories of interpersonal attraction and judgments emphasize the value of physical attributes over other important factors such as personality and intelligence (Dion et al., 1972; Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Walster et al., 1966). Physical attributes were found to be of higher importance than personality and intelligence in three separate studies. Thus, even if a user were to spend hours developing the written text portion of their profile, according to the theorists above, it likely wouldn't carry as much weight as an accurate and attractive photograph. To develop this idea further, Fiore, Lindsay, Taylor, et al., (2008) found photos of women rated by men to be more attractive if the woman appeared to be more extroverted, feminine, less masculine, and to possess high self-esteem without appearing self-centered. This is intriguing as the

study focused on perceptions of photographs, not necessarily the actual personality traits listed in the profiles. To summarize, these studies all illustrate the importance of physical attractiveness and the link it has to other attractive attributes, although these studies note the strong role perceptions of others play in their claims.

However, the link between attractive positive personality traits and physically attractive attributes may not be the result of a stereotype, but instead the outcome of good genes. What is more, males and females are both biologically attracted to high gene quality and as such, choose physically attractive, intelligent, strong, and fertile partners to mate with. Hence, this competing explanation asserts that what is beautiful may actually be good in certain other ways.

Good Genes Theory

When discussing Good Genes theory, one must examine its three unique facets. First, Good Genes theory suggests positive qualities, such as a man's muscularity or a woman's body symmetry, attractive eyes, a sense of humor, straight teeth, intelligence, or even charisma, often cluster together (Folstad & Karter, 1992; Frederick & Haselton, 2007; Scheib, 2001; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999), resulting in the notion that the same high gene quality which makes an individual attractive might actually make him or her smart and socially skilled as well (Brand et al., 2012; Scheib et al., 1999; Scheib, 2001; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). This is of particular interest to the current work because the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype, Halo Effect, and SIP theory all rely on the assumptions and perceptions of others.

In conjunction with this, Good Genes theory suggests actual biological data which implies that beautiful people may indeed possess a host of other positive attributes. Supporting this idea, Furlow, Armijo-Prewitt, Gangestad, and Thornhill (1997) found that body symmetry does actually correlate with general intelligence, encouraging the notion that perhaps beautiful is better, or at least smarter. Moreover, according to Bouchard and Loehlin (2000), personality traits and behavior are substantially influenced by an individual's genes, supporting the idea that it is possible for attractive individual to actually have more attractive qualities. For instance, results from a study performed by Langlois et al. (2000) indicated that individuals who were rated as good looking were found to be more socially skilled, well-adjusted (mentally healthy), successful, and somewhat more intelligent.

Unfortunately, little research has been performed examining Good Genes theory with respect to its application of a man's evaluation of a woman's physical attributes; it is much more frequently applied to a woman's evaluation of a man's physical attributes. According to research by Barash (1982), this is most likely because the process of finding a mate with higher gene quality is more important to a female "simply because a female is committing a large part of her reproductive future wherever she chooses a male" (p. 226).

This assertion is also in line with the concepts of Intersexual selection and Intrasexual selection. Because Intrasexual selection states that the less-limited sex (typically males) will compete among themselves to gain access to the limited sex (the females) and Intersexual selection states that males will once again "compete" with one

another to be the top mate selection until a female makes her final mate selection (Campbell & Reece, 2004), males evaluating females for physical attractiveness goes against the basic understanding of sexual selection.

Finally, Good Genes theory thrives on the motivations of mate selection. The theory assumes that males and females will choose mates that present traits that suggest good genes and high genetic qualities (Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008). Although the general theory suggests that men evaluating women for physically attractive and other attractive attributes goes against sexual selection, the current work would argue that applying this theory to women will be beneficial.

First of all, Brand et al., (2012) recommended doing exactly this in their original study and argued that new correlations could potentially be established in future data. The current work would argue that because the scholarship above is gender neutral, meaning the claims are not framed to reflect women solely evaluating men, it is important to examine the theory from all angles to understand if the above findings hold true with consideration of men's evaluations of women. Moreover, although previous research describes females as the ones carefully selecting men for mating and men simply competing to be selected, the current work would argue that the average online dating site presents a forum in which both men and women get the chance to be selective when choosing their ideal mate, and as such, perhaps men should be evaluated under the same theory as women. Lastly, because online dating sites (e.g., Match, Tinder, Bumble, HotorNot) are now focusing on evaluations of photographs over profile texts, it is

incredibly important to evaluate Good Genes theory from a male's perspective, especially since they make up half of all users (Rudder, 2014).

Clearly good genes are important to potential partners, however with the exception of medical records and sometimes awkward self-disclosure, there are very few ways to actually tell if a potential partner actually has "good genes." Most of the time it's a guessing game propelled by cues in photographs and text messages. For example, if a man has large muscles in his profile photo, he is clearly strong, a trait and gene many women look for when first seeking a partner, but also down the road when wanting to reproduce. Hence, viewing a photo of someone with large muscles automatically gives a woman a cue that the man may be genetically superior and allows her to make inferences about who he is as a person and other traits that he may possess, a practice described in Social Information Processing theory (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, et al., 2001).

Social Information Processing Theory

When electronic media began to surface in the late 1990s and early 2000's, namely instant messaging, cell phones, and social networking and online dating sites, many scholars believed self-disclosure would occur at a slowed rate due to a lack of emotion and nonverbal cues (Culnan & Markus, 1987; Rice & Love, 1987; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). Surprisingly however, Walther (1996) discovered that when used frequently and very strategically, users of computer-mediated communication (CMC) could actually exceed the norms of normal face-to-face self-disclosure. Walther explained this effect with the creation of the Hyperpersonal model (1996), explaining further that Hyperpersonal CMC messages afford users a host of advantages over traditional face-to-

face communication such as the ability to edit and adjust self-presentation or to strategically ask questions about the receiver of the message (Walther, 1996). Thus, the Hyperpersonal model essentially suggests that a user of CMC may experience higher levels of intimacy, liking, and self-disclosure more quickly than someone interacting in a traditional face-to-face interaction (Walther, 1996).

This perspective is important for several reasons, the first being that dating by nature is an intimate activity, and to take such an activity online could be argued as counter intuitive. The Hyperpersonal model aids in the argument that meaningful relationships can be developed online at the same rate as face-to-face relationships, sometimes even quicker, with the same level of intimacy and self-disclosure occurring. Furthermore, the Hyperpersonal model assists in framing Social Information Processing (SIP) theory, which contends that people make inferences about others in social situations, such as an online dating websites, based on any available cues (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, et al., 2001). As such, SIP theory plays a major role in facilitating the development of new relationships, both online and off, as well as increasing discourse, both of which lead to higher levels of self-disclosure (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, 1996).

Within the confines of SIP theory, examples of cues include reading an excerpt from a profile text, examining a photo, or even instant messaging with someone online. Furthermore because these cues are often subtle, it is the task of the individual to determine how much weight each cue holds and how to interpret what they see, something that can often be daunting online. For instance, it would seem to reason a

variety of inferences could be made by a man looking at a photo of a traditionally attractive, thin, well-groomed, woman who seemed to exude warmth and confidence. Because she is thin he could infer that she is always on a diet and might be a picky eater. He could infer that she is in shape, active, enjoys the outdoors or sports, and therefore could be considered a team player and friendly. He could infer that she is dedicated to health, wellness, and her appearance, and therefore dedicated to other facets of life, and according to Good Genes theory, healthy for child-rearing or sex. He could also infer that she may be high-maintenance but worth it, and then think to himself, “the good ones always are.”

Conversely, if a user sent a message in the middle of the night, the recipient may make inferences about (a) what type of lifestyle the individual leads, (b) what type of job the individual has, and (c) how intelligent the individual is by the type of language they use in the message. Furthermore, if the recipient of the message responds to this late night correspondence too quickly, this may signal (a) desperation, (b) insomnia, or (c) a perfect match! However, it is interesting to consider what effects attractiveness would have on the perceptions of these messages.

Research performed by Langlois et al. (2000) which is in line with the Halo Effect argues that the attribution of positive qualities to attractive people is not limited to perceptions by strangers, but also perceptions by well-known others, illustrating that even if a person's personality is well known, a person's looks have the ability to influence an entire host of other personality characteristics. As such, it seems that a message or a profile written by a single person could be read in a multitude of ways depending on how

physically attractive he or she is. Thus, in line with the aforementioned literature the current work would argue if a profile photo is accessible to view as an available cue, SIP theory would support the notion that the photo would influence the inferences made by the receiver.

In a similar vein, OkCupid user data illustrates that women smile about 50 percent more often than men in their profile photos and make "flirty faces" four times more often than men (Rudder, 2014). What's more, these differences in seemingly simple photo trends can make the difference between a few new messages versus dozens of new messages each month. OkCupid's reasoning for these trends are in line with assertions made by SIP theory (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, et al., 2001) when they claim that users make inferences about members based on profile photos and small variations in the photos. These small photo variations range from smiling directly into the camera to being extremely flirty, which the site claims gets females the optimal amount of new messages each month, over simply smiling (Rudder, 2014). Hence, the structure of OkCupid supports the claim that a photograph will influence the inferences and therefore choices (e. g. to send or not send a message) made by the receiver.

OkCupid, OkTrends

OkCupid is a free online dating website that launched in 2004. It has a similar framework to other dating sites such as Match.com and E-Harmony, as user's are matched based through algorithms after answering a series of questions, in addition to being able to browse other members that might be of potential interest on the site but not a specific match. One large difference among the sites is that OkCupid is free of charge.

Due to the lack of financial risk involved with joining, the site has been criticized as being somewhat of a “hook-up” site. Moreover, because it is free it draws a younger age demographic which has a tendency to focus the site more on physical appearance (Pew Research Center, 2013; Rudder, 2014). Nonetheless, the page has all the same offerings as a traditional site, such as the ability to make a profile, connect and message with other users, “wink,” and affords its users the ability to browse through profiles of other members.

All of these factors alone do not necessarily make OkCupid stand out, but together they begin to paint a deeper picture. Because OkCupid uses a mixed method matching system, meaning users are not only able to freely browse potential matches but they are also matched with potential companions through a computer algorithm, users still have the impression that they are making their own choices. However, they also have a computer supporting these choices with a high-percentage match rating, leading them to believe in their attraction to the chosen individual that much more (Rudder, 2014). As such, it could be argued that because OkCupid draws a younger age demographic, users are not necessarily interested in forming long-term relationships, thus they are more interested in physical relationships with users they perceive physical attractive. While this may not be a great environment to meet someone, for the purpose of the current study, a site that encourages physically attractive individuals to succeed seems ideal. One downfall of the site however is that those who are on the site may be seeking short-term relationships, thus skewing their perceptions of potential mates.

Over the past ten years OkCupid's basic structure has stayed the same, however, much like any other company, it has experimented with implementing small changes to the system, aiming to enhance each member's experience. One function OkCupid experimented with in its original framework was to offer members the ability to rate another user's profiles on two separate scales: personality and looks.

Essentially the hope for this application (app) was in line with what Levine (2000) believed, that is, just because a person is not classically beautiful does not mean that they can't have a great personality. What OkCupid learned from this app, however, was that people were not reading the written texts of profiles and simply rating users (both their personality and photograph) based solely on their photos. Subsequently, OkCupid found that a profile text, at least on its site, was only worth 10 percent of an individual's overall rating (Rudder, 2014). These claims are in line with those made in the literature suggesting that attractiveness of a profile photo is the strongest predictor of overall desirability (Fiore, Lindsay, et al., 2008) and that users without profile photos will most likely be overlooked (Whitty & Carr, 2006).

Another function OkCupid experimented with was called, "The Blind Date" app. It essentially matched members based only on profile data and made it so that users would not get to see their matches until the first date. Needless to say, the application failed, but in honor of the failure, OkCupid removed all profile photos from their site for a 7-hour period and called it, "Love is Blind Day." Within these 7 hours, OkCupid noted huge variations from normal activity. Notably, users responded to messages 44 percent more often, an increase in intimacy and self-disclosure levels within conversations

occurred, and contact details (cell phone numbers, emails, screen names) were exchanged more quickly (Rudder, 2014). However, when the photos were restored at the end of the day, most of the 2,200 conversations that began blind abruptly stopped. Rudder, a data analyst for OkCupid described it by saying, "We'd turned on the bright lights at the bar at midnight" (Rudder, 2014, p.2).

Although the data from OkCupid paints a grim portrayal of the significance appearance plays in online dating, it also helps frame the current reality. Moreover, the theories and effects in which this study are grounded are important to discuss in relation to OkCupid, as they suggest that inferences can and usually will be formed from a single photograph, whether additional information is available or not. Furthermore, they suggest that a photograph tends to be the most important factor when forming a first impression, a claim also supported by OkCupid data suggesting a written text makes up only 10 percent of a user's overall appeal (Rudder, 2014). The concepts also propose that attraction plays an immensely influential role in the world of online dating. For instance, with consideration to "Love is Blind Day," although no photos were exchanged for 7 hours, over 2000 individuals exchanged intimate messages with one another, illustrating the notion that positive attributes can be exuded through written texts (Rudder, 2014), when people choose to read them. Thus, framing the four concepts within the structure of OkCupid, five important hypotheses are brought to light that the current work will test in its examination of whether physically attractive people truly do possess more attractive qualities. The five hypotheses are as follows:

Much like Brand et al., (2012) concluded, the overall attractiveness of a photograph is positively correlated with the overall attractiveness of written a profile due to attractive qualities conveyed in written texts. Specific qualities Brand et al., (2012) examined included qualities of confidence, femininity, kindness, intelligence, and how fun and funny an individual was perceived to be. This connection between physical attractiveness and these other attractive qualities is supported by the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype and Halo Effect, which argue that individuals treat beautiful people as though they possess positive characteristics, setting up a self-fulfilling prophecy and therefore shaping those qualities in beautiful people. It is also supported by Good Genes theory through the argument that good genes produce both physical attractiveness and other appealing characteristics. Therefore, the current work would argue that an individual who is rated as more physically attractive may then have more attractive attributes as well. Hence, the current work is interested in testing the aforementioned qualities Brand et al., (2012) used in their cursory study (i.e. confidence, femininity, kindness, intelligence, funny, fun) in addition to facial symmetry with specific consideration to profile photographs, as a strong correlation has been found between symmetry and general intelligence and attractiveness (Furlow et al., 1997; Langlois et al., 2000), to examine whether attractive individuals truly do write more attractive texts. Thus, hypothesis 1 is posed:

> H1: When evaluated separately, physical attractiveness of a profile photo is positively correlated with attractiveness of other qualities apparent in the profile text.

Similarly, research suggests that confidence is a key factor in attraction among both sexes (Brand et al., 2012; Fiore, Lindsay, et al., 2008). Moreover, Brand et al. (2012) noted that individuals who were rated as attractive "wrote texts that conveyed confidence, and it was perhaps this confidence which signaled a [higher] quality [to the reader]" (Brand et al., 2012, p. 169). Similarly, Good Genes theory supports the claim that the good genes of those considered physically attractive are also what helps to make them confident as well (Scheib et al., 1999; Scheib, 2001; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Therefore, the current work hypothesizes

H2: Text confidence mediates the relationship between profile photo attractiveness and profile text attractiveness.

Moreover, because much of the literature, especially with consideration to Good Genes theory, suggests that attractive people do possess a higher number of attractive qualities, it would seem to reason that those consistently rated as physically attractive would have also consistently higher ratings of other attractive attributes as well. For instance, Furlow et al., (1997) found that body symmetry correlates with general intelligence and Langlois et al., (2000) claimed that physically attractive people were frequently found to be more socially skilled, well-adjusted (mentally healthy), successful, and somewhat more intelligent. As such, the current work would argue that those rated as physically attractive would also have consistently high rating of other positive attributes as well. Therefore, those rated as less attractive would have more of a discrepancy between their physical attractiveness ratings and ratings of other positive characteristics,

as there is likely to be more variability in the attractiveness of a less-physically-attractive person's other characterizes. Thus, the current work hypothesizes

H3: The discrepancy between photo attractiveness ratings and text attractiveness ratings will be negatively related to the physical attractiveness of the photo.

Conversely, according to Lundy, Tan, and Cunningham (1998), men are more likely to judge women using a framework of the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype. To elucidate, men are more likely to judge women based on physical characteristics and make inferences about additional attributes based on these traits. Furthermore, throughout the literature a common theme arose of men valuing youthfulness and physical attractiveness in their mate significantly more so than women (Buss, 1988; Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004; Little et al., 2006; Rubenstein et al., 2002; Scheib, 2001). As such, because men appear to scrutinize physical appearance more closely and value it more highly than do women, the current work hypothesizes:

H4: Men will judge women to be less attractive than women judged men to be in Brand et al.'s (2012) study.

Chapter Two: Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 83 males recruited from the Rocky Mountain Region, ranging from 18-24 years of age (M = 21.41, SD = 1.59). Though a majority of participants identified as White (n = 66, 79.5%), several participants identified as Black/African American (n = 6, 7.2%), American Indian/Native American (n = 1, 1.2%), Asian (n = 4, 4.8%), Middle Eastern (n = 4, 4.8%), Hispanic (n = 6, 7.2%), and other (n = 1, 1.2%). Participants could identify as more than one race. More students reported that they were not currently dating or hooking up with anyone or single (n = 36, 43.4%) than in a committed, exclusive relationship (n = 30, 36.1%), with remaining participants reporting that they were dating or hooking up, but not in an exclusive relationship (n = 17, 20.5%). All participants reported as straight (n = 82, 98.8%) or bisexual (n = 1, 1.2%).

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling methods via an IRB-approved recruitment announcement posted on Facebook or sent through emails. Classroom recruitment methods were also used. Undergraduate students were notified through in-class announcements that a questionnaire was available to take online in exchange for compensation. Participants were compensated either with either extra

course credit, if applicable, or entered into a drawing for one of three $25 Amazon gift cards if extra credit was not available.

Materials

The current work used 84 profile texts and their corresponding photos, posted by women on OkCupid, a free online dating site popular among young adults, much like other dating sites such as Tinder and Match. The profiles were selected from women outside of the Rocky Mountain Region, with targets ranging in age from 24-29 years old, a range specifically chosen to reduce the likelihood that a participant would recognize a target. Any participant who recognized a target's profile were asked to skip the profile in question and that portion of questionnaire and it was not included in the overall data set from that participant.

OkCupid was contacted and gave permission to use profiles pulled from its site as long as each target was notified and gave consent. As such, each target was sent an IRB-approved email through the OkCupid site asking for permission to use her profile photo, headline, and "About Me" section. Thus, each profile used in the survey had written consent from the target, via an email, giving the researcher permission to use their profile. Profiles were also gathered using snowball sampling and a pre-approved IRB recruiting announcement. The announcement asked those who were currently on a dating site to please submit their profile photo and a screen shot of their headline and "About Me" section (to ensure accuracy of representation) to a secure, study-specific email if they were interested in having their profile examined for a research study examining the

correlation between physical attractiveness and personality attributes. This notice was posted on Facebook and sent through e-mail to potential sources.

Profile material selected originally included a target's primary photo, the "Headline" to her profile, and the introductory "About Me" text section; however, due to target-specific and identifiable information found in numerous "Headlines," this portion of the profile was removed, leaving a primary photo and "About Me" text section. Answers to specific questions, lists of hobbies, ethnicity, and income were also not included in selection material. Profiles were selected only if a target had a primary photo that clearly showed their face. Profiles that had blurry or potentially misleading (photo-shopped or heavily-filtered) profile photos were also avoided. Finally, photos were chosen so they could not be obviously linked to the corresponding profile text, and vice versa.

After setting profile criteria, a search was conducted for 84 profiles matching the age and location criteria indicated above. Twenty-five targets were then contacted from each of the 50 states with the IRB approved email until 84 targets consented. The 84 profiles were then sorted and arranged by recent activity, alternating the layering process with targets who had logged in only hours earlier to targets who had logged in up to two months prior. The profiles were then separated into two parts: profile texts and profile photographs. Profile texts were copied and then each single text appeared one at a time on the computer screen while the questionnaire was being taken in Qualtrics. All wording and punctuation was retained, including any spelling or grammatical mistakes. Profile photos were also copied and appeared one at a time on the computer screen while the

questionnaire was being taken in Qualtrics. They were displayed in the same color scheme (black and white, full color, and with filters) as they were on the target's profile.

The 84 profiles were separated into 7 sets of 12 using a collating sequence. Photos were separated into sets: Set A, Set B, Set C, Set D, Set E, Set F, Set G, and Set H. Profile texts were also separated into sets: Set 1, Set 2, Set 3, Set 4, Set 5, Set 6, and Set 7. Thus, Set 1 was matched with Set A, Set 2 was matched with Set B, Set 3 was matched with Set C, and so on and so forth. The 83 participants were then randomly assigned to one of the 7 sets by Qualtrics. By these means, Qualtrics was given instructions to randomly and equitably assign text and photo sets to each participant. Although each Set consisted of 12 complete profiles (12 photos and 12 profile texts), participants rated images and profiles independently of each other and were not informed which text belonged to which profile and vice versa.

The order of responding was counterbalanced, such that Group 1, 3, 5, and 7 rated texts first, while Group 2, 4, 6, and 8 rated photos first. Noted at the top of each questionnaire, participants were asked to imagine that they were single and romantically available, even if they were currently engaged in a romantic relationship. Brand et al.'s (2012) original measures were used to test photo and profile attractiveness.

Procedure

Eighty-three participants were recruited by two methods. Some participants were recruited from undergraduate classes and offered extra credit for their participation if eligible, or if ineligible were entered to win one of three $25 Amazon gift cards.

Participants were also recruited using snowball sampling and posts on social media to obtain a larger age range of participants. These participants were also entered to win one of the three $25 Amazon gift card for their participation in the study. After providing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved informed consent as well as a short demographic questionnaire about themselves including age, gender, and relationship status, participants were asked to complete a 48-question survey using the online survey software, Qualtrics. Prior to beginning the survey, participants were reminded that their answers would be kept confidential, and they were asked to answer questions as if they were single and available, even if they were in a relationship. Participants were given as much time as they need to complete the survey.

Measures

Because the dating profiles were the unit of analysis for the current work, scores for each variable were created by averaging the participants' ratings. Before calculating these scores, the researcher recoded the collected data to reflect the 5-point Likert scale of 0 (Not) to 4 (Very) and removed all responses that indicated the additional 6th option of "Cannot Judge." Because Qualtrics assigned participants randomly to groups, and because not everyone who entered the survey completed every item, each profile had from 8-13 responses.

Physical attractiveness was measured using Brand et al.'s (2012) questionnaire. To measure photo attractiveness, participants were asked to evaluate each target on a 5-point Likert-type scale with regard to how physically attractive they found the target (overall), how attractive they found the target for a date, for a short-term sexual

encounter, and for a long-term committed relationship. The scale ranged from 0 (Not) to 4 (Very) with an additional opt-out option for “Cannot Judge.” Next, participants were asked to rate how kind and approachable, confident and self-assured, feminine (rather than masculine or androgynous), symmetrical (with right-and left-side balanced), funny or humorous, fun or outgoing, and intelligent the target seemed based on her photo using the same 5-point Likert-type scale ranging. Following Brand et al.’s (2012) study, the same four items were then averaged to calculate the overall physical attractiveness of a photo (overall, for a date, for sex, for a long-term relationship) and formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .99$). Thus, the mean of these four items ($M = 1.44$, $SD = .77$) will henceforth be referred to as photo attractiveness.

To measure profile text attractiveness, Brand et al.'s (2012) same scale was used. Participants were asked to evaluate each target on a 5-point Likert-type scale with regard to how attractive they found her written profile text (overall), how attractive the profile text made her seem for a date, for a short-term sexual encounter, and for a long-term committed relationship. The scale ranged from 0 (Not) to 4 (Very) with an additional opt-out option for “Cannot Judge.” Next, participants were asked to rate how kind and approachable, confident and self-assured, feminine (rather than masculine or androgynous), funny or humorous, fun or outgoing, and intelligent the target seemed based on her profile text using the same 5-point Likert-type scale ranging. As in Brand et al. (2012), four items were then averaged to calculate the overall attractiveness of a written text (overall, for a date, for sex, for a long-term relationship) and formed a

reliable scale (α = .92). Thus, the mean of these four variables (*M* = 1.83, *SD* = .47) will henceforth be referred to as text attractiveness.

Because the age range of the participants varied, meaning different ages of participants might seek different types of relationships (Rudder, 2014), the current researcher's averaged the four specific variables of overall, for a date, for sex, and for a long-term relationship, in an attempt to achieve a more comprehensive attractiveness score. More specifically, because each participant [male] in this study was not necessarily seeking the same type of relationship, perceptions of attractiveness had the ability to vary, thus effecting each participant's perceptions of each targets profile, especially if they were seeking a one-night stand versus a long-term relationship (Gangestad et al., 2007). Thus, by averaging together the four variables, a more inclusive picture was able to attained. Other variables of central interest to the current work were text confidence (*M* = 2.28, *SD* = .43), text fun (*M* = 2.07, *SD* = .56), text kindness (*M* = 2.11, *SD* = .48), photo confidence (*M* = 2.15, *SD* = .49), and photo fun (*M* = 2.08, *SD* = .53) as they either indicated correlative relationships with overall photo or text attractiveness or illustrated a significant relationship in Brand et al.'s (2012) original work.

Table 1

Physical Attractiveness of Women's Online Dating Photos Variables and Attractiveness of Women's Online Dating Texts Variables: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N = 84)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. PKind	–														
2. PConfident	.66**	–													
3. PFem	.39**	.62**	–												
4. PSym	.46**	.66**	.81**	–											
5. PFunny	.76**	.70**	.47**	.55**	–										
6. PFun	.71**	.72**	.49**	.56**	.80**	–									
7. PIntell	.63**	.45**	.36**	.55**	.60**	.47**	–								
8. TKind	.14	.22*	.16	.20	.12	.03	.20	–							
9. TConfident	.10	.23*	.03	.12	.06	-.04	.15	.61**	–						
10. TFem	.-00	,05	.11	.14	-.05	-.01	.09	.62**	.51**	–					
11. TFunny	.06	.24*	.16	.27*	.15	.07	.16	.72**	.60**	.53**	–				
12. TFun	.06	.31*	.19	.33**	.13	.12	.22	.72**	.67**	.56**	.86**	–			
13. TIntell	.03	-.04	-.07	-.01	-.10	-.14	.13	.61**	.57**	.59**	.43	.44**	_		

Table 1 (Continued)

Physical Attractiveness of Women's Online Dating Photos Variables and Attractiveness of Women's Online Dating Texts Variables: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N = 84)

14. PhotoAttractiveness	.45**	.73**	.79**	.84**	50**	.53**	.51**	.20	.06	.11	.16	.22*	-.04	–
15. TextAttractiveness	.09	.24*	.19	.28*	.08	.11	.19	.73**	.63**	.63**	.75**	.81**	.62**	.22*	–

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 1 (Continued)

Physical Attractiveness of Women's Online Dating Photos Variables and Attractiveness of Women's Online Dating Texts Variables: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N = 84)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
M	1.44	2.17	2.15	2.08	1.91	1.94	2.08	2.05	1.83	2.11	2.28	1.98	1.87	2.08	2.20
SD	.77	.49	.49	.56	.54	.51	.53	.52	.47	.48	.43	.41	.49	.56	.47

Chapter Three: Results

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that when evaluated separately, the physical attractiveness of a profile photo would be positively correlated with the attractiveness of other qualities apparent in the profile text. Only correlations between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness and between photo attractiveness and text fun were significant (see Table 1). Multiple regression examined the relationship between photo attractiveness and overall text attractiveness, text confidence, and text fun. The regression model was significant for photo attractiveness as a predictor of text attractiveness (R = .216, R^2 = .047, F[1, 82] = 4.019, p < .05; β = .216, t = 2.01, p = .048) and text fun (R = .218, R^2 = ..047, F[1, 82] = 4.083, p < .05; β = .218, t = 2.02, p = .047), but not for photo attractiveness as a predictor of text confidence (R = .60, R^2 = .004, F[1, 82] = .298, p = .586; β = .060, t = .546, p = .586). The significant correlation between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness (r = -.216, p = *.048*, n = 84) was similar to the correlation Brand et al. (2012) found between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness (r = .24, p = *.017*, n = 100) however Brand et al. (2012) did not find photo attractiveness to be a significant for text fun as the current work did. Thus, research hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Photo attractiveness predicted overall text attractiveness, though not other positive qualities of the profile text with the exception of text fun.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted that text confidence would mediate the relationship between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness. To test this hypothesis, multiple regression, specifically Baron and Kenny's (1986) method for testing mediated relationships, was used. Following the procedure described by Baron and Kenny (1986) for testing mediated relationships, photo attractiveness was set as an independent variable while text attractiveness was set as the dependent variable. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the independent variable must predict the proposed mediator (text confidence), and the mediator must predict the dependent variable (text attractiveness) while controlling for the independent variable (photo attractiveness). Thus, three regression equations are calculated. In the first, the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable. In the second, the mediating variable is regressed on the independent variable. Finally, the dependent variable is regressed on both the independent variable and the mediator. A significant mediating effect is indicated by significance of all three regressions, with a nonsignificant coefficient, approaching zero, for the independent variable in the third equation.

In relation to hypothesis 2 the first two regression equations were calculated in testing Hypothesis 1. As photo attractiveness was not a significant predictor of text confidence, text confidence does not mediate the relationship between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness. Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the discrepancy between photo attractiveness ratings and text attractiveness ratings would be negatively related to the physical attractiveness of the photo. To test this hypothesis a correlation analysis was performed. The results indicated that the discrepancy between photo attractiveness ratings (M = 1.44, SD = .767) and text attractiveness (M = 1.83, SD = .467) ratings was negatively related to the physical attractiveness of a photo (r = -.345, p = *.001*, n = 75). Thus, the correlation was significant and in the predicted direction, and the hypothesis was supported. The more attractive the individual was, the less of a discrepancy there was between a text and photo rating.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that men would judge women to be less attractive than women judged men to be in Brand et al.'s (2012) study. To test this hypothesis, an independent samples *t*-test analysis was performed based on data from the current study and reported results from the Brand et al. (2012) work. Results indicated that men's physical attractiveness judgements of women (M = 1.44, SD = .77, n = 84) were not significantly different from women's judgments of men (M = 1.33, SD = .86, n = 100), meaning sex is not a contributing factor in how particular an individual is when evaluating another person for elements of attractiveness, $t(182) = .91$, $p > .05$. The hypothesis was not supported.

Chapter Four: Discussion

The goal of the current work was to identify what role, if any, physical attractiveness plays in the world of online dating. Specifically, the researcher was interested in uncovering whether the age-old adage "what is beautiful is better" does actually hold up in a more technological realm. To examine this issue, 84 men were surveyed and asked to rate women's online dating profile photos and texts independently of one another using Brand et al.'s (2012) original measures to test profile photo and text attractiveness. The findings indicated that when a profile is evaluated entirely, not just by specific characteristics, physically attractive people are also more attractive in other ways. Supporting this notion, results indicated the more attractive an individual is, the less discrepancy there is between her overall text and photo ratings, suggesting attractive individuals consistently write more attractive texts than those who are less attractive.

With specific consideration to Brand et al.'s (2012) study, the current work predicted that men would judge women to be less attractive than women judged men to be in Brand et al.'s (2012) study, due to research illuminating the fact that men are more likely to judge women based on physical characteristics and make inferences about additional attributes based on these traits than are women in their judgments of men (Lundy, Tan, & Cunningham, 1998). The current work found no difference between

men's judgments of women's physical attractiveness and women's judgments of men's physical attractiveness.

Finally, of great interest is the difference in the role of confidence between the sexes. Brand et al.'s (2012) study found that confidence mediated the relationship between physical attractiveness and positive personality traits, or in other words, women perceived men who were attractive to exude high levels of confidence, and men who displayed high levels of confidence, in turn, were perceived to also possess additional positive personal qualities. In the current work, results regarding confidence were significantly different from Brand et al.'s (2012) initial study, as photo attractiveness did not predict text confidence in women, however photo confidence was correlated with both photo attractiveness and text attractiveness, and text confidence was correlated with text attractiveness. Thus, in other words, physically attractive women did not express themselves more confidently than less attractive women in their texts, but those who wrote confident sounding texts typically appeared confident.

Attractive People Write Attractive Texts

Hypothesis 1 predicted that when evaluated separately, the physical attractiveness of a profile photo would be positively correlated with the attractiveness of other qualities apparent in the profile text. Multiple regression was used to test this hypothesis and examine the relationship between photo attractiveness and overall text attractiveness, text confidence, and text fun. The regression model was significant for photo attractiveness as a predictor of text attractiveness and text fun, but not for confidence; thus, the research

hypothesis was only partially supported. Photo attractiveness illustrated a weak correlation with text fun and a moderate correlation with overall text attractiveness.

Of note, because results indicated that text attractiveness was significantly related to photo attractiveness when an online dating profile was evaluated in its entirety, overall physically attractive women were also found to have overall higher text attractiveness ratings. Perhaps within the realm of online dating, it is the entire profile which ultimately helps to create a story or persona of the person in the photo, which cannot be achieved through the demonstration of individual qualities. It is instead the combination of many qualities that helps to create the significant correlation found between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness, similar to the correlation Brand et al. (2012) found between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness in their initial study as well.

With regard to photo attractiveness predicting text fun, the current researchers believe an occurrence is taking place where those who are physically attractive are actually formulating their texts to appear more fun, as opposed to confident which can appear unfeminine or forward (Paasonen, 2007), in an effort to project themselves as more attractive to the opposite sex. Meaning, perhaps women believe that projecting themselves as fun will be better than projecting themselves as confident, hence the lack of correlation between photo attractiveness and text confidence. Likewise, maybe physically attractive women are actually downplaying their confidence as they fear men will perceive it as either too threatening, intimidating, or overly direct (Paasonen, 2007; Fullock, 2013) and these physically attractive women fear the quality of confidence in their text will be seen as an off-putting value, hence the quality of fun is being played up,

thus creating the positive correlation. As such, it is not necessarily that those who are attractive are more fun, but they are writing more fun sounding texts to simply appear more attractive to their audience. Therefore, the researcher still believes that it is the entire profile text, not simply individual characteristics such as the variable of fun, which are creating the relationship between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness.

To elucidate and compare with Brand and colleagues' initial study (2012), there were two main parallels. First and foremost, the current work's finding that photo attractiveness is a significant predictor of overall text attractiveness is in line with Brand et al.'s (2012) initial findings and supported through a similar correlation found in both works. As Brand and colleagues (2012) stated, "those who are physically attractive also write more appealing profiles" (p. 169). Thus, it would seem to reason that when researchers such as Levine (2000) deemed online dating would level the playing field for those considered traditionally unattractive, they were incorrect, and those who are physically attractive not only have an unspoken advantage in the electronic realm via their physical attractiveness, but also truly appear to write more appealing texts.

These findings also align with past attraction research. For instance, although there are common features perceived to be attractive among both sexes (e.g. genuineness, trustworthiness, kindness, warmth), the value of these characteristics can fluctuate depending on the type of relationship the man or woman is seeking at the time of log-on (Gangestad, et al., 2007). For instance, past research found a woman seeking a man for a long-term relationship was more attracted to a man who exuded kindness and warmth in his profile photo whereas a woman seeking a man for a short-term sexual encounter was

more attracted to a man who exuded higher levels of masculinity in his photo (Gangestad et al., 2007), such as in a gym or shirtless mirror selfie. As such, it is no wonder that a profile photo would only influence and correlate to a text if evaluated in its entirety, as perceptions of attraction are contingent on relational pursuits.

Similarly, Good Genes theory suggests that positive qualities often cluster together (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999) and outlines a framework which purports those with higher gene quality will be inherently smart, funny, and socially skilled as well (Brand et al., 2012; Scheib et al., 1999; Scheib, 2001; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Intrinsically, Good Genes theory supports the assumption that a profile must be evaluated in its entirety, but more importantly supports the finding that more attractive people are more prone to writing more attractive and socially-skilled profiles. This argument is also supported by Fiore et al. (2008), whose research indicated that online dating profiles with attractive photos are typically judged to be more attractive overall, with higher ratings of both physical attractiveness and personality attributes, while the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype contends that those who are perceived as physically attractive will also be perceived as possessing other desirable attributes as well (Dion, et al., 1972; Eagly, 1991).

These studies (Brand, et al., 2012; Fiore et al., 2008; Gangestad, et al., 1999; Gangestad, et al., 2007) directly support the current work's finding that when evaluated separately, physical attractiveness has the ability to influence and positively impact the attractiveness of a profile text. That said, it could be argued that physically attractive individuals are given preferential treatment, much like the Halo Effect suggests (Landy &

Sigall, 1974), thus affecting evaluation processing. That is, perhaps physically attractive individuals are not judged as meticulously or scrupulously as unattractive or even minimally attractive persons, which could impact participants' decision making skills. The present study's design made this type of preferential treatment impossible, however, the notion is something to consider. With more image-based sites like Tinder, Grindr, and Bumble sites appearing seemingly almost daily, are people even reading profile texts anymore? Or are those who are physically attractive simply being selected based on a set of five photographs?

Interestingly, although the current study design made preferential treatment impossible during the evaluation process by separating texts from photos, a new algorithm developed by OkCupid, which is also in line with the Halo Effect (Landy & Sigall, 1974), is now actually giving preferential treatment to those the site detects as overall more attractive. That is, the top-tenth percentile of users considered most attractive by a combination of user clicks, messages, and likes on OkCupid are sent the following email from OkCupid:

> We just detected that you're now among the most attractive people on OkCupid. We learned this from clicks to your profile and reactions to you in Quickmatch [an algorithm that matches users based on profile keywords, match questions, and demographic criteria a user may set]. Did you get a new haircut or something? Well, it's working! To celebrate, we've adjusted your OkCupid experience: You'll see more attractive people in your results. This won't affect your match percentages, which are still based purely on your answers and desired match's answers. But we'll recommend more attractive people to you. You'll also appear more often to other attractive people. Sign in to see your newly-shuffled matches. Have fun, and don't let this go to your head. (OkCupid, 2015)

Thus, on OkCupid, the most attractive people are now being matched with the . . . most attractive people. If scholars once though that online dating was a way to level the playing field, this added application has removed that notion completely. Not only do physically attractive people write more attractive texts, perhaps due to Good Genes theory, among numerous other rationales, however, with this new development, it seems that those deemed more attractive are now being matched with people on their own level, leaving the rest of us to wonder, who else is out there? If physical attractiveness and personality are linked, how much does a personality or profile text even matter? Undoubtedly, it is at least clear that when evaluated in its entirety, not just by specific characteristics (e.g. confident, kind, outgoing, etc.), a person really can judge a book by its cover.

What's Wrong with Being Confident?

Hypothesis 2 predicted that text confidence would mediate the relationship between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness. As photo attractiveness was not a significant predictor of text confidence, text confidence did not mediate the relationship between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness, and the hypothesis was not supported. Although the hypothesis was not supported, confidence did still play a strong role in women's online dating profiles. Text confidence predicted text attractiveness, and photo confidence strongly predicted both photo attractiveness and text attractiveness. Meaning, women who exuded higher levels of confidence in their profile photos also tended to write more confident-sounding profile texts, and accordingly had higher scores for their overall photo and text attractiveness ratings as well. These findings are

interesting for several reasons, one being that they conflict with Brand et al.'s (2012) original results which noted that men who were rated as physically attractive "wrote texts that conveyed confidence, and it was perhaps this confidence which signaled a [higher] quality [to the reader]" (Brand et al., 2012, p. 169). As such, it is interesting to reason why this finding was considerably different from Brand and colleagues' original study.

While various interpersonal communication scholars list the key role of confidence as a contributing factor to developing a variety of attractive traits such as a high self-esteem, warmth, and an extroverted personality (Brand et al., 2012; Fiore et al., 2008), possibly there is a difference between the sexes' perceptions of the characteristic of confidence or, more likely, perhaps with how this characteristic is perceived and expressed by each sex within the context of online dating. Although Good Genes theory suggests that men will seek out young and physically attractive women, while women will seek out men with broad shoulders, an overall muscular body, a high social-status, and good genes for reproducing, (Ahuvia & Adelman, 1992; Hirschman, 1987; Hitsch, Hortacsu, & Ariely, 2004; Jagger, 2001; Lynn & Bolig, 1985; Nevid, 1984; Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008; Woll & Cozby, 1987) (all characteristics one could reason would increase an individual's confidence level), the theory itself does not specifically list the key role of confidence within its theoretical framework.

Although confidence is not included in the structure itself, Good Genes theory does support the claim that the good genes of those considered physically attractive are also what helps to make them confident (Scheib et al., 1999; Scheib, 2001; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999). Moreover, "physically attractive men with physical indicators of good

genes tend to have more dating success" (Brand et al., 2012, p. 169), and therefore gain confidence not only from their own high mate value, but also from their perceived success in the dating world (Rhodes, Simmons, & Peters, 2005). Although Rhodes and colleagues (2005) were not testing to examine if confidence was correlated with attractiveness, it could be argued that the current study's results were somewhat similar to Rhodes et al.'s (2005) work, as both studies found photo confidence and text confidence to be correlated with one another.

Although these studies were very similar with respect to this finding, one key difference among them was the gender of the participants, meaning Rhodes and colleagues (2005) examined women evaluating men's profiles, while the current work examined men's perceptions of women's profiles. Because Rhodes et al., (2005) alluded to a connection between physical attractiveness and confidence among men, and Brand et al. (2012) found a distinct connection between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness in men, clearly gender is affecting how the variable of confidence is expressed toward potential online dating partners.

Because the notion of gender is performed, each individual is responsible for developing their own set markers and language with which they choose to present themselves. For instance, women stereotypically have a higher toned voices, wear dresses, jewelry, and do their hair and makeup (Butler, 1990; Fullick, 2013). In an online realm such as OkCupid, users typically only have their text blub and photo to perform their gender identity so users must interpret a vast amount of information from very little material. As such, perhaps SIP theory would explain how users must make assumptions

to fill in the blanks (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, et al., 2001). Unfortunately, this can frequently lead to the fulfillment of gender stereotypes. For instance, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), traditionally in heterosexual relationships, binary gender stereotypes for masculine and feminine couples include the notion that the man is taller and darker while the woman is shorter in stature and thinner while often being lighter in complexion. This difference reflects how "women and men are required to complement each other-to be 'opposite' rather than merely 'different,'" (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 49).

In a similar vein, through a content analysis of print dating advertisements, Elizabeth Jagger (1998) thematically coded a number of personality traits as “masculine" including intelligence, assertiveness, strength of character, and characteristics associated with being ambitious and hard-working. Feminine traits included empathy, coquetry, passivity, the appearance of being nurturing, intuitive, talkative, and related correlates. Although results of Jagger’s (1998) work showed the qualities of weakness and dependency were frequently eroticized by advertisers (Cameron & Kulick, 2003) regardless of whether the characteristics were possessed by the women or the men, of greater interest to the current work were the themes that arose during the content analysis itself.

Published dating advertisements as far as 20 years back, conceptualized to sell the idea of dating, pitched men as strong, smart, ambitious, hard-working and the current researcher’s would reason, as good looking and therefore confident as well. Conversely, women were being portrayed and printed in these same dating advertisements not as

smart, strong, and confident, but instead as kind, passive, nurturing, intuitive, and once again the current work would reason, beautiful (Jagger, 1998). Although these variables are admirable, there are two immensely different themes arising between the genders: passive versus confident. Thus it is no wonder that, in the first place, being physically attractive may not create confidence in women. Perhaps endless advertisements (both print and commercials) suggesting a woman should be thin, kind, funny, pretty, and toned only create self-doubt and stress, so when a woman is physically attractive, she may lack the confidence to craft a confident sounding profile text. Secondly, men may not find confidence as attractive in women as women find confidence in men due to traditional gender roles. For instance, it is possible that due to these purported stereotypes, men find confidence arrogant or intimidating, oppose to attractive.

Although the advertisements in Jagger's (1998) analysis were published over 20 years ago, the gendered stereotypes they detail still exist and as a result, Jagger (1998) points to shifting definitions of masculinity. As past scholars also support (Fullick, 2013) women are now seeking men who are warm, sensitive, and loving in addition to being a good example of a potential provider. Interestingly enough however, although men's traditional gender roles and norms have shifted, "women are still expected to exhibit some level of 'delicacy,' and 'assertiveness' is [still] not part of the dominant female gender script" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 49). Likewise, because men find delicacy attractive, it is reasonable that the women who had higher ratings of photo kindness and photo fun were rated higher overall, thus illustrating that men are perhaps more attracted to a female who appears more lighthearted, easy going, and fun in her

photo than one who appears confident. However, the question remains, why can't confident women be fun and kind as well? Does being physically attractive create confidence in women or reinforce self-doubt?

The present researcher would argue, first, that appearing confident and delicate are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor is confidence always perceived as assertive. For instance, in the current work the text confidence variable was actually found to be strongly correlated with text attractive and was the second-highest-rated text characteristic (after kindness). So do physically attractive and confident women not know how write confident texts or do they simply choose not to?

This question can be answered using a few different lenses. By means of a gender focused lens, perhaps women believe that projecting themselves as fun or kind in their text will be better than projecting themselves as confident, hence physically attractive women are downplaying their confidence as they fear men will perceive it as either too controlling, assertive, or generally less attractive. Conversely, perhaps confidence displayed by men is seen as a form of masculinity where confidence displayed by women can be perceived as threatening, intimidating, and overly direct (Paasonen, 2007; Fullock, 2013). Thus physically attractive women fear the quality of confidence in their text will be seen as an off-putting value, when in reality text confidence had a moderately strong positive correlation with text attractiveness. Consequently, attractive women are choosing to craft texts which radiate the characteristics they believe men find attractive (e.g. fun) and downplay traits, such as confidence, which have been taught through various channels, such as advertisements (Jagger, 1998), to be innately unattractive. As such,

physically attractive women who exude confidence in their photographs may choose to craft texts which do not illuminate the same level of confidence.

With concern to the nonsignificant relationship between text confidence and photo attractiveness, specifically with regard to women who received lower ratings of photo attractiveness but higher ratings of text attractiveness, perhaps these findings could be attributed to less-attractive women writing more confident-sounding texts to compensate for their lack of physical attractiveness, in an attempt to signal their own high-mate value to potential suitors (Rhodes, et al., 2005). Finally, and most in line with the aforementioned scholars (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Jagger, 1998), perhaps women who are confident in their appearance are not generally confident. By these means, attractive women are portraying an air of confidence in their photo, but may not be as confident in their texts, signaling the possibility of low self-esteem. Clearly, more research is needed to identify why exactly confidence is being perceived and expressed differently between the genders and more importantly, why it is not necessarily always an attractive trait for women when online dating.

Variability of Attractiveness Ratings between Photos and Texts

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the discrepancy between photo attractiveness ratings and text attractiveness ratings would be negatively related to the physical attractiveness of a photo. The results of the correlation test indicated that the difference between photo attractiveness ratings and text attractiveness ratings negatively related to the physical attractiveness of a photo. Thus, the correlation was in the predicted direction, and the hypothesis was supported. The more physically attractive an individual, the less of a

discrepancy there will be between a text and photo ratings. The less physically attractive an individual, the more likely a discrepancy between their physical attractiveness ratings and ratings of other positive characteristics is to exist. The current work reasons the discrepancy in unattractive or less attractive user profiles is partially due to the increased likelihood of variability in attractiveness scores of a less-physically-attractive person's other characteristics. By these means, those rated as physically attractive would also have consistently higher rating of other positive attributes as well.

Basis for these assumptions stems from the reviewed literature, especially with consideration to Good Genes theory, which suggests that attractive people do possess a higher number of attractive qualities than unattractive people (Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008), and thus it would seem reasonable that those consistently rated as physically attractive would have also consistently higher ratings of other attractive attributes as well, thus explaining the smaller discrepancy. For example, it has been noted that facial symmetry has been linked to higher levels of intelligence and overall attractiveness (Furlow et al., 1997) and findings in the current study found a strong correlation between text attractiveness and facial symmetry, indicating those deemed more symmetrical (e.g. attractive) also write more attractive texts, a finding in direct support of Good Genes theory.

Accordingly, it is no wonder that those rated as less attractive also had the potential to be perceived as less intelligent (due to a lack of facial symmetry), less confident, funny, socially skilled, or kind (Brand et al., 2012; Folstad & Karter, 1992; Frederick & Haselton, 2007; Scheib et al., 1999; Scheib, 2001; Thornhill & Gangestad,

1999); thus explaining the additional variability between text and photo ratings. Furthermore, this negative relationship between the physical attractiveness of a photo and the discrepancy between photo and text attractiveness ratings is believed by the current researchers to be partially attributed to factors associated with SIP theory and the Halo effect. Although genes play a crucial role in the evaluation of a potential mate, the aforementioned concepts clearly hold weight as well.

SIP theory states that individuals make inferences about others based on available cues. Within the confines of SIP theory, examples of cues include reading an excerpt from a profile text, examining a photo, or even instant messaging with someone online. Because these cues are often subtle, it is the task of the individual to determine how much weight each cue holds and how to interpret what he or she sees (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, et al., 2001). Thus, within the borders of the current work, although men did not know which photo belonged to each profile text, they still had the ability to interpret the photographs and texts accordingly. Although photos were chosen so they could not be obviously linked to the corresponding profile text, and vice versa, due to the outcome of the hypothesis, it almost seems reasonable to assert that enough attractive cues exist within a target's photo or text to note which text could belong to which photo.

As previously mentioned, the Halo effect purports a cognitive bias among evaluators that attractive individuals will receive a superior evaluation for the exact same task done by a less attractive individual (Landy & Sigall, 1974). Within the framework of online dating, it is hard to reason that those considered physically attractive do not have an upper hand even when compared to another user who has the exact same profile text

but a less attractive photograph. While this is interesting and it appears that those described as more physically attractive would have more of an edge on a better evaluation for their prospective profile texts, the survey design made it impossible for any sort of bias to occur as texts and photos were rated independently of one another and by different participants. However, it is very interesting to consider that some sort of connection may be occurring to create more of a discrepancy between less attractive profile texts and photos while those with higher evaluations are fulfilling aspects of what the Halo Effect purports to be bias. Realistically, and in conjunction with hypothesis 1, it is more likely that attractive people either present themselves better online or indeed truly do write better profile texts than those considered less physically attractive.

Differences in Attractiveness Ratings between the Sexes

Hypothesis 4 predicted that men would judge women to be less physically attractive than women judged men to be in Brand et al.'s (2012) study. The research hypothesis was not supported. Results relating to men's evaluations of women's profile photos were not significantly different from women's judgments of men, suggesting sex is not a contributing factor in how particular an individual is when evaluating another person for elements of attractiveness.

Although this hypothesis was unsupported, existing literature finds that men value physical attractiveness more in their mate more than women (Buss, 1988; Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004; Little et al., 2006; Rubenstein et al., 2002; Scheib, 2001), which is what initially led the current work to predict it would lead to higher levels of scrutiny among female profiles; it actually did not.

This finding could be partially explained through several factors, one being subjectivity of attractiveness. Because attractiveness is subjective and the survey administered was focused on perceptions of attractiveness, it is hard to have a baseline to say what is and is not objectively attractive. Therefore, when comparing individual participant opinions in the current work, and in the larger spectrum, entire studies such as that of Brand et al.'s (2012) and the current study's findings, it is hard to scientifically say whether men judge women to be more attractive than women judge men. Similarly, it is possible that the particular photos submitted by women in the current study were equally attractive as the photos submitted by men in Brand et al.'s (2012) study.

Thus, it is reasonable to assume then that if one accepts these results at face value, then men and women do not differ in judgements of physical attractiveness of the opposite sex. Accordingly, the difference, then, is not in perceptions of attractiveness, but in how influential the perception is for men versus women. (Buss, 1988; Hirschman, 1987; Hitsch, Hortacsu, & Ariely, 2004; Jagger, 2001; Woll & Cozby, 1987) and perhaps what type of relationship the individual is seeking at the time of log-on (Gangestad et al., 2007).

Conclusion

In summation, the current work adds to the foundation created by past theories and models, specifically the Halo Effect (Landy & Sigall, 1974), the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype (Dion, Bersheid, & Walster, 1972; Eagly, 1991), and Good Genes theory (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1999) with two basic findings including photo attractiveness predicting overall text attractiveness for men's evaluations of women and

the result that the discrepancy between photo attractiveness ratings and text attractiveness ratings negatively relates to the physical attractiveness of a photo. These results not only contribute directly to the Halo Effect model, the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype, and Good Genes theory, as both findings exemplify physically attractive individuals as to possessing more positive traits (whether actual or perceived), but the results also lay the groundwork for additional research to be performed under the umbrella of these models and Good Genes theory with consideration to scholarship in the field of attraction and online dating.

Furthermore, with concern to Social Learning theory, the current work provides an impetus to begin examining what role genetics may play within this concept. Although the current findings would point to the notion that genetics do play an important role in the perceptions of attractiveness, there is room for research in this field, especially with consideration to confidence. It appears that there is a difference in the display of confidence in texts between attractive men and women, which implies an interaction of genes and environment (e.g. women have learned to downplay confidence or have had their confidence diminished). Similarly, because it is clear that attraction ideologies are shifting, it would be interesting to examine how photos are changing to stay current within this same framework (e.g. men posting muscular photos while women are seeking more sensitive matches). Finally, the present study also found confidence to be a non-mediating factor between photo attractiveness and text attractiveness in men's evaluations of women's profiles and found men's evaluations of women's profile photos not to be significantly different from women's judgments of men (Brand et al., 2012), suggesting

gender is not a contributing factor in how particular an individual is when evaluating another person for elements of attractiveness.

Because Good Genes theory suggests desired traits fluctuate depending on the type of relationship an individual is seeking at the time of log-on (Gangestad et al., 2007), and the current work's participant pool was 18-24 years of age, it would be interesting to increase the age demographic by ten years, to see if older participants potentially seeking more serious relationships were attracted to different personality variables, namely confidence. There is opportunity for these ideologies to develop and grow with the development of technology driven sites like OkCupid and Tinder, and there is massive potential to transform this set of already existing principles to something even more exceptional. It is the researcher's hope that the current findings will aid in doing this.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future research would benefit from evaluating the 84 profiles qualitatively. Because each profile was evaluated individually, overall mean scores were calculated to determine the attractiveness of each text and photo, as well as each trait (e.g. fun, outgoing, kind). Thus, it would be interesting to examine texts that received overall high scores and profiles that received high scores based on these specific traits (e.g. fun, outgoing, kind) to determine what words are associated with highly rated profiles. Accordingly, if ten profile texts had high overall scores, it would be interesting to perform thematic analysis to determine which words or phrases were typically associated with highly (or lowly) rated profiles. From there researchers could use this approach to essentially build the "perfect profile" or build profiles directed to specific users. In

connection with this analysis, since profile texts were found to be a significant predictor of photo attractiveness, it would be interesting to match a profile photo which initially had lower ratings of attractiveness and a profile photo which had higher ratings of attractiveness with the "perfect profile text," to determine if a profile text can increase baseline attractiveness ratings of a photo.

Along these lines, it would be interesting for future scholars to examine if it is possible for participants to match texts and photos (which belong to the same profile) solely based on what they read and see, in addition to testing the photos and texts that are matched for similar levels of attractiveness to one another (as the current work found) and examine if the photo and text attractiveness of participant-generated matches are more or less strongly correlated than real matches. This would aid in adding support to the current findings as well as add an additional layer to the current work. If individuals believe attractive people to have positive traits, as both the Halo effect (Landy & Sigall, 1974) and current work claim, and SIP theory purports an individual will make assumptions based off an image to make a more balanced opinion (Walther et al., 1992; Walther, et al., 2001), it would be interesting to the test these scenarios where participants have all of the correct matches available to them, unlike in the current study, to see what variability might occur in the outcome.

Alternatively, future research should also consider adjusting the age range to an older sample size. The current study used participants with ages ranging from 18-24. Typically, men in this age group are not hoping to enter a serious, long term relationship and in the current study a majority of participants (n = 54, 65%) were single or in a non-

committed relationship. By increasing participants' age range to 26- 32, more men may be seeking serious or long term relationships versus short-term or casual ones, thus effecting the overall evaluations of each profile as well as individual characteristics such as confidence.

Finally, because the current work's findings differed so drastically with consideration to Brand et al.'s (2012) findings relating to the confidence variable, future research would benefit from honing in on the confidence characteristic to determine why it is that men do not find confidence as attractive in women as women find it in men. Conversely, perhaps future research could examine why being physically attractive may not create confidence in women or why physically attractive women do not project confidence. Along these same lines, perhaps future researchers could apply a more critical lens or take a more feminist perspective and investigate the role of gender within the confines of online dating as there are clearly gender differences occurring. Along these same lines, it would be beneficial for future researchers to examine what role race and ethnicity plays in perceptions of attraction. Finally, perhaps the suggested adjustment to the age group above will provide insight to the discrepancy between the results or possibly a greater manipulation is needed to the study design, however, at the very least, more research is needed on this particular variable to provide further insight for contrasting findings.

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