

## **Introduction**

As mentioned by Pew Research Center in 2016, online dating is becoming a popular mode of finding a dating partner. Whitty's study in 2007 found that participants found it important to "sell themselves" and often misrepresented themselves to appear more attractive when creating online profiles. This is in agreement to Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). According to Eagly and Wood's study (1999) across cultures women and men value different things when picking a mate. Women were found to value ambition (in relation to obtaining resources) and men were found to value physical attractiveness (in relation to reproductive ability). Fisman, Iyenar, Kamenica, and Simonsin found in 2006 that men avoid women with higher levels of ambition. Based on those findings, the researchers of this study hypothesized that facial attractiveness and ambition would have an effect on men's and women's evaluations of potential mates, and that women would be more attracted based on ambition and men would be more attracted to physical attractiveness portrayed by a potential mate on an online dating profile.

## **Method**

This study was a convenience sample of 116 (65 females, 51 males) heterosexual college age (18-22) students at a small, private, four-year, primarily undergraduate college in the Midwestern United States, and participated for extra credit or received no compensation and were recruited by word of mouth or student organizations. The average age of the females was 19.77 years old with a standard deviation of 1.21, and the average age of the males was 19.70 years old with a standard deviation of 1.22. The demographics of race and religion were as

follows: European American (87%), people of color (13%), Roman Catholic (41%), Protestant (21%), other, no, or unknown in their religious traditions (38%). The participants first completed an informed consent, then viewed one of four dating profiles of the opposite sex on a screen; these profiles included a more or less ambitious autobiography and more or less physically attractive photo. After viewing the profile, they completed a 5-item likeability questionnaire (same as the one used in the study by Sritharan 2010). They could respond on a 1 (not at all)-7 (very much) scale to answer: how much the participant liked the person, if the participant would go on a date with the person, if the participant would like to be friends with the person, if the participant thought the person is nice, and if the participant would like to get to know the person better. All ratings were then added to form a composite score, the higher the composite, the more favorable the evaluation, which indicates increased attraction.

## **Results**

The researchers found that both sexes rated individuals higher on interpersonal attraction that were more physically attractive and ambitious. However, the effects of ambition and physical attractiveness were comparable and independent, and the effect between these variables was not statistically significant ( $p=.49$ ) This supports the hypothesis that facial attractiveness and ambition would have an effect on men's and women's evaluations of potential mates. The researchers would reject the hypothesis that women would be more attracted based on ambition and men would be more attracted to physical attractiveness portrayed by a potential mate on an online dating profile; there is no statistically significant difference between the sexes on these variables as represented by a small effect size of .16 and a low p value of .001.

## **Discussion**

These results show that both men and women feel more interpersonal attraction to potential mates that display high physical attractiveness and ambition. Therefore, humans are more attracted to people who exhibit signs of reproductive ability and indicators of financial success. In context to online dating profiles, individuals that display these characteristics are more likely to be selected by potential partners, while profiles displaying low physical attractiveness and low ambition would be the least likely to be selected by potential partners.