1989

Physical Attractiveness: Effects on Trained and Untrained Observers' Ratings of Heterosocial Skill and Anxiety in Female College Students.

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Physical attractiveness: Effects on trained and untrained observers' ratings of heterosocial skill and anxiety in female college students

Calvert, James Douglas, Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1989
Physical Attractiveness: Effects on Trained and Untrained Observers' Ratings of Heterosocial Skill and Anxiety in Female College Students

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of Psychology

by

James D. Calvert
B.A., Clemson University, 1983
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1984
August 1989
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my entire dissertation committee for their help and patience during this entire effort. I would like especially to thank W. Drew Gouvier, Ph.D., my major professor, for allowing me the space to conduct my own research while still being there to make sure I kept on track. Frank Gresham, Ph.D., also deserves a great debt of gratitude for all the help he gave me on the statistics. There were many days I was sure that all was lost, but Frank was there to point out another way to look at the data. My other committee members, Drs. Joe Witt, Mary Lou Kelley, and Fredda Blanchard-Fields, were all helpful in their suggestions and great cooperation in getting everyone together for the dissertation meetings, which was no small feat in itself. I leave off these acknowledgments with a final nod to Joe Witt for these words of wisdom, which were often of great help in graduate school - "It is often easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission."
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Abstract

Physical attractiveness has been shown to be an important interpersonal variable. Physically attractive persons are perceived by others as possessing high levels of positive characteristics such as intelligence, competence, and warmth. Although research from social psychology has suggested that physical attractiveness has a major impact on peoples' perceptions, research on the behavioral assessment of social skill and anxiety has given little attention to the effects of physical attractiveness on ratings of skill and anxiety. The present study was designed to assess the effects of physical attractiveness on ratings of heterosocial skill and anxiety. A 4(groups) X 2(Observers) factorial design that was based on the Solomon four-group design was utilized, with physical attractiveness being the "pre-post testing" and a five-minute role-play interaction being the "treatment". The format for each group was as follows: (Group 1) rate attractiveness, rate skill and anxiety, rate attractiveness; (Group 2) rate skill and anxiety, rate attractiveness; (Group 3) rate attractiveness, wait five minutes, rate attractiveness; (Group 4) wait five minutes, rate attractiveness. The skill and anxiety ratings were done via audio hook-up. Subjects included 80 female undergraduates (20 per group). Ratings were
done by six trained (three male and three female) and six untrained (three male and three female) observers. Interobserver reliabilities were found to be at acceptable levels. Results from the 2(Group) X 2(Observers) MANOVA were significant for differences between Group 1 and Group 2 and for differences between observers. An examination of the univariate ANOVAs for differences between Groups 1 and 2 revealed that subjects in Group 1 were rated significantly higher on skill and the four intermediate behaviors and lower on anxiety than subjects in Group 2. None of the univariate ANOVAs for differences between observers reached significance. As such, a stepwise discriminant analysis was performed and two of the intermediate behaviors, personal conversation type and conversation content, significantly discriminated between trained and untrained observers. These results suggest that physical attractiveness affects both trained and untrained observers ratings of skill and anxiety. The reason for the differences in observers, with trained observers apparently being more influenced by attractiveness on the two intermediate behaviors than untrained observers, is not known and further research is necessary to fully explain these differences. However, it does appear that physical attractiveness
affects observers' ratings of heterosocial skill and anxiety and needs to be evaluated in future research dealing with social skills.
Introduction

Physical attractiveness has been shown to be an important interpersonal variable. Research has suggested that people who are physically attractive are perceived by others as possessing high levels of specific and general characteristics such as abstract cognitive ability and general performance skills (Webster & Driskell, 1983). It has been found that physically attractive children (ages three through adolescence) are viewed by their peers as more socially competent, exhibiting more prosocial behavior, and are picked more often as friends than unattractive children (Cavior & Dokecki, 1973; Dion, 1973; Dion & Berscheid, 1974; Dion & Stein, 1978; Korthase & Trenholme, 1982; Lerner & Lerner, 1977; Smith, 1985; Sussman, Mueser, Grau, & Yarnold, 1983; Vaughn & Langlois, 1983). Based on teacher ratings, attractive female students tend to be given more desirable personality ratings than unattractive students (Rich, 1975).

Physical attractiveness has also been shown to play an important role in occupational status. In general, attractive job candidates are preferred over unattractive applicants (Cann, Siegfried, & Pearce, 1981; Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977; Cash & Kilcullen, 1985; Dipboye, Arvey, & Terpstra, 1977; Heilman & Stopec, 1985a; Hickling, Noel, & Yutzler, 1979).
Physical attractiveness can also influence the outcome of courtroom proceedings. For example, attractive rape victims are assigned less responsibility for being raped than their unattractive counterparts (Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983). Attractive defendants are more likely to be acquitted and, if found guilty, receive less severe sentences than unattractive defendants (Stewart, 1980).

Attractive counselors are also perceived more favorably than unattractive counselors (Cash, Begley, McCown, & Weise, 1975; Lewis & Walsh, 1978; Paradise, Cohl, & Zweig, 1980; Vargas & Borkowski, 1982). Relative to the physically unattractive counselor, the attractive counselor is generally perceived as more intelligent, friendly, trustworthy, competent and warm. These findings appear to be strongest for attractive female counselors. In terms of the people counselors see, unattractive persons are more likely to be judged as having a psychological disturbance than attractive persons (Jones, Hansson, & Phillips, 1978).

Physical attractiveness appears to have a profound impact on people's perception. Indeed, in addition to the areas mentioned above, there has been a great deal of research attesting to the positive influence
physical attractiveness has in heterosocial interactions. However, before discussing the effects of physical attractiveness in heterosocial situations, it is important to point out some of the problems experienced by the attractive citizens of the world.

**Disadvantages of Physical Attractiveness**

Although being attractive appears to be advantageous in most situations, the physically attractive do have some problem areas. In some situations, physical attractiveness can be a handicap for females. For example, in occupational settings attractive males are seen as more competent than unattractive males and all women in most jobs, especially managerial positions. Attractive females, on the other hand, are seen as most competent in "traditional" female jobs (e.g. secretary), while their attractiveness is disadvantageous in managerial positions (Cash, et al., 1977; Cash & Kilcullen, 1985; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985a, 1985b). Thus, it appears that sex-role stereotypes are important mediators. Within their "role" attractive females are perceived favorably. Outside of their "role" they're perceived less favorably.

Attractive persons may also face the problem of being easily forgettable. It has been suggested that highly attractive people are more typical in appearance
than less attractive people (Light, Hollander, & Kayra-Stuart, 1981). Although attractive people are liked more, they may be harder to recognize because they tend to have fewer distinctive or unusual features. But the findings of Light et al. (1981) are contrary to those of previous research (e.g., Cross, Cross, & Daly, 1971; Fleishman, Buckley, Klosinsky, Smith, & Tuck, 1976; Shepherd, & Ellis, 1973). Light et al. (1981) suggested that the differences in findings may be attributable to a smaller sample of photographs or a failure to control for study time of photographs in previous research. Another possible explanation for the differences in the findings is that Light et al. used only male subjects to memorize faces. Perhaps there is a gender difference in the memory of faces. Certainly, more research is needed before a clear conclusion can be made about memory of attractive persons.

Attractive people can also create contrast problems for others. When rated by males (Kenrick & Gutierres, 1980) or by themselves (Cash, Cash, & Butters, 1983), average to better-than-average looking females who were contrasted with highly attractive females were rated as less attractive or rated themselves as less attractive than when there was no
contrast. It should be noted that such effects are not always negative. If a person is with an attractive friend he or she is perceived as more attractive than when by themselves or when the person with whom they are contrasted is just a bystander (Geiselman, Haight, & Kimata, 1984). Thus, a contrast effect seems to occur when the contiguous targets are not linked as friends, whereas an assimilation effect occurs when the targets are linked as friends (Cash et al., 1983).

There is also evidence to suggest that attractive females are viewed by other females as being more vain, egotistical, unsympathetic, likely to divorce, and have affairs than their unattractive counterparts (Dermer & Thiel, 1975). These authors suggest that jealousy (i.e., the less attractive women envy their more attractive counterparts) may play some part in these evaluations. However, they also found that males expect attractive females to be more conceited than unattractive females.

Thus, physical attractiveness does not always create positive effects. Indeed, as noted above, there are numerous negative perceptions about persons who are physically attractive.

Physical Attractiveness in Heterosocial Interactions

Although there are notable problems with being attractive, especially for females, researchers have
demonstrated that there are many more advantages than disadvantages associated with being physically attractive. As noted earlier, attractiveness affects children's, jurors', employers', and patients' expectations. However, one of the most important areas that attractive persons have been shown to excel is in heterosocial interactions.

Studies have reported significant positive correlations between physical attractiveness and dating popularity (Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971; Curran & Lippold, 1975; Green, Buchanan & Hever, 1984; Husain & Kureshi, 1983; Stroebe, Inkso, Thompson, & Layton, 1971; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966). Each of these studies found that physical attractiveness was a significant, and generally the most significant predictor of females being chosen by males. Indeed, it has been shown that high-frequency dating females are rated as more attractive than low-frequency dating females (Baker & Calvert, 1985; Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975), and that the most important determinant of a male liking his date is the date's physical attractiveness (Berscheid et al., 1971; Green et al., 1984; Stroebe et al., 1971; Udry & Eckland, 1984; Walster et al., 1966).

Numerous studies have found that the perceptual
effects of physical attractiveness are stronger for males than for females. It has been suggested that females place greater emphasis on status and other social and economic attributes of males, whereas males' primary interest is in physical appearance (Coombs & Kenkel, 1966; Green et al., 1984; Rubin, 1973; Shanteau & Nagy, 1979). However, physical attractiveness appears to play an important role in the heterosocial choices of both males and females.

It must be noted that although physical attractiveness plays an important part in heterosocial interaction, the direction of its effects are in debate. For example, some research has suggested that when positive information about a person precedes visual contact, these people receive higher attractiveness ratings than when rated without preceeding information (Gross & Crofton, 1977; Owens & Ford, 1978; Webster & Driskell, 1983). In these studies raters were given descriptions of a person attached to a photograph. Results revealed that the pictures attached to positive descriptions received higher physical attractiveness ratings than the picture alone. These studies show that persons who are attractive and have positive aspects (e.g., desirable personality characteristics) are rated as more attractive than persons with either attribute alone.
Although some research has argued that higher status individuals are in turn viewed as more physically attractive than low status individuals, thereby arguing that high status or high skills influence attractiveness ratings, most research has examined how physical attractiveness affects other attributes such as ability and likability. For example, Landy and Sigall (1974) found that male raters consistently gave essays that were supposedly written by attractive females higher marks than essays attributed to unattractive females. Webster and Driskell (1983) also point out that physically attractive persons are seen as possessing high states of skill.

Indeed, it has been suggested that those who are more attractive are also more socially skilled (Goldman & Lewis, 1977; Guise, Pollans & Turkat, 1982). Goldman and Lewis (1977) had subjects talk to subjects of the opposite sex over the phone and rate the social skill and how much they liked the person they talked to. Independent observers rated the subject's attractiveness. Results revealed that the more physically attractive subjects (as rated by the observers) received the higher skill and liking ratings from the opposite sex subjects. Thus, it appears
attractive people may be more skilled in heterosocial interactions, possibly due to more practice.

However, Snyder, Tanke, and Berscheid (1977) found that there may also be a self-fulfilling prophetic stereotype at work in social situations. In their study, they found that subjects interacted differently in phone conversation depending upon whether they thought they were talking to an attractive or unattractive female. Naive judges, rating tapes of the male subjects' interactions, found the males to behave in a friendly, likeable and sociable manner when interacting with what they thought to be an attractive female. Male subjects were not rated as highly on these variables when interacting with "unattractive" females.

It appears that there may be a "halo" effect for attractive persons, especially females. Research has suggested that this halo effect, while not as large as once suspected, does have a significant effect on males' judging of females (Kaplan, 1978; Lucker, Beane, & Helmreich, 1981). Certainly, research on primacy effects has suggested that the primacy effect exerts considerable control on perceptions (e.g., Asch, 1952; Jones, Rock, Shaver, Goethals, & Ward, 1968). It has even been asserted that the primacy effect is stronger than the recency effect in interpersonal interactions.
Thus, as physical appearance is usually the first information a person has in heterosocial interactions, and physical attractiveness has a positive or "halo" effect, it would seem plausible to suggest that physical attractiveness has a significant effect on observers' ratings of heterosocial skill. Indeed, researchers have suggested that physical attractiveness may have such a profound effect precisely because it is usually the first stimuli/information received by a person (Benassi, 1982).

It appears that physical attractiveness has a significant effect in heterosocial situations. In general, high levels of attractiveness are positively correlated with dating success, both in terms of quantity and rated satisfaction with their current dating patterns.

Behavioral Assessment of Heterosocial Skill and Anxiety and Physical Attractiveness

Although physical attractiveness has been shown to be a significant variable in choosing heterosocial dating partners, it has been given relatively slight attention in the behavioral assessment literature. There is, however, a plethora of social skills research with male subjects. This research includes both
Perrewe, & Arland, 1983; Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975; Gorecki, Dickson, Anderson, & Jones, 1981; Jaremko, Myers, Daner, Moore, & Allin, 1982; Lipton & Nelson, 1980; MacDonald & Cohen, 1981; Nelson, Hayes, Felton, & Jarrett, 1985), and a few studies have utilized females exclusively (e.g., Baker & Calvert, 1985; Calvert, 1984; Frisch & Higgins, 1986; Greenwald, 1977; Greenwald, 1978; Haemmerlie, 1983; Higgins, Frisch, & Smith, 1983; Kuhlenschmidt, Conger, & Firth, 1985; Myszka & Galassi, 1985; Scott & Edelstein, 1981). Of the studies mentioned, only one of the male heterosocial skill studies (Kupke et al., 1979), three male/female skill studies (Dow, 1985; Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975; Nelson et al., 1985), and five female skill studies (Baker & Calvert, 1985; Calvert, 1984; Greenwald, 1977; Kuhlenschmidt et al., 1985; Scott & Edelstein, 1981) examined ratings of physical attractiveness. All of these studies, except for Kuhlenschmidt et al. (1985), whose observational rating reliabilities were very low, reported significant effects for physical attractiveness. Many of these studies found that high-frequency daters or high-skilled subjects (both male and female) could be differentiated from low-frequency daters or low-skilled daters by ratings of physical attractiveness alone.
(Baker & Calvert, 1985; Calvert, 1984; Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975; Greenwald, 1977; Nelson et al., 1985). Baker and Calvert (1985) and Greenwald (1977) both reported that physical attractiveness was the most significant discriminator of high- and low-frequency dating females.

Based upon these results, it appears that physical attractiveness should be examined in the heterosocial skill literature. Indeed, Arkowitz (1981) reported that physical attractiveness is modifiable and that "appearance training" may be a viable treatment modality. However, before beautifying people it would seem prudent to suggest that further examination of physical attractiveness' effect on observers' ratings of skill and anxiety is needed.

Baker and Calvert (1985) noted that physical attractiveness accounts for much of the variance in untrained observer ratings of skill and anxiety, pointing to a need for a systematic evaluation of the effects of physical attractiveness on trained observers. Indeed, it would be interesting to note if physical attractiveness effects trained and untrained observers differently. Calvert (1985) and Wallander, Conger, and Ward (1983) found that trained and untrained observers rated skill similarly. However, if training were to help negate the effects of physical
attractiveness, then a strong argument could be made for training observers.

In addition, there is still the question of whether, or how much, physical attractiveness affects skill or vice versa. Scott and Edelstein (1981) found that actors taught specific positive interaction strategies were rated more physically attractive than those performing more incompetent strategies. Muehlenhard and her colleagues (Muehlenhard, Koralewski, Andrews, & Burdick, 1986; Muehlenhard & McFall, 1981) found that women were rated as more attractive when they exhibited such behaviors as complimenting, asking questions, and keeping up the conversation than when they didn't exhibit such behaviors. Thus, it appears that ratings of physical attractiveness may also be enhanced by good social skill.

At present there is a need for the assessment of physical attractiveness in social skill research. Most research in social skill has neglected physical attractiveness, but those which have examined its effects suggest that attractiveness can influence ratings of social skill and anxiety, and vice versa.

New Directions In Heterosocial Skill and Anxiety and Physical Attractiveness Assessment
The social psychology literature, as well as some recent behavioral assessment literature, contains research that suggests that social skills may enhance untrained observers' ratings of physical attractiveness. In addition, physical attractiveness has been shown to significantly influence other variables such as social skill ratings. Once again, however, there is little data as to how physical attractiveness affects trained observers' ratings of heterosocial skill and anxiety. It should also be noted that a propensity of the social psychology literature has utilized photographs, generally facial photographs, when analyzing the effects of physical attractiveness (e.g., Byrne, London, & Reeves, 1968; Gallucci & Meyer, 1984; Gross & Crofton, 1977; Owens & Ford, 1978; Reis, Wheeler, Spiegel, Kernis, Nezlek & Perri, 1982; Shanteau & Nagy, 1979; Stroebe et al., 1971; Udry & Eckland, 1984; Webster & Driskel, 1983). Although the face may be the most important feature when assessing physical attractiveness, research has suggested that the male and female physique also play a part in attractiveness (Brown, Cash, & Noles, 1986; Feinman & Gill, 1978; Franzoi & Herzog, 1987; Horvath, 1981; Lavrakas, 1975; Stewart, Tutton, & Steele, 1973). Much heterosocial skill literature utilizes in vivo or videotaped interactions in which the subject's whole
body is visible. Therefore, both facial and body attractiveness come into play, and attractiveness ratings should be made on the whole person, not just the face, if research findings are to be taken as an adequate representation of the naturalistic environment.

As researchers of heterosocial skill are now moving toward the use of global (e.g., overall skills) and intermediate ratings (e.g., conversation structure, speech delivery, use of facial expressions) as opposed to molecular ratings (e.g., number of smiles, gaze time) (Farrell et al., 1985), it appears that the study of physical attractiveness' effects on skill and anxiety ratings would be an especially important research topic. Molecular measures, while possibly being somewhat free from the effects of physical attractiveness, have generally been shown to have only a mild correspondence between test and criterion performance (Bellack, Hersen, & Lamparski, 1979; Bellack, Hersen, & Turner, 1978; Van Hassett, Hersen, & Bellack, 1981). Molecular measures have also been faulted for failing to account for the complex nature of social interactions and the situational context in which they occur (Trower, 1982). Eisler (1976) suggests that global measures possess a higher degree
of social validity than any other objective measure of social skill. However, global measures do not give specific information on strengths and weaknesses. Instead of relying on either extreme of the molecular-molar continuum, it has been suggested that intermediate approaches could be developed (Curran, Farrell, & Grunberger, 1984; Farrell et al., 1985). The intermediate approach (e.g., rating conversation content, language) could provide more detailed information than global ratings and more useful information than molecular measures. Initial reports suggest that the global plus intermediate ratings can provide information about heterosocial skill that is useful for predicting heterosocial competence and dating success (Farrell et al., 1985; Millbrook et al., 1986).

One could hypothesize that global, intermediate, and even molecular ratings could be affected by subjects' physical attractiveness, especially female subjects' attractiveness. Indeed, it could be argued that had physical attractiveness been accounted for in earlier studies which found that high-frequency daters were more skilled and less anxious than low-frequency daters, those findings may no longer have been significant. In other words, with physical attractiveness partialled out, previous research may
not have noted skill differences between high- and low-frequency daters. Thus, it appears that there is a need for the systematic assessment of the effects of physical attractiveness on global, intermediate, and even molecular ratings of skill and anxiety.

It is clear that physical attractiveness needs to be evaluated in social skill research. Calvert (1988) has outlined numerous methods of assessing physical attractiveness and its effects. He stated that designs such as the Solomon four-group would allow for the evaluation of the effects of attractiveness on skill and anxiety, and vice versa, as well as an examination of how trained and untrained observers are affected by attractiveness. Certainly, such an evaluation is important in the progress of social skill research.

Summary

Physical attractiveness has been shown to be an influential variable in such diverse situations as student-teacher interactions and courtroom proceedings. Although there are some noteworthy negative aspects to attractiveness (e.g., highly attractive persons being viewed as vain and egotistical), being physically attractive has many more advantages than disadvantages. These advantages seem to be readily apparent in heterosocial interactions. However, despite the
evidence attesting to the effects of attractiveness in heterosocial interactions, much of the social skill research has neglected to examine its effects on social skill and anxiety. Assessment of social skill and anxiety needs to include an evaluation of physical attractiveness in order to examine their effects on each other.
Purpose of the Present Investigation

The present investigation was designed to assess the effects of physical attractiveness on trained and untrained observers' ratings of heterosocial skill and anxiety, and vice versa. This study utilized a 4(group) X 2(observers) design based on the Solomon four-group design. In this design 80 subjects were assigned to one of four groups (20 in each group): (Group 1) observers rated physical attractiveness, then listened to a five-minute interaction and rated skill and anxiety, and then rated physical attractiveness again; (Group 2) observers listened to a five-minute interaction, rated skill and anxiety, and then rated physical attractiveness; (Group 3) observers rated physical attractiveness, waited five minutes, and rated physical attractiveness again; (Group 4) observers waited five minutes and then rated physical attractiveness.

It was anticipated that physical attractiveness would significantly affect ratings of skill and anxiety. Thus, it was hypothesized that ratings of skill and the four intermediate behaviors in Group 1 would be significantly higher than those ratings in Group 2, while ratings of anxiety would be significantly lower in Group 1. It was also hypothesized that physical attractiveness would affect
trained and untrained observers equally in that there would be significant differences between the observers on their ratings of skill and anxiety.
Method

Subjects

Subjects included 80 unmarried undergraduate Caucasian females who volunteered to participate in the study. They received extra credit for their participation.

Research Design

A 4(group) X 2(observers) design based on the Solomon four-group was used to provide a strong method of examining the effects of any manipulation of attractiveness and skill and anxiety (Beck, Andrasik, & Arena, 1984). Observer ratings of attractiveness served as the pre-post measure and ratings of skill and anxiety were used in the "treatment" phase.

Observers

Observers included six male and six female Caucasian undergraduates. Three of the males and three
of the females were untrained, while three of each were trained. Training consisted of listening to and rating 10 three-minute taped interactions that were similar to the interactions in the present investigation. The six trained observers were trained together. The format of training included a review of definitions and behaviors outlined for each construct to be rated (global skill, anxiety, conversation structure, conversation content, personal conversation type, and partner directed conversation). The training tapes were reviewed, rated, and discussed. Specific behaviors pertaining to each rated construct were pointed out during the discussion phase. Tapes were reviewed at least twice to point out the specific behaviors of interest. Observers were trained until interrater reliabilities of .85 for global skill and anxiety and .80 for each of the four intermediate behaviors (as measured by coefficient alpha) were reached.

Observers were told that the present investigation is designed to assess heterosocial skill and anxiety in females. As the physical attractiveness ratings were done at different times on different subjects, the observers were told that the ratings of physical attractiveness were being done at different times to control for order effects. They were not told that the study was interested in those order effects. Observers
were debriefed following the study to ascertain whether they were aware of the actual purpose of the investigation. None of the observers were aware of the true purpose of the present study.

Ratings

Observers rated all subjects on physical attractiveness, while they also rated subjects in Groups 1 and 2 on global skill, anxiety, and four intermediate behaviors: conversation structure, conversation content, personal conversational style, and partner directed conversation (see Farrell et al., 1985; Wallander et al., 1985). Definitions of the intermediate behaviors are as follows:

Conversation Structure - The progression of the conversation at a general level, such as its fluency and change between topics.

Conversation Content - The subject matter talked about in the conversation such as topic interest and substance.

Personal Conversation Type - The general communication style of the subject, such as use of humor, self-disclosure, and social manners.

Partner Directed Conversation - The verbal behaviors which facilitate the involvement of the partner in the conversation.
All ratings were done on 7-point Likert-type scales. For physical attractiveness, observers rated subjects from a 1 (extremely unattractive) to a 7 (extremely attractive). Ratings for global skill ranged from 1 (extremely unskilled) to 7 (extremely skilled). Ratings for global anxiety ranged from 1 (no anxiety) to 7 (extreme anxiety). Ratings on the four intermediate behaviors ranged from 1 (very inappropriate) to 7 (very appropriate). All observers had a copy of the definitions for the intermediate behaviors during all rating sessions.

In order to control for "observer drift" in ratings, the trained observers reviewed the definitions and behaviors for each rated construct every third observation session. This procedure has been shown to increase accuracy with respect to criterion to criterion (Curran, Beck, Corriveau, & Monti, 1980).

Procedure

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four groups. Prior to entering the room, subjects were told that the study involved ratings of physical attractiveness, social skill, and social anxiety. They were also told that they were going to interact with a male confederate for five minutes and that they were to carry on as much of the conversation as possible as the confederate had been instructed to give short answers
and ask questions only after a 10-second silence. After subjects were ushered into the room by an experimental assistant and seated in a chair in the middle of the room, the following instructions were read to subjects in Groups 1 and 2:

In this role-play, I want you to act as if you have just met the man sitting next to you. I want you to get to know each other. Remember that he has been instructed to answer succinctly and to ask questions only after a 10-second silence. Thus, you are to try to keep the conversation going. Remember that your goal is not just to get to know him but for him to also get to know you. You may ask any questions except those pertaining to the present study. So please do not ask about this study. Do you have any questions? Okay, when I say begin please start your conversation. I will tell you when to stop. Okay, begin.

Subjects in Groups 3 and 4 were given the following instructions:

I appreciate your participation in this experiment. If you will please just wait I will be with you in a few minutes. (Five
minutes later) Thank you for waiting. You have participated as one of our waiting subjects. You don't have to interact with anyone as we only needed you to sit for the five minute interaction time. Thank you very much.

The observers were sequestered in an adjacent room with a one-way mirror and an audio hookup. The procedure for each group was as follows:

Group 1 - Subject entered the room and was ushered to her seat. Observers viewed her for 30 seconds and rated her physical attractiveness. A curtain, located on the observers' side of the mirror, was pulled over the mirror and the subject was given her instructions as outlined above. Following the interaction, the observers rated the subject on skill, anxiety, and the four intermediate behaviors. The curtain was then pulled back and the observers had 30 seconds to again rate physical attractiveness.

Group 2 - Subject entered the room, was ushered to her seat, and the interaction instructions were read. The observers listened to and rated the interaction. The curtains were then
pulled back and the observers had 30 seconds to rate physical attractiveness.

Group 3 - Subject entered the room and was ushered to her seat. Observers viewed her for 30 seconds and rated her physical attractiveness. The curtains were pulled shut and the subject was given instructions to wait. Five minutes later the observers rated the subject's physical attractiveness.

Group 4 - Subject entered the room, was seated and given instructions to wait. Five minutes later the curtains were pulled back and the observers rated the subject's physical attractiveness.

All ratings were given to the principal experimenter immediately after the rating. Thus, when physical attractiveness was rated in Groups 1 and 3, these ratings were given to the experimenter immediately after each set of ratings was completed. After rating skill, anxiety, and the intermediate behaviors, these ratings were given to the experimenter. Then after these ratings were turned in, the observers rated physical attractiveness for a final time. The principal experimenter was present for all data collection, and the observers never had previous
ratings of either physical attractiveness or skill and anxiety when they made new ratings.

The five minute interaction time period was chosen to approximate the type of situation a person would actually encounter when initiating heterosocial interactions (Urey, Laughlin, & Kelly, 1979). The audio rating system was used so that ratings of heterosocial conversation skills were not confounded with physical attractiveness. By observing the subject throughout the interaction it would be difficult, if not impossible, to see how physical attractiveness affects skill. Although live and video taped interactions apparently give more information for ratings of social skill and anxiety, it has been shown that observers predominantly use auditory cues for rating social skills. There is also a generalizability across live, video, and audio ratings for social skill and anxiety, although acceptable levels of interrater reliability for audio ratings of anxiety appear to be more difficult to obtain than for skill (Monroe, Conger, Conger, Moisan-Thomas, 1982). Therefore, it appears that the use of an audio format would provide skill ratings comparable to a video format while allowing for the examination of the effects of physical attractiveness on such ratings. It was anticipated that by specifically training observers on audio-only
tapes they would be able to reliably rate anxiety as well.

Results

**Reliability of Ratings**

Trained and untrained observer reliabilities for each group and dependent variable are presented in Table 1. As can be seen all of the ratings reached an acceptable level, with only one rating (untrained observers' rating of anxiety in Group 1) being below .80.

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

**Differences Between Groups on Ratings of Skill and Anxiety**

In order to assess differences between the two experimental groups (Groups 1 & 2) on ratings of skill, anxiety, conversation structure, conversation content, personal conversation type, and partner directed behavior a 2(group) x 2(observers) MANOVA was performed. A significant difference between the groups was found utilizing Wilks' criterion, $F(6,71)=3.93$, $p<.002$. A significant difference was also noted between trained and untrained observers, $F(6,71)=2.55$, $p<.03$. No significant group X observers effect was
found. Univariate $F$-ratios are presented in Table 2.

Univariate $F$-ratios for group differences were significant for each dependent variable, with ratings for Group 1 being higher for skill, conversation structure, conversation content, personal conversation type, and partner directed conversation and lower for anxiety than Group 2. These ratings are in the hypothesized directions.

An examination of the univariate $F$-ratios for differences between observers revealed no significant differences on any of the dependent measures, however. Due to the fact that the univariate $F$-ratios do not take correlations between variables into account, situations, such as in the present case, may arise where there is a significant MANOVA but none of the univariate analyses reach significance. One proposed method of dealing with this is the use of a discriminant analysis (Bray & Maxwell, 1982). Thus, a stepwise discriminant analysis was performed.

In step 1 personal conversation type was entered into the equation, Wilks' Lambda = .97, $F = (1, 78) = 2.58$, $p < .11$. Step 2 entered conversation content yielding the multivariate statistic of Wilks' Lambda = .87,
The univariate $F$-ratio for personal conversation type was $F(1, 77) = 11.04$, $p < .002$ and for conversation content was $F(1, 77) = 8.29$, $p < .006$. No other variables reached a significance level sufficient to be entered into the analysis. Thus, personal conversation type and conversation content together help explain the difference noted between trained and untrained observers. An examination of the means revealed that the trained observers rated subjects higher on these two variables than the untrained observers.

**Effects of Physical Attractiveness**

The significant differences noted between Group 1 and 2 on each of the dependent variables was in the expected direction, with Group 1 being rated as more skilled and less anxious by both trained and untrained observers. In order to explain these differences ratings of physical attractiveness were examined. Correlations between the skill and anxiety ratings and ratings of physical attractiveness for Group 1 were low for both trained and untrained observers (i.e., the highest correlation was between trained observers' ratings of skill and physical attractiveness, $r = .14$). Thus it appeared that there was no relationship between attractiveness and skill ratings, although Group 1, who
had been seen prior to being rated for skill, was rated significantly more skilled than Group 2, who had not been seen prior to being rated for skill.

In order to evaluate why there were group differences but no significant correlations between attractiveness and skill a number of steps were taken.

First, two analyses of the attractiveness ratings were done. Utilizing the pre and post attractiveness ratings for Groups 1 and 3, a 2(group) X 2(observers) X 2(pre-post) ANOVA was performed. As can be seen in Table 3, no significant main or interaction effects were found. The attractiveness ratings between the groups, observers, and pre and post attractiveness ratings were essentially identical.

Insert Table 3 about here

Post-attractiveness ratings were also analyzed in a 4(group) X 2(observers) ANOVA. Results revealed no significant differences between groups, F(3,152)=.64, observers, F(1,152)=.15, or group X observers, F(3,152)=.06. Thus, ratings of physical attractiveness appeared to be very similar across time, between groups, and between observers.

A second concern centered on the validity of the attractiveness ratings. In order to assess concurrent
validity ratings of physical attractiveness were correlated with dating history. Correlations between attractiveness for all subjects and their dating history were generally significant (see Table 4) and similar to those noted in previous research (Baker & Calvert, 1985; Calvert, Bruce, & Gouvier, 1988). Thus, it appeared that the attractiveness ratings had some measure of concurrent validity.

Finally, an analysis of homoscedasticity was performed to see if the distributions violated the assumption of equality of variances (see Younger, 1979 for a discussion of the evaluation of homoscedasticity). A heteroscedastic distribution would explain the low correlations between ratings of attractiveness and skill and anxiety. As noted in Table 5, all F-ratios for Group 1 were significant. Thus, each distribution tested was heteroscedastic.

The findings that the distributions between attractiveness and the other ratings were
heteroscedastic explain why the correlations were so low. However, in order to explain why Group 1 was rated higher in skill and lower in anxiety a visual inspection of the data was necessary. Although not significantly so, subjects in Group 1 received the highest average attractiveness ratings while those in Group 2 received the lowest. In addition, utilizing overall means and standard deviations for physical attractiveness (see Table 6) found in this and previous research (Calvert et al., 1988), of the seven subjects rated as more than one standard deviation above the mean in attractiveness in Group 1, five were also rated one or more standard deviations above the mean for trained observer rated skill. None of the five subjects greater than one standard deviation above the mean in attractiveness in Group 2 received skill ratings greater than one standard deviation above the mean.

Insert Table 6 about here

Average attractive subjects (i.e., +/-1 s.d.) in Group 1 were rated consistently higher in skill than those in Group 2. It should be noted that average attractive subjects in both groups showed some variability in their skill ratings. For example, a
high average attractive subject was about as likely to receive a skill rating in the low average range as a low average attractive subject was to receive a high average skill rating. At the middle levels of attractiveness there appeared to be no direct relationship between attractiveness and skill or anxiety. This lack of relationship, along with the problems of heteroscedasticity, could also account for the low correlations between attractiveness and skill and anxiety. However, what does appear to be clear is that those subjects who were seen first fairly consistently received higher skill ratings than those subjects who were not seen first.

Discussion

The hypothesis that those females who were seen before being rated for skill and anxiety would be rated as more skilled and less anxious than females who were not seen first was corroborated. Indeed, subjects in Group 1 were consistently rated higher in overall skill and the four intermediate behaviors and lower in anxiety than subjects in Group 2. For example, trained observers rated eight subjects in Group 1 an average of 5 or above (on a 7-point scale) on skill, while they only rated one subject above a 5 in Group 2. In addition, the "attractive" subjects in Group 1 were
rated as generally above average in skill, while the "attractive" subjects in Group 2 were not rated above average in skill.

It should be noted that "average" attractive subjects in both Group 1 and Group 2 varied on their skill and anxiety ratings. For example, one subject in Group 1 received a rating of 3.6 for attractiveness and a skill rating of 4.8, while another subject in that group received an attractiveness rating of 4.6 with a skill rating of 4. All of these scores are within an "average" range but in the wrong direction to show a positive correlation between attractiveness and skill. It doesn't appear that one can predict level of skill from persons in the "average" range of attractiveness. But once again, those "average" attractive females who were seen first (Group 1) tended to do better on ratings of skill and anxiety than those females who were not seen first (Group 2). It appears to be beneficial to be seen first if one is at least of average attractiveness.

Although the present study found that physical attractiveness affects ratings of skill and anxiety, the reverse was not noted. Ratings of attractiveness for Group 2 were not significantly different from any of the other group's ratings of attractiveness. Indeed, Group 2's post-attractiveness ratings were
slightly lower (but not significantly so) than any of the other groups' ratings. Although it appears that skill and anxiety may not affect ratings of attractiveness, it may be that since most of the subjects were rated as "average" in skill and anxiety, average skill does not affect ratings of attractiveness. It may be that only highly skilled persons would benefit by a perceived increase in their attractiveness.

In addition to the views that attractiveness affects ratings of skill and/or vice versa, there is also the argument of whether attractive persons are actually more skilled or if their attractiveness simply creates a "halo" effect. The present results seem to suggest that on conversation skills knowledge of a person's physical attractiveness does influence ratings of social skill as opposed to the physically attractive actually being more skilled. As evidence, none of the "attractive" subjects and only one of the "average" attractive subjects in Group 2 scored above a 5 on social skill. Five of the "attractive", two "average", and one "unattractive" subject scored above a 5 in Group 1. If attractive people were actually more socially skilled, then it would stand to reason that some of the attractive people in Group 2 should have
scored above average on social skill. Obviously a study with a larger number of highly attractive persons is needed to fully delineate these effects. In addition, the present study examined conversational social skills but not nonverbal social skills. Perhaps attractive persons are better at nonverbal social skills, but these are obviously confounded with physical attractiveness since to rate nonverbal skills one must see the subject. Based on the present results, however, it appears that physical attractiveness affects ratings of skill and anxiety as opposed to attractive people actually being more skilled and less anxious.

The second hypothesis, that there would be no difference between the effects of physical attractiveness on trained and untrained observers, was only partially supported. There were no significant differences between trained and untrained observers on ratings of attractiveness, skill, anxiety, conversation structure, and partner directed behavior. However, results from the discriminant analysis revealed that personal conversation type and conversation content discriminated between trained and untrained observers. The analysis revealed that these two variables shared variance and that when examined separately neither showed a significant difference between observers.
Intuitively it seems reasonable that these two variables would be related in that both have an element of likeability in them. Personal conversation type deals with the impression of the subject's personal style and conversation content has to do with the appropriateness of the conversation topics. However, the reason that these two variables discriminate between trained and untrained observers is somewhat unclear.

An examination of the mean scores for these two variables revealed the largest difference between trained and untrained observers to be personal conversation type for Group 1. As the untrained observers had a lower mean, it would appear that they were less influenced by physical attractiveness than trained observers. This finding seems to be contrary to intuition. However, as previous research has suggested that there is no significant difference between trained and untrained observers of social skill and anxiety (Calvert, 1985; Wallander et al., 1983), it may not be that trained observers are less likely to be influenced by attractiveness. The present study suggests that they are at least, if not more influenced by attractiveness than untrained observers.

Both groups of observers had definitions of each
variable. In order to rate the subjects the untrained observers had to rely more on the handout of definitions because they were not as familiar with each variable that was to be rated as the trained observers were. Perhaps the extra attention to the definitions during the actual rating procedure mediated the effects of attractiveness to a small degree. It may also be that training only helps insure some level of consistency. Or perhaps the training sensitizes observers to the effects of attractiveness (W.D. Gouvier, personal communication, April 21, 1988). As these observers are trained to be more observant of the subjects' behavior, they may be more perceptive of all aspects of a subject, thereby making them more likely to be influenced by physical attractiveness than untrained observers.

Obviously these are only suppositions as the source of these differences between trained and untrained observers is not known based on the present data. It is clear, however, that future research needs to further address the similarities and differences between trained and untrained observers, especially as to intermediate behaviors such as conversation content and personal conversation type.

The results of the present study suggest that by viewing females before rating their conversational
social skill and anxiety, observers rate the females as more socially skilled and less anxious than when the females are not seen first. Although viewing the females had an overall positive effect on their ratings of skill and anxiety, there appears to be little relationship between physical attractiveness and skill for "average" attractive females in that "high average" attractive females appeared to be just as likely to receive a low average skill rating as a "low average" attractive female was to receive a high average skill rating.

These results suggest that physical attractiveness plays an important, but often neglected role in social skill and anxiety assessment. Two logical extensions of the present study include examining the effects of physical attractiveness where the observers are aware that attractiveness can alter their perceptions in order to see if knowledge about the effects of attractiveness can eliminate the effects. Another approach would be to screen for attractive and unattractive subjects. The present study did not have many unattractive subjects so the effects of attractiveness on such a population needs to be assessed. A dichotomy between high and low attractiveness would help delineate the effects of
attractiveness with extreme groups to see if there are
differential effects. If all levels of physical
attractiveness were found to affect ratings of social
skill to the same degree, then perhaps the assessment
of physical attractiveness would not be as important as
the distortion would be the same for all groups.
However, if different levels of attractiveness affected
rating differently, then assessment of attractiveness
would be imperative. The present data suggest that
average and high attractive females are both favorably
affected, but it appeared that high attractive females
showed slightly greater gains, thereby suggesting that
there may be differential effects at different levels
of attractiveness.

Similar studies also need to be conducted with
males. Numerous studies have examined male social
skill and anxiety, but there is still a paucity of
research on attractiveness and social skill with males.
Certainly, as shown in the present study, physical
attractiveness is an important influential variable in
social and heterosocial interactions and needs to be
assessed when examining interpersonal interactions.
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Table 1
Trained and Untrained Interobserver Reliabilities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>U</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>U</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-attr.</td>
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<td>.89</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<td>Post-attr.</td>
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<td>.87</td>
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<td>.89</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
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<td>.89</td>
<td>.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversation Structure</td>
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<td>.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversation Content</td>
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<td>.85</td>
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<td>.90</td>
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<td>Personal Conversation Type</td>
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<td>.82</td>
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<td>Partner Directed Conversation</td>
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<td>.81</td>
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Table 2

F-ratios for Differences Between Groups and Observers

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*p<.001
Table 3

F-ratios for Group X Observers X Pre-Post Attractiveness Ratings

<table>
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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Group</td>
<td>.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observers</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Post Attractiveness</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group X Observers</td>
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<td>Group X Pre-Post Attr.</td>
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<td>Observers X Pre-Post Attr.</td>
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<td>Dating History Variables</td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># dates last month</td>
<td>.27*</td>
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<tr>
<td># dates last 3 months</td>
<td>.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># men dated last month</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td># men dated last 3 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with</td>
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<td>amount of dating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-rated attractiveness</td>
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</table>

N=80

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
Table 5  
Group 1 F-tests for Homoscedasticity of Variances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Trained Observers</th>
<th>Untrained Observers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness X</td>
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<td>Skill</td>
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<td>Conv. Structure</td>
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<td>10.99***</td>
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<td>6.18**</td>
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<td>5.02*</td>
<td>6.76**</td>
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*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.005
Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Each Group’s Ratings

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<th>Observers</th>
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<th>Untrained</th>
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<td>S.D.</td>
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<td>Anxiety</td>
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<td>.89</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.86</td>
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<td>.91</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.97</td>
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Vita

Personal Data

Name: James D. Calvert
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Education

1989 PhD Louisiana State University
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Major: Clinical Psychology
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Clinical Internship - Houston VAMC

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Minor: Advertising Communications

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1983 Bernard Caffrey Award for outstanding undergraduate in psychology, Clemson University, Clemson, SC.
Psi Chi Research Award for outstanding research in the department of psychology, Clemson University, Clemson, SC.
Phi Kappa Phi Research Award for outstanding research in the College of Liberal Arts, Clemson University, Clemson, SC.
Member, Psi Chi.

Clinical Experience
Sept. 1988 to Present: Clinical Psychology Internship at the Houston VAMC.
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Aug. 1986

to Dec. 1986: Counselor at the LSU Psychological
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School Psychology Tract. Included
testing and assessment in schools.

Aug. 1985

to May 1986: Counselor at the LSU Psychological
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Adult Psychology Tract. Included
individual and marital counseling.

Aug. 1985

to Jan. 1986: Sponsor for second Baton Rouge, LA
chapter of Parents Anonymous.

Aug. 1984

to May 1985: Counselor at the LSU Psychological
Services Center, Baton Rouge, LA - Child
Psychology Tract. Included parent
training and social skills groups and individual and school counseling.

Aug. 1983
to Aug. 1984: Counselor at the LSU Psychological Services Center, Baton Rouge, LA - Adult Psychology Tract. Included individual and marital cases.

Oct. 1982
to May 1983: Crisis Line Counselor at the Clemson Crisis Line, Clemson, SC.

Sept. 1981
to May 1983: Administered Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale and interviewed social security applicants at Redfern Health Center, Clemson University, Clemson, SC.

June 1982
to Aug. 1982: Worked with two recreational therapists and one dance therapist at Horizon Mental Hospital, Clearwater, FL. Aided recreational therapy, dance therapy, and communications therapy on the drug and alcohol abuse ward.

**Teaching Experience**

June 1988
to July 1988: Instructor, Introductory Psychology,
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to May 1988: Instructor, Educational Psychology,
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Aug. 1987

to Dec. 1987: Teaching Assistant (Lab Instructor),
Research Methods, Louisiana State
University, Baton Rouge, LA.

June 1987

to July 1987: Instructor, Child Psychology, Louisiana
State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

June 1987

to July 1987: Instructor, Introductory Psychology,
High School Summer Enrichment Course
sponsored by Louisiana State University,
Baton Rouge, LA.

Jan. 1987

to May 1987: Instructor, Child Psychology, Louisiana
State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Aug. 1986

to Dec. 1986: Instructor, Abnormal Psychology,
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
June 1986

to Aug. 1986: Instructor, Adjustment, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center through the Louisiana State University extramural teaching department.

Aug. 1985

to May 1986: Instructor, Adolescent Psychology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Aug. 1984

to May 1985: Teaching Assistant, Louisiana State University Psychological Services Center, Baton Rouge, LA.

June 1984

to Aug. 1984: Teaching Assistant, Research Methods, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Aug. 1983

to May 1984: Research Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Asst. Professor: Dr. Bernard J. Jensen.

Professional Affiliations

Present: American Psychological Association
Southeastern Psychological Association
Aug. 1983
to May 1985: Clinical Training Committee, Dept. of
Psychology, Louisiana State University,
Baton Rouge, LA.

Invited Presentation
Louisiana District Attorney Secretary's Annual
Meeting, New Orleans, LA.

Paper Presentations
Calvert, J.D., Underwood, C.N., Gresham, F.M.
(1988, April). Who gets prettier at closing time?
An examination of the Gilley Theory. Paper
presented at the meeting of the Southeastern
Psychological Association, New Orleans, LA.

Heterosocial anxiety, skill, and physical
attractiveness: A multitrait-multimethod study.
Paper to be presented at the meeting of the
Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy,
Boston, MA.

and dating anxiety among late adolescents. Paper
presented at the meeting of the Southeastern
Psychological Association, Orlando, FL.

Calvert, J.D. (1985, November). Trained vs.
untrained observer's ratings of heterosocial skill
and anxiety in females. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy, Houston, TX.


**Refereed Publications**


**Non-refereed Publications**


**Book Review**


*Book Reviews in the Neurosciences.*
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate:         James D. Calvert

Major Field:      Psychology

Title of Dissertation: Physical Attractiveness: Effects on Trained and Untrained Observer's Ratings of Heterosocial Skill and Anxiety in Female College Students

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination: May 11, 1988