



University of HUDDERSFIELD

University of Huddersfield Repository

Bale, Christopher

Testing causal relationships between self-perceived attractiveness and self-esteem.

Original Citation

Bale, Christopher (2012) Testing causal relationships between self-perceived attractiveness and self-esteem. In: British Psychological Society Annual Conference, 18-20 Apr 2012, London, UK. (Unpublished)

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/16727/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

Testing causal relationships between self-perceived attractiveness and self-esteem

Dr Chris Bale

Department of Behavioural and Social
Sciences

University of Huddersfield

c.bale@hud.ac.uk

Sociometer Theory

- Leary & Baumeister (2000)
- Functional, evolutionary explanation of self-esteem.
- Self-esteem functions as an interpersonal monitor of:
 - the quality and quantity of existing relationships,
 - perceived eligibility for relationships,
- and motivates us to act accordingly.

Attractiveness and Self-Esteem

- Self-perceived attractiveness (SPA) positively correlates with self-esteem in both sexes. (e.g. Nell & Ashton, 1996)
- Especially strong relationship in women.

Direction of causation?

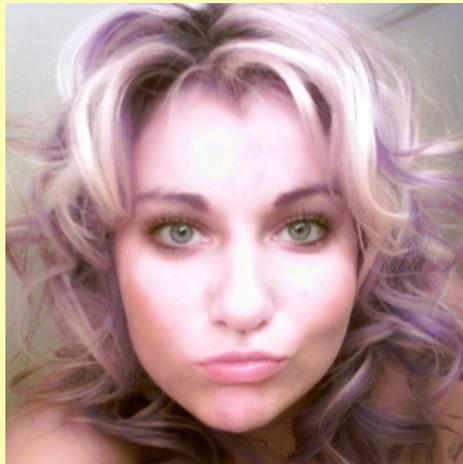
- Correlational data is consistent with Sociometer theory (“bottom-up”).
- However data can also be explained by “top-down” theories (e.g. Brown et al. 2001)
- Studies showing that there is little relationship between self and other rated attractiveness (e.g. Diener et al, 1995) suggest against Sociometer theory.
- Need for experimental studies to examine direction of causation.

Manipulating self-perceived attractiveness

- Studies 1 & 2 attempted to manipulate SPA in women to examine whether this has a knock-on effect on SE.
- Attractiveness contrast effect: Women who are exposed to pictures of highly attractive others report lower levels of self perceived attractiveness than those exposed to unattractive others (Want, 2009).

Studies 1 & 2: Methods

- Female participants asked to rate attractiveness of (study 1; $n = 128$) or compare own attractiveness to (study 2; $n = 137$) “hot” or “not” pictures.



“Hot”



“Not”

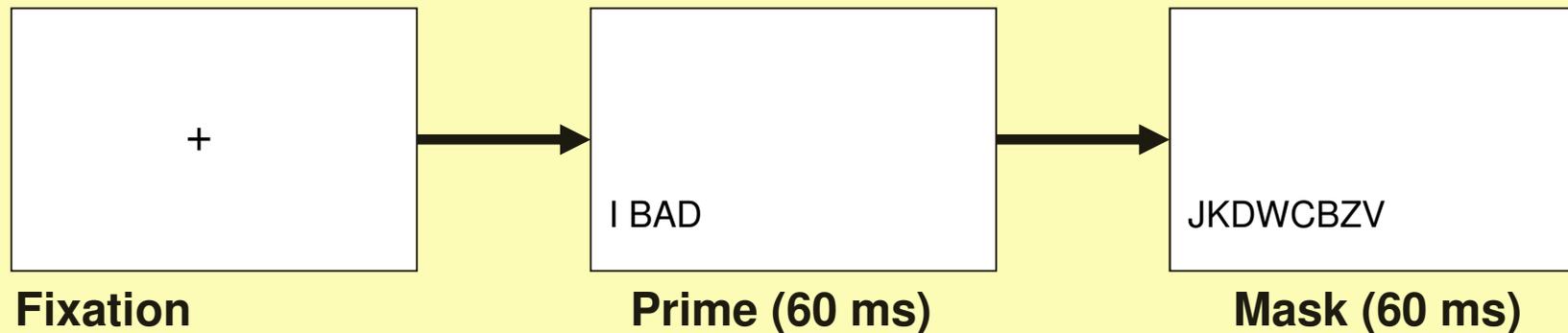
- Completed a variety of subsequent measures of SPA and SE.

Summary of Results

- No initial differences in SPA between groups.
- After the comparison task, participants in the “Not” condition rated themselves as significantly more attractive than those in the “Hot” group.
- **No group differences on any self-esteem scales or subscales.**
- Does SE affect SPA? (Study 3)

Study 3: Method

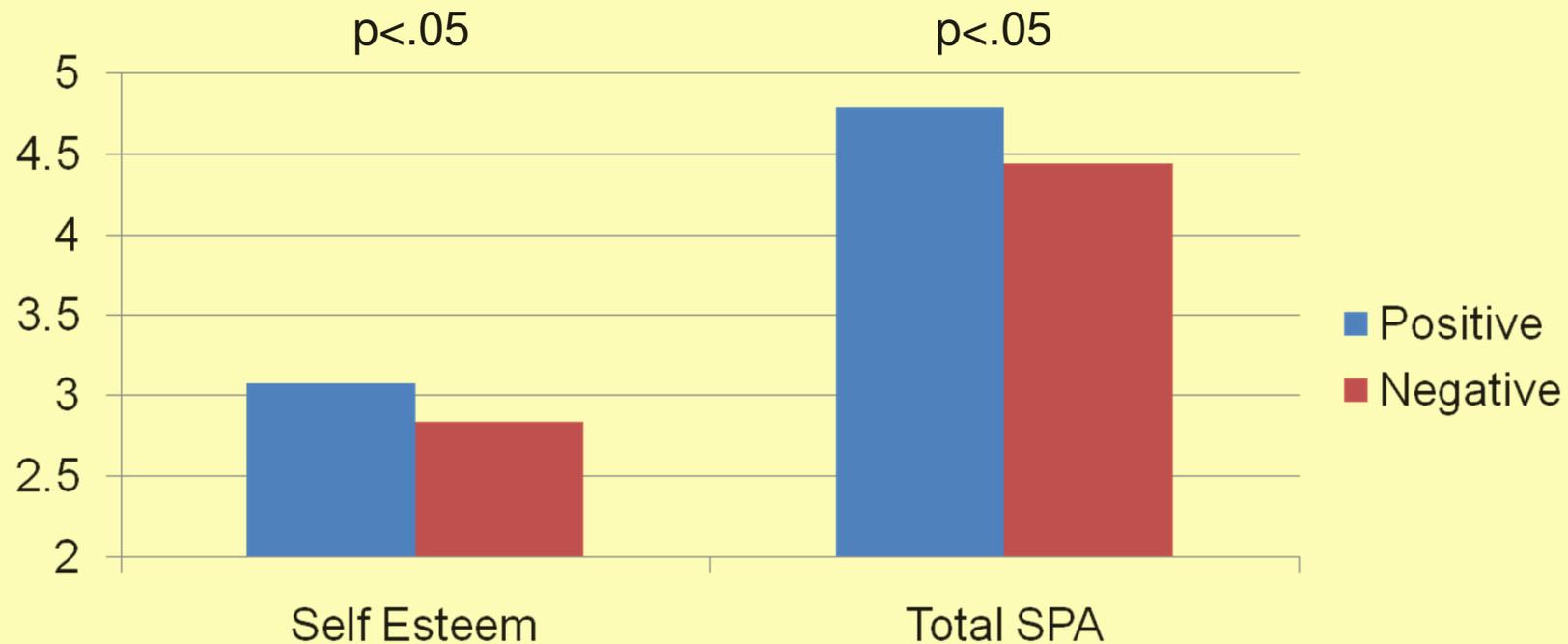
- 2 groups: +ve / -ve manipulation (Ricketta & Dauenheimer, 2003) .
- 76 female participants asked to complete a “reaction time” test.



Respond: Left / Right

- Then complete SE manipulation check and a measure of SPA.

Results



- Participants in +ve condition reported significantly higher subsequent levels of both SE ($d = .50$) and SPA ($d = .39$).

Conclusions and Future Research

- Results support a “top-down” perspective on the relationship between self-perceptions and self-esteem (Brown et al, 2001).
- Future studies on implicit manipulations of SPA and implicit measures of self-esteem.

Implications and Applications

- Effects of media images on self-perceptions and self-esteem.
- Controversy over relationships between self-esteem, academic and job performance, antisocial and criminal behaviour (Baumeister et al. 2003).
- Clear relationship between self-esteem and happiness and life satisfaction.
- Prospects for self-esteem interventions.

References

- Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 4*, 1-44.
- Brown, J. D., Dutton, K. A., & Cook, K. E. (2001). From the top down: Self-esteem and self-evaluation. *Cognition & Emotion, 15*, 615-631.
- Diener, E., Wolsic, B., & Fujita, F. (1995). Physical attractiveness and subjective well-being. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 69*, 120-129.

- Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In M. Zanna (Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 32, pp. 1-62). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Nell, K., & Ashton, N. L. (1996). Gender, self-esteem, and perception of own attractiveness. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 83, 1105-1106.
- Riketta, M., & Dauenheimer, D. (2003). Manipulating self-esteem with subliminally presented words. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33, 679-699.
- Want, S. C. (2009). Meta-analytic moderators of experimental exposure to media portrayals of women on female appearance satisfaction: Social comparisons as automatic processes. *Body Image*, 6, 257-269.