Beauty as a Confounding Variable: Refining Measures of Viewing Time

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Viewing time measures of sexual interest are becoming more popular as they require less costly equipment, are less invasive, and require less training to administer. Several of these measures are commercially available, yet independent research on them is limited. Current research on viewing time measures of sexual attraction fail to explore potential confounding variables of viewing time. One viewing time measure, the LOOK, has been shown to be reliable over time and generally correlated with self-reported sexual orientation but has been unable to differentiate between a non-offending group and an offending group of individuals. This objective of this study was to utilize the LOOK to examine the relationship between viewing time and a potential confounding variable of viewing time, beauty, using two constructs of beauty (facial beauty and full-body beauty). Facial beauty scores were created by measuring the degree of adherence to four universal standards of beauty shown to correlate with subjective estimates of attractiveness (Schmid, Marx, & Samal, 2006). Given the subjective nature of beauty when viewing the whole body, participants of the study rated the beauty of each LOOK image in its entirety. No significant correlation was found between facial beauty scores and beauty ratings, suggesting these are unrelated constructs. Significant correlations were found between facial beauty scores and male viewing time, and between male beauty ratings and male viewing time. These correlations suggest that further research exploring the extent to which estimates of beauty confound measures of viewing time may increase their discriminative ability and could aid in the development of a norm-referenced procedures for screening and diagnosis. With future research, these measures may be capable of measuring sexual interest more accurately.

Schmid, K., Marx, D., & Samal, A. (2006). Computation of a face attractiveness index based on neoclassical canons, symmetry, and golden ratios. *Pattern Recognition*, *41*(8), 2710–2717. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.patcog.2007.11.022

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