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A beauty-map of London: Ratings of the physical attractiveness of women and men in London's boroughs

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ABSTRACT

In 1908, Francis Galton discussed anecdotal data he had collected for the compilation of a 'beauty-map of the British Isles'. Based on his discussion, the present study attempted to compile a more empirical beauty-map of London. A community sample of 461 Londoners completed a questionnaire in which they rated the physical attractiveness of women and men in London's 33 boroughs, as well as their familiarity with those boroughs. Results showed a significant interaction between borough and rated sex, with women being rated as more attractive across boroughs, and three boroughs in particular (the City of London, the City of Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea) being rated high in physical attractiveness. Overall, ratings of attractiveness were significantly positively correlated with familiarity of boroughs, as well as objective measures of borough affluence (specifically, annual gross pay and average house prices) but not of borough health (life expectancy). These results are discussed in relation to the association between wealth and attractiveness, as well as Galton's original beauty-map.

1. Introduction

Sir Francis Galton was one of the great Victorian polymaths, producing over 300 papers and books throughout his life (Forrest, 1974). Although he is sometimes reviled as the 'father of eugenics' (see Brookes, 2004), Galton was also a pioneer in the fields of scientific meteorology, fingerprinting, psychometrics, differential psychology, and statistics. Among Galton's lesser-known endeavours was his attempt to collect data for a 'Beauty-Map' of the British Isles. In his autobiography, Galton (1908) wrote:

> I may here speak of some attempts by myself, made hitherto in too desultory a way, to obtain materials for a 'Beauty-Map' of the British Isles. Whenever I have occasion to classify the persons I meet into three classes, 'good, medium, and bad,' I use a needle mounted as a pricker, wherewith to prick holes, unseen, in a piece of paper, torn rudely into a cross with a long leg. I use its upper end for 'good,' the cross-arm for 'medium,' the lower end for 'bad.' The prick-holes keep distinct, and are easily read off at leisure. The object, place, and date are written on the paper. I used this plan for my beauty data, classifying the girls I passed in streets or elsewhere as attractive, indifferent, or repellent. Of course this was a purely individual estimate, but it was consistent, judging from the conformity of different attempts in the same population. I found London to rank highest for beauty; Aberdeen lowest.

While Galton's Beauty-Map was based entirely on his personal observations of women, it is possible to construct contemporary maps of beauty that are more empirical in nature. This was the aim of the present study, although our map was more modest, focused on Galton's epicentre of beauty: the boroughs of London. To our knowledge, no previous study has empirically examined perceptions of physical attractiveness as a function of geographical region (although there is a great deal of research on what constitutes culturally-defined beauty ideals; see Swami, 2007; Swami & Furnham, 2008). Nevertheless, there are two relevant bodies of work that guided the formulation of our hypotheses.

First, we predicted that there would be a correlation between perceptions of attractiveness and the socioeconomic status of boroughs. Although there remains a dearth of studies examining this association in detail, at least one recent study has reported a positive association between socioeconomic status and attractiveness (O'Reilly, Steele, Patterson, Milsom, & Harte, 2006). Specifically, this study of general practitioners showed that patients from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were assessed as more facially attractive than less affluent patients. Within the psychological literature, there has also been a discussion of the positive correlation between socioeconomic status and symbols of beauty, with the latter typically being defined in terms of body fat or skin tone (for a review, see Swami & Furnham, 2008).

Various explanations may underlie this association, including the greater ability of affluent classes to shape beauty ideals (e.g., through their greater access to media resources), cultural associations of physical attractiveness with wealth, and the greater access of affluent individuals to resources that enhance physical beauty.

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O'Reilly et al. (2006) also suggest that affluent individuals may have more positive outlooks (e.g., as a result of suffering fewer stressors or being buffered against misfortune), and that this has an effect on how they are perceived in terms of their physical appearance. In short, then, we expected to find a significant positive correlation between ratings of physical attractiveness and objective measures of socioeconomic status in London's boroughs.

A second possibility is that ratings of physical attractiveness will be associated with the health of individuals in various geographical regions. Some evolutionary psychologists have suggested that perceptions of physical attractiveness are, in part, influenced by honest signals of health (Buss, 1987, 1994; Symons, 1995). Thus, it might be expected that geographical regions that have lower incidences of disease or ill-health should also be perceived as having more physically attractive individuals. Of course, this prediction is predicated on the assumption that the attractiveness-health association is strong (but see Weeden & Sabini, 2005) and that lay individuals have accurate health information about various geographical regions. Nevertheless, as a preliminary hypothesis, we expected to find a positive correlation between the health status of London's boroughs and perceptions of physical attractiveness.

Of course, these predictions will only be borne out if perceptions of physical attractiveness do indeed vary as a function of geographical region. To begin with, therefore, we sought to compile a beauty-map of London and examined whether there was geographical variation in perceptions of physical attractiveness. Specifically, participants rated how physically attractive they believed women and men were in the various boroughs of London. These ratings were then correlated with socioeconomic and health indicators for the various boroughs to examine their associations as discussed above.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were a community sample of 224 women (age $M \pm SD = 39.21 \pm 12.62$) and 237 men (age $M \pm SD = 36.73 \pm 9.25$), all of whom were resident in London at the time of study. In terms of ethnicity, 36.9% were of European Caucasian descent, 21.6% of Asian descent, 12.7% of African Caribbean descent, and 28.8% of other ethnic descent. Most participants were Christians (43.0%), while other religious denominations included Muslims (16.7%) and atheists (11.5%; other = 26.7%, not sure = 2.2%). In terms of marital status, most participants were single (41.9%), in a dating relationship (29.1%), or married (20.8%). Finally, in terms of educational qualifications, 7.2% of participants had been educated to a GCSE level, 21.5% to A-Level, 46.9% to undergraduate level, and 11.5% to postgraduate level (other = 13.0%).

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Beauty-map of London

This novel questionnaire asked participants to provide ratings of how "physically attractive" they believed women and men are in the various London boroughs. Participants were provided with a map of London showing the borough boundaries as well as the names of the 32 boroughs and the City of London (although the latter is *sui generis*, it is usually included in maps that present borough demarcations). These boroughs are the principal local authorities in London and are responsible for the running of most local services. They are, therefore, likely to be familiar to lay individuals, at least in relation to their own borough of residence. Participants provided ratings of women's and men's physical attractiveness for each of the boroughs (33 ratings for women and men, respectively), based on a 9-point scale (1 = *Not at all physically attractive*, 9 = *Extremely physically attractive*). In addition, participants also rated how familiar they were with each of the boroughs (that is, how often they visited the borough, how many people they know who live there, and so on), again on a 9-point scale (1 = *Not at all familiar*, 9 = *Extremely familiar*).

2.2.2. Demographics

All participants provided their demographic details, namely sex, age, ethnicity, religion, marital status, and highest educational qualifications. They also indicated which of the boroughs they were currently residing in (see Table 1).

2.3. Borough data

Indicators of socioeconomic development and health for each of the boroughs was obtained from the London Health Observatory website (details from the corresponding author), which provides health and income data by local authority. In the present study, the following indicators were used: (1) pooled male life expectancy for the years 2001 to 2006; (2) pooled female life expectancy for the years 2001 to 2006; (3) annual gross pay for full-time workers by borough workplaces for 2006; (4) annual gross pay for full-time workers by borough residence for 2006; (5) percentage of the population unemployed in 2005, and; (6) average house prices in 2006. Indicators (1) and (2) were used as proxies of health status, whereas indicators (3) to (6) were used as proxies of socioeconomic development (gross domestic product, or GDP, data is not collected at the borough level). All data were for the most recent available year.

2.4. Procedure

All participants were recruited opportunistically by the authors through their personal contacts and using purposive sampling to ensure that residents from all boroughs were included in the study. Once ethical approval was obtained, potential participants were invited to take part in a study on interpersonal attraction. No participant declined participation, and all took part on a voluntary basis. Once written consent was obtained, participants completed a four-page, paper-and-pencil questionnaire in the presence of an experimenter. All participants were verbally debriefed following completion of the questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1. Physical attractiveness ratings

Mean ratings of women's and men's physical attractiveness, and mean familiarity ratings are reported in Table 1. We initially conducted a 33 (Borough) × 2 (women's or men's physical attractiveness, henceforth Rated Sex) × 2 (Participant sex) repeated measures analysis of variance, with the first two variables as within-subject factors and participant sex as a between-subject factor. Mauchley's text of Sphericity was significant for Borough, $\chi^2(527) = 8270.03$, $p < .001$, and Borough × Rated Sex, $\chi^2(527) = 7731.01$, $p < .001$. For these variables, therefore, the Greenhouse–Geisser correction was applied.

The results showed a significant effect of Borough, $F(10.32, 4734.45) = 71.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$, but not of Borough × Participant sex, $F(10.32,4374.45) = 3.26$, $p > .05$. Tests of simple effects showed that the City of Westminster was given higher attractiveness ratings than all boroughs (all $ts > 3.58$, all $p < .05$). The City of London did not receive significantly higher attractiveness ratings than Kensington and Chelsea, $t(460) = .36$, $p > .05$, but both these

Table 1
Mean ratings (and standard deviations in brackets, where available) of physical attractiveness and familiarity as well as indicators health and socioeconomic development by borough

Borough	Mean rating of women's physical attractiveness	Mean rating of men's physical attractiveness	Mean familiarity rating	Number of participants residing in borough	Total borough population (in 000s, 2005–2006)[a]	Pooled female life expectancy (2001–2006)	Pooled male life expectancy (2001–2006)	Annual gross pay for full time workers by workplace (2006)	Annual gross pay for full time workers by residency (2006)	Percentage of population unemployed (2005)	Average house price (2006)
Barking & Dagenham	3.01 (2.27)	2.77 (2.05)	3.13 (2.60)	8	165	79.70	75.10	26645	25182	3.00	175260
Barnet	3.54 (2.60)	3.18 (2.35)	3.50 (2.83)	11	330	82.50	78.20	26186	29235	2.60	344000
Bexley	3.06 (2.18)	2.90 (2.14)	3.05 (2.31)	11	220	81.60	77.50	24723	27890	1.90	209155
Brent	4.15 (2.31)	3.72 (2.15)	4.39 (2.60)	25	270	82.60	76.80	25587	25381	2.70	283641
Bromley	2.81 (2.12)	2.76 (2.10)	2.85 (2.38)	6	302	82.30	78.10	25934	31848	1.60	282037
Camden	3.79 (2.16)	3.53 (2.00)	4.69 (2.67)	22	226	80.90	74.90	32670	32746	2.70	493034
City of London	6.22 (1.87)	5.45 (2.14)	5.95 (2.00)	3	9	87.40	82.10	46260	[b]	[b]	375459
City of Westminster	6.46 (1.59)	5.75 (1.91)	6.32 (1.61)	23	244	82.50	77.70	33891	33668	2.50	192630
Croydon	3.89 (2.40)	3.73 (2.43)	4.08 (2.75)	26	343	80.80	77.10	26281	27202	2.30	231299
Ealing	3.56 (2.43)	3.37 (2.25)	3.72 (2.71)	12	302	81.60	76.60	26854	27519	2.40	292910
Enfield	3.72 (2.60)	3.48 (2.51)	3.84 (2.79)	16	281	81.30	77.00	25863	27659	3.00	245090
Greenwich	4.79 (2.14)	4.31 (2.16)	4.76 (2.29)	3	228	80.30	74.60	27688	27492	2.60	237806
Hackney	3.78 (2.28)	3.55 (2.15)	4.56 (2.64)	29	208	81.10	74.90	30389	26118	3.30	276890
Hammersmith & Fulham	4.29 (2.07)	4.02 (1.99)	4.64 (2.18)	6	180	81.90	76.20	30472	32280	2.10	450334
Haringey	3.56 (2.20)	3.13 (2.03)	3.78 (2.54)	6	224	80.40	74.90	27185	29167	2.20	306041
Harrow	3.75 (2.46)	3.51 (2.41)	3.95 (2.82)	7	214	82.90	78.50	25626	27039	2.40	296310
Havering	3.36 (2.47)	3.36 (2.35)	3.06 (2.61)	19	226	81.10	77.20	26595	28567	2.30	228186
Hillingdon	3.41 (2.46)	3.21 (2.37)	3.56 (2.80)	10	252	81.50	76.80	29229	26564	2.50	253244
Hounslow	3.68 (2.56)	3.42 (2.40)	3.74 (2.78)	17	213	80.20	75.80	27763	26417	2.20	287792
Islington	4.55 (2.18)	4.30 (2.12)	4.79 (2.55)	34	183	79.70	74.00	32291	32144	2.20	367696
Kensington & Chelsea	6.10 (1.92)	5.51 (2.06)	5.39 (1.95)	9	196	84.60	80.20	26534	[b]	2.30	871678
Kingston-upon-Thames	3.84 (2.56)	3.55 (2.37)	3.98 (2.73)	6	153	81.70	78.00	26002	30415	2.30	304163
Lambeth	3.66 (2.07)	3.48 (2.00)	4.14 (2.52)	11	269	80.00	74.30	30075	27006	2.80	294028
Lewisham	3.48 (2.18)	3.30 (2.06)	3.76 (2.43)	13	247	79.30	74.70	27326	27515	2.50	223395
Merton	3.32 (2.28)	3.11 (2.10)	3.51 (2.67)	24	195	82.30	77.70	24879	27906	2.60	302984
Newham	3.08 (2.32)	2.85 (2.17)	3.36 (2.81)	19	246	79.10	74.10	27163	24486	2.80	212719
Redbridge	3.57 (2.78)	3.25 (2.55)	3.57 (2.91)	18	252	81.40	77.10	27730	29798	2.40	258107
Richmond-upon-Thames	4.39 (2.49)	4.10 (2.40)	4.18 (2.50)	7	186	82.60	78.80	28585	34848	1.60	202094
Southwark	3.65 (2.02)	3.49 (1.94)	3.98 (2.46)	8	258	80.50	74.90	31625	29640	2.60	289579
Sutton	3.18 (2.45)	3.09 (2.36)	3.28 (2.60)	10	178	81.10	77.60	25478	27437	1.80	239596
Tower Hamlets	3.88 (1.98)	3.60 (1.88)	4.07 (2.38)	8	213	79.60	73.90	39320	28924	3.10	280438
Waltham Forest	3.46 (2.47)	3.12 (2.27)	3.74 (2.89)	21	224	80.10	74.90	23055	27172	2.50	219066
Wandsworth	4.10 (2.20)	3.93 (2.16)	4.12 (2.42)	13	281	80.30	75.70	27310	32192	2.40	395542

[a] Listed here as a reference, but not included in any analyses.
[b] Not available in original.

borough were given higher ratings than all remaining boroughs (all $ts > 10.28$, all $p < .05$). All further tests of simple effects relating to boroughs are available from the first author.

In addition, there was a significant effect of Rated sex, $F(1,459) = 137.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .23$, as well as a significant interaction between Rated sex and Participant sex, $F(1,459) = 233.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .34$. These results are reported graphically in Fig. 1. Tests of simple effects showed that female participants rated men as more attractive than women, $t(223) = 3.48$, $p < .05$, while male participants rated women as more attractive than men, $t(236) = 15.98$, $p < .001$. Finally, there was also a significant Borough × Rated sex interaction, $F(12.48, 5782.92) = 10.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, but no significant interaction with Participant sex, $F(12.48, 5782.92) = 3.36$, $p > .05$. These results are shown in Fig. 2, and as can be seen, women were rated as more attractive than men across boroughs.

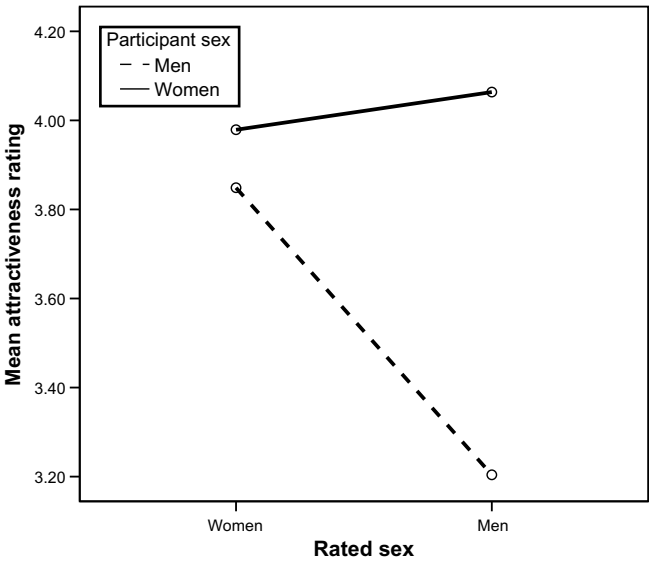

Fig. 1. Depiction of the significant Rated sex × Participant sex interaction for ratings of physical attractiveness.

3.2. Correlations

Bivariate Spearman's correlations were conducted between ratings of women's and men's physical attractiveness, rating familiarity of boroughs, number of participants residing in each borough, and socioeconomic and health indicators for each borough. The results, reported in Table 2, showed that ratings of women's physical attractiveness was only significantly and positively correlated with ratings of men's physical attractiveness, familiarity ratings, annual gross pay by residency and workplace, and average house prices. Similarly, ratings of men's physical attractiveness was significantly positively correlated with ratings of women's physical attractiveness, familiarity ratings, and three of the socioeconomic indicators (average house prices and annual gross pay by residency and workplace, respectively).

3.3. Predictors of physical attractiveness

As can be seen in Table 2, ratings of male and female attractiveness are almost perfectly correlated with ratings of borough familiarity ($rs > .93$). To investigate whether the association between attractiveness ratings and socioeconomic development was due to familiarity, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis with familiarity entered in a first step and all socioeconomic variables (annual gross pay by residence, annual gross pay by workplace, percentage of the population unemployed, and annual house price) in a second step.

For ratings of female attractiveness, the first step of the regression was significant, $F(1,29) = 195.53$, $p < .001$, with familiarity ($\beta = .93$, $t = 13.98$, $p < .001$) accounting for 86.6% of the variance. The second step of the regression was also significant, $F(1,25) = 73.43$, $p < .001$,

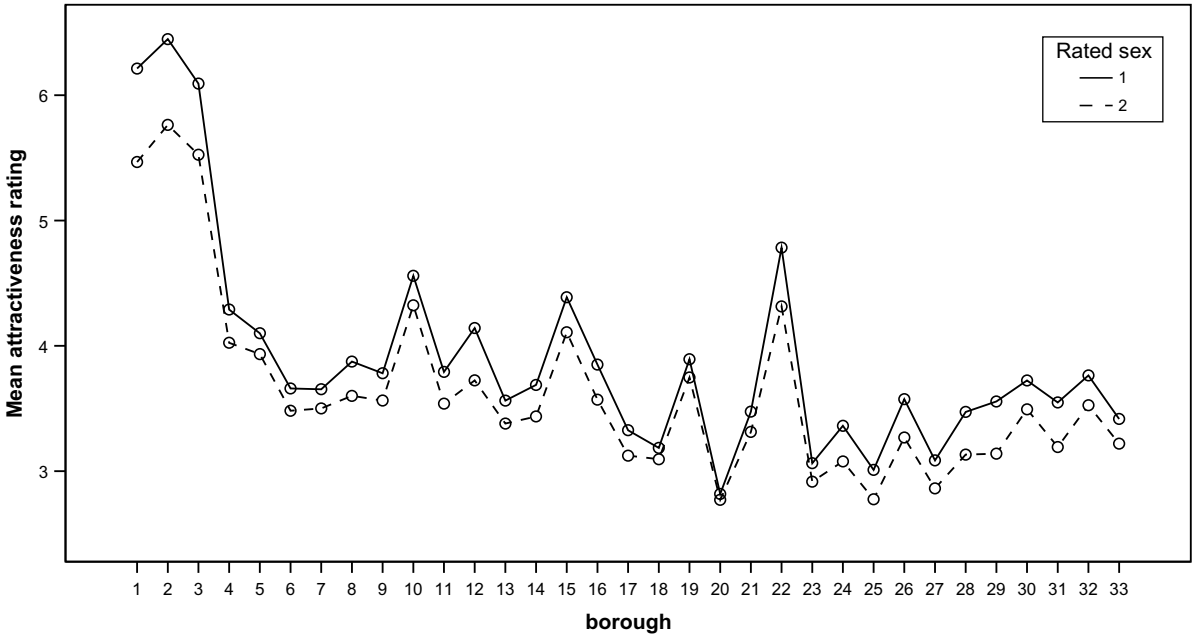

Fig. 2. Depiction of the significant Borough × Rated sex interaction for ratings of physical attractiveness. Key for Rated sex: 1 = Women's physical attractiveness, 2 = Men's physical attractiveness. Key for Borough: 1 = City of London, 2 = City of Westminster, 3 = Kensington & Chelsea, 4 = Hammersmith & Fulham, 5 = Wandsworth, 6 = Lambeth, 7 = Southwark, 8 = Tower Hamlets, 9 = Hackney, 10 = Islington, 11 = Camden, 12 = Brent, 13 = Ealing, 14 = Hounslow, 15 = Richmond-upon-Thames, 16 = Kingston-upon-Thames, 17 = Merton, 18 = Sutton, 19 = Croydon, 20 = Bromley, 21 = Lewisham, 22 = Greenwich, 23 = Bexley, 24 = Havering, 25 = Barking & Dagenham, 26 = Redbridge, 27 = Newham, 28 = Waltham Forest, 29 = Haringey, 30 = Enfield, 31 = Barnet, 32 = Harrow, and 33 = Hillingdon.

Table 2
Bivariate correlations between ratings of women's and men's physical attractiveness, familiarity with borough, number of participants residing in each borough, and various socioeconomic and health indicators by borough

	Men's physical attractiveness	Familiarity	Number of participants in borough	Female life expectancy	Male life expectancy	Annual gross pay by workplace	Annual gross pay by residence	Percentage unemployed	Average house price
Women's physical attractiveness	.98**	.95**	−.05	.26	.06	.52**	.37*	.01	.36*
Men's physical attractiveness	–	.93**	−.03	.26	.07	.53**	.38*	−.01	.33*
Familiarity	–	–	.02	.16	−.09	.58**	.30	.14	.39*
Number of participants in borough	–	–	–	−.22	−.24	−.08	−.18	.28	−.17
Female life expectancy	–	–	–	–	.88**	−.20	.31	−.32	.26
Male life expectancy	–	–	–	–	–	−.37*	.26	−.47**	.09
Annual gross pay by workplace	–	–	–	–	–	–	.32	.20	.20
Annual gross pay by residence	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	−.42*	.32
Percentage unemployed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	−.09

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .001$.

Adj. $R^2 = .92$, with familiarity ($\beta = .95$, $t = 14.03$, $p < .001$) and annual house price ($\beta = .24$, $t = 4.13$, $p < .001$) emerging as significant predictors. The same regression for ratings of men's attractiveness was likewise significant following the inclusion of familiarity alone, $F(1,29) = 165.01$, $p < .001$, Adj. $R^2 = .85$ ($\beta = .92$, $t = 12.85$, $p < .001$). The second step of the regression was also significant, $F(1,25) = 60.28$, $p < .001$, Adj. $R^2 = .91$, with familiarity ($\beta = .93$, $t = 12.42$, $p < .001$) and annual house price ($\beta = .21$, $t = 3.25$, $p < .001$) emerging as significant predictors.

4. Discussion

The results of this preliminary attempt to compile a beauty-map of London suggest that there is indeed some variation in lay individuals' perceptions of the physical attractiveness of women and men from London's various boroughs. Specifically, participants rated individuals from the City of Westminster as being highest in physical attractiveness, followed by a number of nearby boroughs (Kensington and Chelsea, and the City of London, respectively). Looking at Fig. 2, it might also be suggested that no one borough was perceived as being disproportionately low in physical attractiveness, which raises the possibility of floor-effects in such ratings. Overall, then, it would appear that our method of compiling a beauty-map was successful in uncovering differences in perceptions of physical attractiveness as a function of geographical region.

Our results also suggest that there is a strong positive correlation between perceptions of attractiveness and familiarity with different boroughs. Indeed, in the regression analyses, ratings of borough familiarity explained about 85% of the variance in ratings of women's and men's attractiveness. These effects are perhaps not very surprising: a relatively robust finding with the social psychological literature is that of increased liking for various stimuli with greater familiarity (cf. Bornstein, 1989; Zajonc, 1968). This phenomenon may also be effective in perceptions of people we see in our everyday lives (e.g., Jorgensen & Cervone, 1978; Moreland & Beach, 1992), which helps explain why individuals in familiar boroughs may be rated as more physically attractive than individuals in unfamiliar boroughs.

Familiarity may also lead to higher ratings of attractiveness because of the effects of differential association (Urdy, 1971). That is, we tend to live near people who are like ourselves (e.g., in terms of socioeconomic status, education, religion, and so on), and such pockets of geographical homogeneity may be treated as in-groups who are perceived differentially from out-groups in other geographical areas. In such a scenario, participants may have been rating individuals in boroughs they were familiar with as more physically attractive because such individuals are perceived as the most similar to participants themselves. Clearly, we are not able to distinguish between these explanations in the present study, though our results do suggest fruitful avenues for future research.

Our results also revealed positive associations between perceptions of physical attractiveness and the socioeconomic development of the various boroughs. That is, women and men from more affluent boroughs were perceived as being more physically attractive than individuals from less affluent boroughs. Although GDP data (which would have provided a more direct measure of socioeconomic development) was not available for each of the boroughs, annual income and average house prices provide useful proxies of relative affluence (and are also more likely to reflect lay knowledge). Moreover, our results of a positive association between ratings of attractiveness and objectively-measured socioeconomic development are consistent with previous work among general practitioners (O'Reilly et al., 2006) as well as theoretical discussions of the value of beauty symbols (e.g., Swami,

2007; Swami & Furnham, 2008; Swami & Tovée, 2005a, 2005b, 2006).

As discussed above, there are a number of possible explanations for this association. One likely scenario is that affluent members of any society have greater access to resources with which to shape ideals of beauty, thereby excluding out-groups in terms of physical appearance. Beauty products and services that enhance physical appearance are also likely more affordable for affluent members of society, thus allowing them to more easily attain ideals of beauty (Furnham & Alibhai, 1983). Of course, our data deal with perceptions of beauty rather than actual beauty, but it seems likely that the former are, at least partly, grounded in reality. Alternatively, they may be stereotypes of individuals from various geographical regions, which are promulgated through various societal, political, and economic institutions.

By contrast, our results showed no significant correlation between ratings of attractiveness and health, as measured by the life expectancies of women and men. It may be that the knowledge lay individuals have about health by geographical region is not sophisticated (or, at least, not as accurate as their knowledge about wealth), or that the association between health and attractiveness is weak (Weeden & Sabini, 2005). Health information may, therefore, not play a major role in global judgements of attractiveness. Alternatively, it may be that the indicators of health (that is, the life expectancies of women and men) we used here are not accurate reflections of the way in which individuals think about health outcomes, and thus the use of other indicators (e.g., incidence of specific health consequences or hospital admission rates) may result in significant correlations with ratings of attractiveness.

This speaks to an important limitation of the present design. While we have examined the association between ratings of attractiveness and objectively-measured health and affluence, we have no data that our participants have assimilated the latter information. Although it seems intuitively plausible that this should be the case (especially in relation to the indicators of affluence that we used), future studies could improve upon the present design by examining the correlation between ratings of attractiveness and participants' own beliefs about the health and affluence of different geographical regions. Future research could also extend the present study by examining perceptions of attractiveness at more micro (e.g., by ward or neighbourhoods) or macro levels (e.g., by city, regions, nations, or continents). This may prove illuminating, particularly in relation to participants' familiarity with different geographical regions.

The main limitation of the present study, however, relates to the small sample sizes of participants residing in each of the various boroughs in London. Our failure to obtain large samples of participants from each borough, and more importantly participants who are representative of their boroughs, clearly limits the validity of our findings. Further work utilising a psychogeographical framework such as this should endeavour to sample an equal and representative number from the different geographical regions that are studied. Doing so will provide for a more accurate picture of the way in which perceptions of attractiveness are formed, and may also serve to explicate in greater detail the association between attractiveness and proximity of residency (for a review, see Katz & Hill, 1958), which in the present study were not correlated.

In conclusion, the present study suggest that there were significant differences in participants' ratings of the attractiveness of women and men from London's different boroughs. If the limitations described above can be overcome and if this methodological paradigm can be applied to other geographical regions, the results may prove illuminating for our understanding of the way in which beauty ideals are formed. Specifically, our preliminary results suggest that there are positive associations between perceptions of physical attractiveness and familiarity and socioeconomic status, respectively. In the long term, investigating these association more comprehensively and using more sophisticated methodologies may prove important in helping to redefine discourse on human beauty as encompassing many different types of beauty, not just those associated with a particular geographical or socioeconomic groups.

A 100 years after Francis Galton first discussed his Beauty-Map of the British Isles, we have put together what we believe is the first empirical beauty-map based on a specific geographical region. Unlike Galton's map, ours is based on the perceptions of the individuals that populate London's various boroughs and, therefore, have the advantage of being more representative and generalisable. Our map also examined the attractiveness of both women and men, overcoming a neglect of the latter in Galton's map of Britain. Overall, our approach – picking up from Galton's original idea – may prove a useful stepping stone for future research on human physical attractiveness.

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