

SEXUAL AROUSAL AND HETEROSEXUAL PERCEPTION¹

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It has been theorized that high drive initiates an "autistic" perceptual process operating in the direction of drive gratification. In the present study, it was hypothesized that (a) under conditions of high drive, perceptual distortion of drive-relevant objects occurs principally along drive-relevant dimensions; (b) the direction of distortion is toward enhancement of the object's potential for drive satisfaction; (c) the degree of accessibility of the object for potential drive gratification affects the extent to which drive-relevant characteristics of the object are enhanced. These hypotheses were tested in a person-perception situation in which level of sexual arousal and accessibility of the judged stimulus object (a prospective date) were varied. A two-factor multivariate analysis of variance with three dependent measures indicated that arousal level of judge, accessibility of stimulus object, and dimension relevance interact in determining perception of stimulus person. This and additional findings are discussed.

Bruner and Goodman (1947) first proposed to study the variations that perception undergoes "when one is hungry, in love, in pain, or solving a problem [p. 33]." Since then, many investigators have examined the impact of motivational factors on perception, most particularly on the perception of stimuli related to the drive under consideration. Much of this research has focused directly on Bruner and Goodman's hypothesis, that as motivational level increases, drive-related objects "become more vivid, have greater clarity or greater brightness or greater apparent size [p. 36]."

Although the *perceptual accentuation* hypothesis was initially couched in general terms, experimental investigations of the proposition have been confined largely to tests of a special derivation of the hypothesis. Most experiments have been concerned with the judgment of *size* of objects, most particularly objects associated with monetary value, and among these, most especially coins.

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Several theorists have noted the circumscription apparent in tests of the hypothesis. Secord and Backman (1964), for example, felt it necessary to point out that the hypothesis "may apply not only to a series of physical stimuli but also to any abstract dimension opening the way for the exploration of many variables that have great social importance [p. 46]." Tajfel (1969), too, commented that the hypothesis has wider implications than is implied by its experimental tests and specifically pointed out that little attention has been given to the effect of need upon person perception, even though "studies on the perception of physical characteristics of people would seem to lend themselves *par excellence* to the demonstration of the effect of motivational factors in perception [p. 325]."

Despite the relevance of the perceptual accentuation hypothesis to person perception, little relevant research has been conducted in this area. The vagueness of the proposition's theoretical underpinnings makes its predictive extension difficult, a fact that may partially account for the unwillingness of many investigators to stray far from the domain in which the hypothesis was first formulated and tested. (Bruner & Goodman, e.g., gave only cursory attention to the *raison d'être* of an accentuation effect under high drive. They

speculated that it was the result of "habitual selection," but they did not elaborate.)

The perceptual accentuation hypothesis, however, bears a great deal of similarity to a proposition advanced earlier by Levine, Chein, and Murphy (1942). This earlier formulation does seem to readily permit extensions to person-perception situations. These investigators posited that high drive initiates an "autistic" process "operating in the direction of gratification." Such an autistic process, of course, may account for certain instances of perceptual accentuation. Although Levine et al. also failed to elaborate on their notion, they clearly foresaw that some explication would inevitably be necessary:

However commonplace such [autistic] processes may be in everyday life and in clinical experience, extraordinarily little is known about them; no one can define the laws determining when they will appear or vanish, or how they facilitate or inhibit each other [p. 283].

While the notion of autistic processes in person perception has survived in the social-psychological literature to the present day (sometimes under the label of "facilitative distortion," cf. Jones & Davis, 1965, p. 241), little has been discovered concerning the circumstances under which such autistic processes may be expected to "appear or vanish."

One might speculate, however, that implicit in Levine et al.'s concept of a drive-initiated autistic process are the following two axioms: (a) Perceptual distortions will occur principally along dimensions of the stimulus object which are *relevant* to drive gratification. For example, individuals will distort the size of a coin. They will not systematically distort the color of coins. Size of coin is associated with value and potential need satisfaction, while color is not. (b) The direction of distortion along drive-relevant dimensions will be toward *enhancement* of the object's potential for satisfaction of the drive.⁴

⁴ The first implication is in accord with Tajfel's (1957) analysis of the results of the several studies that have tested the size-accentuation hypothesis and with his theoretical statement of the principles underlying these findings. It is difficult to determine whether the second implication (that the direction of distortion will be toward enhancement of the object's drive-satisfaction potential) is compatible with Tajfel's theory. Tajfel (1957) predicted that

A number of additional factors may be hypothesized to influence the extent to which such an autistic process will operate in a given perceptual situation. One factor that may be of potential importance is the *accessibility* of the stimulus object to the perceiver. In daily life, the extent to which a stimulus object qualifies as a potential need gratifier depends on two factors: (a) the extent to which the stimulus object is *relevant* to the aroused need (i.e., the extent to which the object has the inherent potential for satisfying the need) and (b) the extent to which the stimulus object is *accessible* to the perceiver as a means of need gratification. One might speculate, then, that both the inherent relevance and the accessibility of an object should determine how drive relevant the object is perceived to be, and thus determine the extent to which various features of the object should be enhanced.

Previous tests of the perceptual accentuation hypothesis have been conducted in situations in which the stimulus objects—whether judged under conditions of high or low drive or judged on dimensions relevant or irrelevant to the drive under consideration—were completely unavailable for consumption or for "drive gratification." One should expect the perceptual accentuation hypothesis to be demonstrated most strongly when the stimulus object is both relevant and accessible.

The present experiment was designed to test the hypothesis that arousal, accessibility, and relevance interact in determining perception of a stimulus person. The hypothesis was tested in the context of a heterosexual dating situation. The two independent variables were varied in the following way.

there will be an accentuation of the differences between valued and neutral stimuli and argued that a "functional" mechanism underlies this effect: "Minimizing the differences entails a risk of confusion; accentuation then is additional guarantee of a successful response [p. 197]." Tajfel pointed out that the presumption of a functional mechanism leads only to the prediction that the perceived differences of magnitudes between valued and neutral stimuli will be larger than the corresponding differences between two sets of neutral stimuli. "It does not, however, allow for the prediction that the valued stimuli would be perceived as *larger* than the neutral ones [p. 200]," or, in the present case, permit prediction of the direction that distortion will take.

Arousal: Half of our male subjects (aroused subjects) evaluated a girl while sexually aroused; half evaluated her while not so aroused (nonaroused subjects).

Accessibility: Half of the males in each arousal group evaluated a girl whom they were to date within the following week (accessible subjects). The remainder evaluated a girl who was participating in the study but with whom they would never have an opportunity to interact (nonaccessible subjects).

Relevance: The three dependent variables varied in relevance. Each man was asked to rate the stimulus object on a wide variety of traits. Some traits were selected because they seemed especially relevant for sexually aroused males (i.e., a girl's physical attractiveness and her sexual receptivity). Other traits were chosen because they seemed irrelevant for sexually aroused males (i.e., the general favorability of the girl's personality).

In order to test for the predicted differential effect of arousal and accessibility on judgments made on relevant and irrelevant dimensions, a two-factor multivariate analysis of variance with three dependent measures was used.

METHOD

Subjects

Ninety-two males who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Minnesota participated in the experiment. Seventy-five subjects volunteered for the experiment in return for receiving points to be applied to their final exam grade. Due to a shortage of volunteers on this basis, the other 18 subjects received \$2.50 in addition to points. Subjects were preselected to eliminate all married, engaged, or pinned subjects, as well as those who were steadily dating only one girl at the time of the study.

Procedure

Subjects were scheduled to arrive at the experimental rooms in groups of four. Each subject in a group was randomly assigned to a different experimental condition. Each subject was seated in a separate booth. Subjects were not permitted to converse with one another during the experiment.

After the subjects were seated, the experimenter explained that she was on the staff of the Center for Student Life Studies and that the present study was part of an effort to examine the dating practices of college students. She told the subjects that each of them would be asked to go on one blind date with a co-ed also participating in the study and that

their date would be selected on the basis of random assignment.

Subjects were told that they would be asked about their impressions of their partner both before and after the date. The first impression was to be made after they had examined information concerning the girl's background. (Subjects were told that in the current study only the males would have background information provided them prior to the date. Ostensibly, the girls participating had agreed to go into the dating situation without prior information about their dating partners.) Following the blind date, subjects would be expected to return to the laboratory to fill out a number of questionnaires describing their postdate impressions.

After this description of the purpose and procedure of the study, subjects were asked to indicate on a "commitment" form their willingness to date whichever girl they received by process of random assignment and, further, to hold in confidence the nature of the background information they would read about each girl. All subjects agreed to the conditions of participation in the study of dating processes.

After collecting and examining the commitment forms, supposedly to see how many subjects had agreed to the terms of the study, the experimenter said that she would get the background information questionnaires of four girls who had also indicated their willingness to participate in the study and would make the random pairings. She assured the subjects that this would take only a few minutes. The experimenter then explained that a graduate student in the laboratory where the study was being conducted had asked to be allowed to try to enlist their cooperation in a pretest for his thesis during the time she collected the required number of files and made the random pairings. At this point, the experimenter went to the door and called the graduate student (the second experimenter), and then told the subjects she would be back shortly.

The second experimenter introduced himself as a graduate student in the lab and explained that he hoped to study sexual behavior the following summer. He said that he was in the process of selecting written materials that would vary in their potentiality for arousing male undergraduate college students. He explained that he wanted the entire continuum of arousal represented in his material and that, therefore, he needed some materials that undergraduates would find highly arousing as well as materials that they would find only mildly arousing.

He asked the subjects if, while they were waiting, each would be willing to read a short one-page article and rate it on a brief form as to its arousability value for undergraduates. He stressed that some subjects might not wish to do this and that all were free to refuse if they felt any reservations whatsoever about reading this type of material. All subjects were willing to read and rate an article.

He then distributed one brief article and a short evaluation form to each student. Two subjects in each group read an article depicting a romantic seduction scene between two young people. (We

hoped that the subjects would find this article sexually arousing.) The other two subjects read an article describing the sex life of herring gulls. (We considered this article to be nonarousing.)

After reading the article, the subjects filled out the evaluation questionnaire that asked the subjects to evaluate the article's potential for capturing attention and for producing sexual arousal. In the aroused condition, the last item on the questionnaire requested that subjects very briefly, in a few sentences, tell what kind of article they would find sexually arousing. In the nonaroused condition, the subjects were asked to indicate what kind of story they would find interesting but not arousing. This phase of the experiment lasted approximately 10 minutes.

When the first experimenter returned with the background questionnaires, the second experimenter collected his articles and questionnaires, thanked the subjects for helping him out, and departed.

At this point, the first experimenter told the subjects that she would give each of them the background questionnaires of *two* girls participating in the study and that they should report their first impressions of each. She instructed them:

In addition to giving us your first impression of the girl assigned to you as a date, we are also going to ask you to give us your first impressions of a girl that you will not be dating. We are asking you to rate two girls participating in the study because we want several opinions of each of the girls.

Thus, all subjects expected that a date would be assigned to them. The subjects were told that some of them would evaluate their own date first, while others would first evaluate a girl they would not be dating. They were then given an envelope containing background information on the first girl they were to evaluate.

One aroused subject and one nonaroused subject received envelopes that indicated that the girl they were to evaluate was their blind date. The other two subjects received envelopes which indicated that the girl they would be evaluating would not be their date.

The envelope which the subject received contained a picture of the girl, a "background questionnaire" ostensibly completed in the girl's own handwriting, and a "first-impression inventory," on which the subject was to record his first impression of the girl. The photograph of the girl that was attached to the background questionnaire and the background information included on the questionnaire were the same for all subjects. The photo was of a pretty, blonde co-ed. The girl had described herself on the questionnaire as active, fairly intelligent, easy to get along with, and moderately liberal.

After the subjects had looked at the photograph and read the girl's responses to the background questionnaire, the photo and questionnaire were removed by the experimenter. This was done to give the subjects the widest possible latitude to indulge

in fantasy while filling out the first-impression inventories. Subjects then filled out the inventory.

Relevant Items

When a man is sexually aroused, two traits in a girl—her sexual desirability and her sexual receptivity—should be especially relevant to his needs (and thus especially susceptible to drive distortion).

A number of questions designed to tap the perceived attractiveness of the stimulus girl were included on the first-impression inventory. Subjects were asked to indicate on an 8-point scale how attractive they felt the girl was and also how attractive she was compared to girls they usually dated. In addition, subjects were required to rate the girl on a number of characteristics, using a semantic differential format. Three of these semantic differential scales were relevant to attractiveness: beautiful versus ugly; pretty versus not pretty; and attractive versus unattractive. The responses to all five items were combined to form an attractiveness index.

Questions designed to tap the perceived sexual receptivity of the stimulus girl were also included on the semantic differential portion of the inventory. Included were amorous (versus nonamorous); immoral (versus moral); willing (versus unwilling); promiscuous (versus unpromiscuous); unwholesome (versus wholesome); careless (versus careful); nasty (versus nice); durable (versus delicate); and not inhibited (versus inhibited). Subjects' responses to these nine items were then combined to form a sexual-receptivity index.

Less Relevant Items

The semantic differential also asked the subjects to assess the girl on a number of traits that were intended to be of little relevance to a sexually aroused male. These traits were intelligence, cheerfulness, neatness, sensitivity, warmth, generosity, friendliness, open-mindedness, affectionateness, self-confidence, sophistication, and femininity. (Each of these irrelevant traits could be classified as socially desirable or undesirable traits for a person to possess.) Such a classification was made, and the subjects' responses were combined to form an index of favorability of a girl's personality.⁵

When the subjects had completed their evaluation of the girl, the experimenter collected the inventories. The experimenter then asked the subjects to provide some information about themselves while she

⁵ It is possible, of course, that some subjects may have perceived some of these 12 traits to be relevant to sexual gratification. What is relevant or irrelevant depends entirely on individual perceptions. Although we cannot be sure that for every subject every trait we designated as irrelevant was perceived as totally irrelevant, we do have some confidence that on the whole the irrelevant traits were undoubtedly perceived to be less relevant to sexual gratification than were physical attractiveness and sexual receptivity. To the extent that our classification is wrong, we simply diminish our chances of supporting our hypothesis.

assembled the information on the second set of girls they were to rate. The subjects were told that the information furnished on their own background forms would be kept strictly confidential and would not be furnished to their dates.

After the subjects had finished filling out the questionnaire about themselves, the experimenter said that she had not yet assembled all the information on the second set of girls and suggested that while the subjects waited they could fill out a form usually given out at the end of the experiment. This form explained that there had been a deception involved in the experiment and invited the subjects to guess what it was. They were also invited to write down any guesses that they might have as to what the experimenters expected to find out in this experiment.⁶ After the subjects had finished filling out this final form, both experimenters debriefed the subjects.

RESULTS

Sexual Arousal Manipulation Check

It will be recalled that the rationale given to the subjects for reading the stories that we hoped would be either sexually arousing or nonarousing was that the second experimenter, the graduate student, was interested in assessing the potentiality of each story to sexually arouse college males. Thus, each subject evaluated the arousal value of the story he read. These evaluations served as our check that aroused subjects (who read the romantic seduction story) were indeed more sexually aroused than nonaroused subjects (who read about the sexual behavior of the herring gull).

The evidence indicates that the arousal manipulation was successful. As compared to subjects in the nonaroused condition, aroused subjects found their story to be more sexually arousing ($F = 391.76, p < .01$), more interesting ($F = 17.97, p < .01$), and reported themselves to be far more desirous of engaging in sexual behavior after reading the article ($F = 125.66, p < .01$). Nonaroused subjects were

⁶ In speculating as to the nature of the deception, 7 subjects responded that they felt it possible that they were not really going to get their date as had been promised, and 5 subjects felt that there may have been a connection between the two experiments, only 1 of these subjects correctly guessing the nature of the connection. The data, collected from these subjects, who were randomly distributed among experimental cells, were dropped from our analyses, leaving a total of 80 subjects, or an n of 20 per cell. (All analyses were run both including and excluding these subjects in order to determine whether or not excluding these suspicious subjects affected our experimental results in any way. It did not.)

more likely to report that the story failed to hold their attention ($F = 60.47, p < .01$) and that the story was not graphic enough to be arousing ($F = 29.86, p < .01$). It seems clear, then, that immediately prior to making their evaluations of the girl, aroused subjects were more sexually aroused than were the nonaroused subjects.

Before proceeding to the test of our hypothesis, however, we might ask if these differences in sexual arousal were maintained throughout the experiment or if they quickly dissipated.

Some evidence pertinent to this question was obtained from the background information forms that all subjects completed after they had evaluated the girl and just prior to the termination of the experiment. The last few items of this form concerned the recency with which the subjects had engaged in various types of sexual behavior (from necking through intercourse). After indicating their actual level of sexual activity, the subjects were asked to indicate the level of sexual activity that they would consider to be ideal. It was reasoned that if aroused subjects were still more aroused than nonaroused subjects at this point in time, they should report a higher ideal level of sexual behavior than nonaroused subjects. Thus, a greater discrepancy between actual and ideal level of sexual behavior should be found in the aroused condition than in the nonaroused condition. This was, in fact, the case. Although there was no significant difference between the two groups in reported level of actual sexual activity ($F = 2.13, p > .10$), the discrepancy between actual and ideal level was greater for aroused subjects than for nonaroused subjects ($F = 4.17, p < .05$). Since the subjects filled out their information forms approximately 45 minutes after they had read the arousing materials, this result would seem to attest to the strength and duration of the sexual arousal manipulation.

Test of Hypothesis

It will be recalled that we predicted that the arousal (or drive) level of the subjects and the accessibility of the girl would differentially affect the extent to which the subjects would enhance the relevant versus the irrelevant characteristics of the girl. Specifically, an

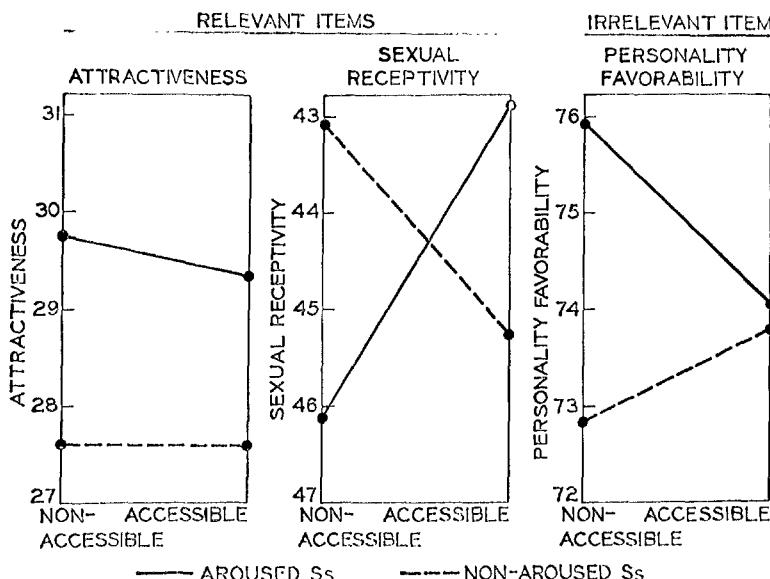


FIG. 1. The effect of arousal and accessibility of relevant items (attractiveness and sexual receptivity) and irrelevant items. (The higher the number, the greater the perceived attractiveness or perceived favorability; the lower the number, the greater the ascription of traits associated with sexual gratification.)

interaction for the relevant dependent measures was predicted in which subjects in the aroused-accessible condition would rate the girl as more attractive and receptive than those in the aroused-nonaccessible condition, and these cells would show greater enhancement than the two nonaroused cells, between which little or no differences were predicted; for the irrelevant dependent measures, only a minimal interaction, if any, was predicted. As indicated previously, the correct way to test this hypothesis, given our design, is via a multivariate analysis of variance (cf. Hays, 1963).

The appropriate means are graphically presented in Figure 1. Statistical analysis indicated that the independent variables, arousal and accessibility, did affect the relevant dependent variables, attractiveness plus sexual receptivity, differently than they affected the irrelevant dependent variable, favorability of girl's personality (multivariate interaction $F = 4.62$, $df = 1/76$, $p < .03$). Neither arousal alone nor accessibility alone had a significant effect on perception (multivariate F s = .48 and .26, respectively).

Examination of Figure 1 suggests that contrary to our expectations, the two relevant de-

pendent variables were differentially affected by the arousal and accessibility manipulations. A second multivariate analysis, conducted to test for this possibility, provided marginal evidence that there was indeed differential response to the two relevant dependent measures (multivariate interaction $F = 3.13$, $df = 1/76$, $p < .08$). For this reason, and because the nature of the obtained overall interaction was not entirely as expected (e.g., nonaroused subjects appear to have been affected by the accessibility of the stimulus girl, although in different fashion than for aroused subjects), additional analyses were undertaken to further examine the data.

Separate Analyses of Three Dependent Variables

Attractiveness. It will be recalled that it was predicted that arousal and accessibility would strongly interact in determining how much subjects enhanced the girl's attractiveness—a characteristic relevant to sexual gratification. An analysis of variance performed on the attractiveness data (see Figure 1) indicated that arousal and accessibility did not significantly interact in determining how attractive the subjects judged the girl to be

(interaction $F = .05$, ns). (Thus, we have confirmation that our first relevant dependent measure did not contribute to the expected interaction.) Nor was the accessibility main effect significant ($F = .05$, ns). Rather, it appears that the sexual arousal manipulation alone affected the extent to which the girl's attractiveness was enhanced ($F = 4.37$, $p < .05$). Subjects in the aroused conditions found the girl more attractive than did subjects in the nonaroused conditions.

Sexual receptivity. It was predicted that arousal and accessibility would interact in determining how much the subjects enhanced the girl's sexual receptivity—a characteristic relevant to sexual gratification. An analysis of variance performed on receptivity data (see Figure 1) indicated that arousal and accessibility did significantly interact in determining how sexually receptive the subjects perceived the girl to be (interaction $F = 6.24$, $p < .02$). Subjects in the aroused-accessible condition were more likely to perceive the girl as being sexually receptive than were subjects in the aroused-nonaccessible condition. This difference between the accessible and nonaccessible conditions was reversed for the subjects in the nonaroused conditions.

Neither arousal alone nor accessibility alone affected perception of the girls' sexual receptivity (aroused $F = .09$; accessibility $F = .23$).⁷

General favorability of personality. It was predicted that arousal and accessibility would interact only weakly—or not at all—in determining how favorably subjects would perceive the girl's personality characteristics essentially irrelevant to sexual gratification. As

⁷ With respect to analyses of the individual items included in the receptivity index: On none of the items was there a significant accessibility main effect. A significant main effect for arousal was obtained on "willing" ($F = 8.38$, $p < .01$), such that aroused subjects perceived the girl as more willing than non-aroused subjects. This item, however, showed evidence of an Arousal \times Accessibility interaction of the nature found on the total index ($F = 2.78$, $p < .10$). The means on each of the remaining items also showed evidence of an interaction of the type described for the total receptivity index. Several of these individual interactions were statistically significant: ("amorous" $F = 12.95$, $p < .01$; "careless" $F = 6.46$, $p < .05$; "nasty" $F = 3.21$, $p < .10$; "durable" $F = 5.26$, $p < .05$).

predicted, arousal and accessibility did not strongly interact in determining how favorably subjects perceived the girl to be along presumably irrelevant dimensions ($F = 1.44$, ns), and the means were not lined up in the direction predicted for relevant items.

Neither the arousal nor the accessibility main effect was significant (arousal $F = 1.99$; accessibility $F = .16$).⁸

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide some support for Levine et al.'s (1942) general hypothesis that high drive initiates an "autistic" process "operating in the direction of gratification." The results also suggest some guidelines that may prove useful in predicting the occurrence and nature of such processes in person perception.

If it is presumed (as seems safe in this culture) that sexual relations with an attractive girl are expected to be more satisfying than sexual relations with an unattractive girl, the greater perceived attractiveness of the stimulus girl under conditions of sexual arousal is compatible with the notion that drive-initiated autistic distortion takes the form of enhancing the stimulus object's potential for drive gratification.

This result supports and perhaps extends a similar finding in an experiment conducted by Epstein and Smith (1957). Although primarily interested in investigating the effect of sexual drive upon fantasy, these investigators also examined the effect of sexual drive upon perception of the attractiveness of stimulus

⁸ No significant interaction or main effects were found for the following items making up the favorability index: intelligence, cheerfulness, neatness, sensitivity, warmth, generosity, friendliness, open-mindedness, affectionateness, and self-confidence. On the two remaining items—sophistication and femininity—an arousal main effect was found (F for sophistication = 5.17, $p < .05$; F for feminine = 4.97, $p < .05$). Aroused males perceived the girl to be more sophisticated and more feminine than did non-aroused males. Arousal \times Accessibility interaction effects of the same nature as that obtained on the receptivity index were also found (sophisticated $F = 5.17$, $p < .05$; feminine $F = 3.06$, $p < .09$). Subjects in the aroused-accessible condition found the stimulus girl to be less sophisticated and less feminine than did subjects in the arousal-nonaccessible condition; this effect was reversed for subjects in the nonarousal cells.

women. Rather than manipulating sexual arousal, Epstein and Smith estimated the strength of an individual's sex drive on the basis of the subject's reported rate of sexual orgasm. They requested their subjects to rate on a 5-point scale the sex appeal of three scantily clad women whose pictures were projected successively on a screen. A positive relationship was found between the tendency to rate the women in the pictures as sexually appealing and rate of orgasm; that is, the more sexually experienced the subject reported himself to be, the more likely he was to rate the women as sexually attractive.

One way in which the Epstein and Smith results may be interpreted is that the high-rate subjects possessed chronically high sexual drives; in the interest of need fulfillment, these subjects, like our sexually aroused subjects, saw the depicted women as more attractive than did the low-rate subjects. There are other possible interpretations of their findings, however (e.g., as has been demonstrated by Leiman & Epstein, 1961, high-rate subjects may have more accepting attitudes toward sex and thus may be less inhibited in ascribing sex appeal to women depicted in a laboratory setting; having just proclaimed their sexual prowess on a questionnaire, high-rate subjects may feel a need to make their ratings of sexual appeal consonant with their extensive experience by rating the women as sexually appealing, etc.).

In the context of our own study, we investigated the effect of sexual experience versus inexperience on the tendency to find the stimulus girl attractive. We found that the more sexually experienced males in our study (determined by self-report of frequency and recency of sexual experience) found the stimulus girl *less* attractive than did the inexperienced males ($r = -.21, p < .05$). Thus, while sexual arousal was definitely related to perceived attractiveness of the stimulus girl, sexual drive as measured by reported magnitude of sexual experience was related to perceived attractiveness of the stimulus girl in the opposite fashion. This result suggests that sexual arousal may have mediated the Epstein and Smith finding; that is, sexually experienced males may have been aroused more easily by

scantily clad women in a laboratory setting, and arousal then led to enhanced attractiveness.

The absence of an Arousal \times Accessibility interaction on the attractiveness index is perplexing, however, since it seems quite clear that accessibility does make a difference in whether or not subjects perceive the girl as potentially receptive to engaging in sexual behavior on the first date.

In this connection, we must comment on the nature of the sexual receptivity interaction. We had predicted that since accessible objects have more relevance for drive gratification than inaccessible objects, distortion along drive-relevant dimensions in the arousal-accessible condition should be greater than in the arousal-nonaccessible condition. This was the case. We had thought, however, that under conditions of nonarousal, the accessibility or inaccessibility of the stimulus would have little effect on perception of the stimulus. This was not the case. Contributing to the sexual receptivity interaction was a tendency for nonaroused subjects to perceive their date as less immoral, promiscuous, etc., than the girl they were not to date. If it is assumed that it is not generally socially desirable for a girl to be immoral, promiscuous, or nasty, the nonaroused subjects showed a tendency to enhance the general favorability of the girl they were to date as opposed to the nondate (although on other nonsexual items, there was no general effect strong enough to reach significance).

Such general favorability enhancement due to anticipated contact with another might be expected from the results of other studies (e.g., Darley & Berscheid, 1967). But the present results clearly suggest that anticipated interaction alone does not inevitably lead to perceptual enhancement of the favorability of the person. Therein, perhaps, lies the usefulness of the general principle that it is the stimulus object's potential for drive gratification that is enhanced, not simply its general favorability.

In most cases, of course, social interaction with a person possessing characteristics regarded as socially desirable may be expected to lead to greater reward than interaction

with a person possessing socially undesirable traits. In the current case of aroused sexual need, however, we have perhaps stumbled onto one of those cases in which interaction with a person possessing a few socially undesirable traits, of a prescribed nature, is likely to be more immediately rewarding than interaction with a completely socially desirable person. The "sexual revolution" notwithstanding, the characteristics associated with sexual relations on a first date may be still generally unfavorable and may fall into the "bad girl" syndrome (cf. Wolfenstein & Leites, 1950). Thus, the distortion that takes place, while in the direction of enhancing the object's potential for drive gratification, may occasionally be at the same time in the direction of decreasing the general favorability of the object. It might be noted that the results of an additional item included on the first-impression inventory support the notion that aroused subjects perceived their dates both as potential objects of sexual gratification and perhaps less favorably overall than did those who were nonaroused. Subjects were asked how likely they would be to ask the girl out again, assuming that the first date "went well." An Arousal \times Accessibility interaction was obtained such that aroused-accessible subjects felt they would be *less* likely to ask her out again than aroused-nonaccessible subjects; the reverse effect was obtained for nonarousal conditions ($F = 7.32$, $p < .01$).

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