

**The Impact of Physical Attractiveness, Gender of Defendants and Type of Crime on
Sentencing Decisions**

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Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of physical attractiveness, gender of the defendant and the type of crime committed on sentencing decisions and whether the likability of the defendant, perceived positive or negative emotions, and the attitude towards gender roles moderated any of the effects. The experimental study consisted of a 2x2x2 factorial between-subjects design in which the independent variables were the attractiveness of the defendant, either attractive or unattractive; the gender of the defendant, male or female; and the type of crime they committed, either a burglary or a swindle. It was predicted that when the crime was attractiveness-unrelated (burglary), participants would assign more lenient sentences to the attractive defendant than to the unattractive defendant. However, when the offence was attractiveness-related (swindle), it was hypothesised that there will be no differences between attractive and unattractive defendants. Participants ($N = 140$) were randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions and were provided with a full face picture of their assigned defendant. Then they rated their initial emotions after perceiving the picture of the defendant and filled out a likability scale. Subsequently, participants read one fictional case vignette fitting their condition and had to assign a sentence length from 6 to 48 months to the defendant. Finally, their gender role beliefs were measured. The results demonstrated that there were no significant effects of attractiveness or type of crime on participants' sentencing decisions. However, female defendants received significantly shorter sentences than male defendants.

Keywords: physical attractiveness, gender, type of crime, sentencing decision, crime, emotions

Introduction

When criminals are convicted of a crime, legal factors like past criminal behaviour, nature of the crime or the motive of the suspect are important aspects of the sentencing decision. To ensure that everyone is equally treated by judges and the jury, extralegal factors like age, gender or ethnic group should not have an impact on the criminal conviction. However, research has shown that some extralegal factors like being physically attractive or being a woman can be an advantage as people with these characteristics often receive more lenient sentences compared to their counterparts (Desantts & Kayson, 1997). Additionally, research has demonstrated that attractiveness¹ of a defendant interacts with the type of crime committed as for example attractive defendants receive more lenient sentences when committing an attractiveness-unrelated crime like burglary (Sigall & Ostrove, 1975). Therefore, this study investigated the effect of attractiveness and gender on sentencing decisions and how they relate to the type of crime committed. For this, the findings of Sigall and Ostrove (1975) mentioned above will be partially replicated. Also, this study investigated possible reasons why attractiveness might influence decision making. In particular, as perceiving attractive individuals elicits more positive emotions (Mehrabian & Bluhm, 1997) it was examined whether perceived positive or negative emotions will impact the sentencing decision. A study by Nuñez et al. (2015) indicated that jurors described an increase in sadness and anger after observation of a trial. However, the sentencing decision of the juror was only affected by an increase in anger as jurors experiencing greater change in anger were more likely to sentence the defendant to death. Moreover, research has demonstrated that individuals with a positive mood are more susceptible to confirmation bias and reliance on heuristics while sad moods diminish such reliance (Park & Banaji, 2000). Additionally, attractiveness is known for generating a halo effect, a cognitive bias

¹ From here on physical attractiveness is referred to as attractiveness

making individuals believe that an attractive individual must also possess other positive attributes such as having more socially desirable personalities (Dion et al., 1972). Therefore, it was hypothesised that perceiving an attractive defendant will elicit more positive emotions which might impact the ability to make a fair and objective decision resulting in a more lenient sentencing for the attractive defendant. On the other hand, it was hypothesised that looking at an unattractive defendant will elicit negative emotions which will result in a harsher sentencing for the unattractive defendant.

Beautiful is Good

That being attractive has a lot of benefits is already documented in a great amount of research. Dion et al. (1972) found support for the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype which demonstrated that in social interactions attractive individuals were perceived as possessing more positive character traits than unattractive persons. This bias could also be observed in the criminal justice system as attractiveness is one beneficial characteristic which can lead to more attractive persons being more rarely convicted and arrested compared to unattractive persons (Beaver et al., 2019). Moreover, a wide range of studies have shown that attractive defendants receive more lenient sentences compared to unattractive defendants for criminal acts (Abwender & Hough, 2001; Leventhal & Krate, 1977; Solomon & Schopler, 1978). Even though there are mixed findings on whether attractiveness is a consistent advantage in the actual criminal conviction (Wuensch et al., 1991), there is enough support to investigate possible reasons for it.

There are different theories highlighting why attractive defendants are favoured in the conviction of crimes. First, research has documented that attractiveness generates a halo effect, a cognitive bias which is activated when an individual has no information about another person to

judge them (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Therefore, an individual who perceives an attractive person will assume that they also must have other positive attributes. Nisbett and Nelson (1977) demonstrated this effect in their study as participants were either provided with a videotape of a warm and friendly, or a cold and distant college instructor. Their results showed that participants who saw the friendly instructor judged his accent, appearance and his behaviour as appealing while those who saw the distant instructor evaluated the same characteristics as irritating. This study demonstrated how a preconceived positive or negative notion affected the evaluation of the instructor. The findings of an attractiveness halo is underlined by Eagly et al. (1991) who showed that attractive people were treated more positively in social interactions and participants assumed that attractive individuals have more favourable personality traits and more successful life outcomes. Moreover, a meta analysis by Langlois et al. (2000) showed that attractive people were not only evaluated better but they were also actually treated better compared to unattractive people. These findings highlight that being attractive is perceived as a positive characteristic which leads to attractive people being more liked by others as they were more positively treated. This is in line with research by Micheleni and Snodgrass (1980) who emphasise the liking-leniency model which suggests that decisions and evaluations are affected by perception. Therefore, people should behave more positively towards people they like than those who they dislike. Applied to the juridic context, the model predicts that judges and juries will act more beneficially towards attractive defendants as they are more liked than unattractive defendants.

Another possible explanation which has received less attention in the context of criminal convictions is the role of emotions, especially positive emotional reactions towards attractive defendants are rarely considered in sentencing decisions. Research by Pataki and Clark (2004) have demonstrated that people felt more positive when they assumed they were about to meet a

physically attractive person in comparison to an unattractive person. Moreover, attractive faces that were presented only for a few milliseconds primed positive emotion concepts, indicating that positive affect reactions are perceived in a self-acting way (Olson & Marshuetz, 2005). Also, neurological studies have shown that human medial orbitofrontal cortex, which is a region involved in representing rewarding stimuli like food, reacts upon perceiving an attractive face (O'Doherty et al., 2003). Additionally, this region automatically processes attractive faces even when occupied with a task unrelated to facial attractiveness. Furthermore, Lemay et al. (2010) shows evidence for an affect based affiliation motivation in perceivers of physically attractive people which is associated with a need to maintain and form interpersonal relationships. In line with this finding is research stating that individuals are more likely to help attractive victims (Wilson, 1978), are more ambitious in returning their lost property (Benson et al., 1976) and attractive individuals are more likely to receive money in an emergency (West & Brown, 1975) which may reflect their interest in forming closer relationships. As a result of the information above, it may be concluded that emotions, especially positive emotions can alter the perception of an attractive defendant which may result in a more lenient sentencing decision. Therefore, this study will investigate the relationship between emotions after perceiving an (un)attractive defendant and consequent sentencing decision.

Even though research has claimed that attractive defendants are sentenced more leniently due to various factors, there is evidence that an attractive defendant receives harsher punishment when it is believed that they are taking advantage of their attractiveness to the disadvantage of the victim getting deceived (Smith & Hed, 1979). As a result, the next section will discuss the interaction of attractiveness and type of crime committed.

Attractiveness and Type of Crime

In early research by Sigall and Ostrove (1975), it was investigated whether the effect of attractiveness differed depending on the type of crime. They argued that attractive offenders are seen as less likely to relapse and have more potential and thus would receive less punishment than an unattractive offender in an attractiveness-unrelated crime. However, when the crime can be seen as attractiveness-related like in a swindle crime, the attractive defendant, despite being viewed as having greater potential, can be seen as more dangerous and the effects of beauty could be nullified or even reversed. To test their hypothesis, participants were provided with one of two cases, an attractiveness-related crime, swindle, and an attractiveness-unrelated crime, burglary. Additionally, in each case they were provided with a picture of either an attractive or unattractive woman and had to assign a sentence length to them based on the crime they committed. Their results showed that overall when the crime was attractiveness-unrelated, the unattractive offender was punished significantly harder than the attractive and when the crime was attractiveness-related, the attractive offender was punished slightly harder than the unattractive. Even though an overall significant interaction between attractiveness and the crime could be observed, in the attractiveness-related condition, the sentences assigned to the attractive and unattractive swindler were statistically not significantly different. However, a tendency was observed for the attractive swindler to be punished harsher but their conclusion was that attractiveness was not a big liability for the swindler. Still, the attractive defendants seem to have lost their advantage.

Michelini and Snodgrass (1980) provide an explanation for the findings by applying the attributional or causal inference model which assumes that information about a person is used to determine whether their actions are intended and characteristic. Therefore, a jury member who is

aware of a defendant's traits will establish whether they will act criminally and if they are likely to reoffend in the future. In case the defendant's characteristics are judged as favourable then this will result in a more lenient treatment, but will result in harsher treatment when they are negatively interpreted. However, the jury decisions will only be affected when the characteristics about the defendant are perceived as relevant to the behaviour which is judged. Consequently, positive characteristics of a defendant do not always have to produce a more lenient treatment and negative characteristics do not always have to result in a harsher treatment. As mentioned above Sigall and Ostrove (1975) suggested that an attractive defendant can be seen as more dangerous when they deliberately use their attractiveness as an advantage to deceive a victim. The attributional or causal inference model would predict a harsher punishment which was demonstrated in their study as the attractive defendant lost their advantage in the attractiveness-related crime.

Gender and Sentencing Decision

The study by Sigall and Ostrove (1975) did not examine the role of the defendants gender as only female defendants were tested in their study. Still, there is reason to believe that gender disparities in sentencing exist as a wide range of studies show substantial differences in sentencing males and females. The reason why generally a gender gap in sentencing exists is due to male defendants offending at much higher rates, usually committing more extreme offences and having a larger criminal history (Doerner & Demuth, 2014; Steffensmeier & Allan 1996). However, research has shown that females were less likely to be incarcerated when convicted of a crime and when they received a prison sentence it was substantially shorter compared to males for the same crime (Koons-Witt et al., 2014). Moreover, a paper by Mustard (2001) demonstrated

that after analysing over 77,236 offenders and controlling for broad criminological, demographic, socioeconomic variables and legal factors, black people, males and offenders with low levels of education received considerably longer sentences indicating that gender impacts court decisions. Moreover, research has shown that females were less likely to be incarcerated when convicted of a crime and when they received a prison sentence it was substantially shorter compared to males for the same crime (Koons-Witt et al., 2014).

Most of the findings of gender differences are coming from the USA. There seems to be a lack of studies from European countries highlighting gender disparities in sentencing but it can be indicated that in Europe, females do not have a greater advantage compared to males. A recent study from Lithuania showed that neither gender nor other extralegal factors were significant in influencing the duration of the prison sentence (Tereškinas et al., 2022). Also, research from Finland, which is characterised by more gender equality compared to the USA, shows no difference in sentence length given to men and women (Kruttschnitt & Savolainen, 2009). One reason for the observed gender differences in the USA might be that, as opposed to most European countries, there are different regulations depending on the state the crime was committed in. For example, a study by Fernando Rodriguez et al. (2006) came to the conclusion that observed gender differences could be attributed to Texas' legal codes as judges had more discretion available depending on crime type. However, as participants in this study are laypeople, they will not have any expertise in the criminal conviction of offenders and will not be able to make an objective decision about the degree of penalty. Thus, the results demonstrated by Tereškinas et al. (2022) and Kruttschnitt and Savolainen (2009) cannot be applied to the current study. As a result, it is assumed that the sentencing decision of participants will be influenced by gender stereotypes, as these are often internalised and perpetuated as they have been socialised

within a broader societal context that reinforces such beliefs, resulting in more lenient punishment for women. Therefore, even though this study mainly gathered participants from western European countries like Germany and the Netherlands it is expected that participants will give more lenient sentences to females compared to males. The gender differences in sentencing primarily found in research from the USA can be explained by various theories.

There are several theoretical perspectives like the chivalry thesis, the focal concerns theory or the judicial paternalism theory which are frequently used to explain gender disparities in sentencing. This study will focus on the chivalry thesis and test whether possible gender differences can be explained by it. The chivalry thesis presumes that stereotypes about men and women influence the sentencing decision according to the sex of the offenders (Fernando Rodriguez et al., 2006). Chivalry or paternalism claims that women are stereotyped as childlike and in need of protection and can therefore not be held accountable for their criminal behaviour. As a result, women need to be protected and men want to minimise any suffering women can experience. When these stereotypes are activated in the field of the criminal justice system, this will result in favourable treatment for female offenders as police officers, judges and prosecutors are mainly men (Brown & Silvestri, 2020; Farnworth & Teske, 1995). Moreover, chivalry often manifests itself in forms of men opening doors for women or paying for dates as it is seen as an act of respect or admiration. On the other hand, paternalism refers to the practice of men treating women as in need of protection based on the idea that men should make decisions on behalf of women which dates back to traditional gender role beliefs. In these traditional views, men are usually expected to be dominant and strong while women are expected to be in need of protection and dependence. However, nowadays many people support gender equality and reject the idea of women being in need of guidance or protection from men. Applied to the current

study, it is expected that individuals who are more inclined to have a traditional gender roles view will unconsciously engage in stereotypical thinking, which will act as a moderator, resulting in more lenient punishments for female defendants.

Aim of the Study

First, the aim of this study is to find out whether the same results of Sigall and Ostrove (1975) can also be found in this study. It is hypothesised that attractiveness does only matter when the crime is not attractiveness-related. Therefore, attractive defendants will be treated more leniently than unattractive defendants when the crime is attractiveness-unrelated. However when the crime is attractiveness-related, there will be no differences in sentencing decision between the attractive and unattractive defendant. Next to the replication of Sigall and Ostrove (1975), it is researched whether the gender of the defendant also interacts with the type of crime and attractiveness of the defendant. Due to gender stereotypes, it is expected that female defendants will receive more lenient sentencing decisions compared to male defendants.

It is also researched whether attractive and unattractive faces will elicit positive and negative emotions and whether these emotions impact the consequent sentencing decision. As a result, a moderation analysis will be conducted to test whether perceived positive emotions will result in more lenient sentencing and whether perceived negative emotions will result in harsher sentencing. Additionally, it is tested whether looking at attractive faces will result in a halo effect and whether that positive influence has an impact on the sentencing decision. Thus, it was tested whether likability will moderate the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision. Finally, to evaluate the assumptions of the chivalry theory, another moderation analysis will be

conducted to test whether the attitude towards gender roles has an effect on the sentencing decision.

The following hypotheses were established:

H1: Attractive defendants will receive more lenient sentences than unattractive defendants when performing an attractiveness-unrelated crime but there will be no differences between attractive and unattractive defendants when the crime is attractiveness-related.

H2: Female defendants will receive more lenient sentences than male defendants

H3: The relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision will be moderated by the current positive and negative emotions and the likability of the defendant.

H4: The relationship between gender and sentencing decisions will be moderated by the attitude towards gender roles.

Methods

Design

This study was a 2x2x2 factorial between-subjects design in which the independent variables are the attractiveness of the defendant, either attractive or unattractive; the gender of the defendant, male or female; and the type of crime they committed, either a burglary or a swindle. The dependent variable is the sentence length assigned by the participants from 6 to 48 months. To test whether emotions will moderate the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision, the first moderator variables are the perceived positive and negative emotions after seeing the picture of the defendant. The second moderator variable indicating a halo effect is the likability after seeing the picture of the defendant. Finally, the last moderating variable for the relationship between gender and sentencing decision is the attitude towards

gender roles. In this study, every participant was randomly and with the aim for equal allocation to one of the eight different conditions assigned by means of the randomizer on Qualtrics.

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited through convenience sampling via Sona Systems, a research management system facilitating survey creation and participant sign-ups. About half of the participants ($N = 71$) were gathered through the researcher's social network, while University of Twente students ($N = 86$) participating through SONA systems received 0.25 credit points for completing the survey. In total, 157 participants participated in the study. In order to be able to take part in the study, the participant had to give informed consent, and had to ensure by means of tick boxes to be older than 18 years. From the 157 participants, 11 were excluded because they did not complete the entire study and six withdrew from the study after they were debriefed at the end.

The remaining 140 participants were approximately evenly assigned to the eight conditions, the smallest group had 15 participants and the biggest group had 19 participants. Out of the 140 participants, 48 were male (34.3%), 91 were female (65.0%), and one preferred not to answer (0.7%). Also, the nationality of participants varied (German = 89, Dutch = 20, Other = 29, Prefer not to say = 2) and their age ranged from 18 to 88 ($M = 25.97$, $SD = 11.39$).

Materials

Faces

The experiment was hosted online via Qualtrics. To manipulate attractiveness and gender participants were shown one of four faces chosen from the Chicago Face Database (Ma et al.,

2015). Research has shown that race and age impacts the sentencing decision as young black defendants receive harsher sentences than any other group and that race has the biggest impact in the sentencing of younger rather than older males (Steffensmeier et al., 1998). As most participants in this study will probably be young adults from Germany or students of the University of Twente from the Netherlands and thus be most likely white young adults, the defendants in the chosen pictures were also white young looking adults. All photographs were front facing neutral expression faces with a plain background which look similar to a mugshot from the police. The people in the photographs all wore grey clothes and had a neutral face expression to ensure that potential effects were not the result of emotional contagion. All models in the pictures were recruited in the United States and for establishing the norms for the creation of the database independent judges rated them on their attractiveness on a 7 point Likert scale by considering the person in the picture with respect to other people of the same race and gender. It was ensured that the age and the physical attractiveness ratings were roughly the same in the female physical attractive and the male physical attractive condition, as well as in the female physical unattractive and male physical unattractive condition. The chosen models from the Chicago Face Database were between the ages of 26 and 29 as the participant sample was predicted to be young adults. The pictures can be seen below and the mean attractiveness ratings as well as the estimated age of the person in the picture were as follows: Fig.1 Attractiveness 4.8, Age 27.6 Fig.2 Attractiveness 1.9, Age 27.4 Fig.3 Attractiveness 4.7, Age 25.8 Fig.4 Attractiveness 1.9, Age 29.

**Fig.1** Female Physical Attractive**Fig.2** Female Physical Unattractive**Fig.3** Male Physical Attractive**Fig.4** Male Physical Unattractive

Case Vignettes

Two cases were created which resemble the original work by Sigall and Ostrove (1975). The first case vignette described a burglary and the second one a swindle. The case vignettes were tried to be kept as close as possible to the original work but some elements like the location, the names and the currency were adapted to the predominantly German sample. Moreover, by using an inflation and currency calculator, the amount of stolen money was changed from originally \$2200 to €5000. Within this experiment, the information in both scenarios was kept the same to avoid confounding effects, only the type of crime and the names were adapted to their conditions accordingly. In the first case, a burglary was described in which

either Alex or Alexa Müller moved into a high-rise apartment and illegally obtained a pass key of the neighbour's apartment. Then, the perpetrator entered the apartment of their neighbour and stole €5000 in cash. After stealing the money and leaving the town, the perpetrator was apprehended by police and consequently was charged with grand theft. However, in the swindle condition Alex or Alexa Müller moved into a high-rise apartment and made the acquaintance of her victim who lived in the neighbouring apartment. Then, the perpetrator induced the victim to invest €5000 in a non-existing company. After receiving the money and leaving the town, the perpetrator was apprehended by police and consequently was charged with serious fraud. The full cases can be seen in Appendix A.

Questionnaires

Initial Emotions Form. To assess whether the perceived positive and negative emotions of the participant moderate the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision, participants filled out an initial emotions form after receiving the picture of the defendant. The form consisted of the 5 items “Happy”, “Pleased”, “Sad”, “Upset”, “Angry” and participants reported to what extent they felt this way initially after looking at the person in the picture on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 equalled “Not at all” and 5 equalled “Extremely”. The items “Happy” and “Pleased” were merged together to measure the positive feelings while the items “Sad” and “Upset” were merged together to measure the negative feelings of the participant. There was a significant positive correlation between “Happy” and “Pleased”, $r(138) = .60, p < .001$ and also between “Sad” and “Upset”, $r(138) = .35, p < .001$. The item “Angry” was used as a filler item and there was a significant positive correlation between “Angry” and “Upset”, $r(138) = .50, p < .001$.

Attractiveness Rating. To rate whether the models in the pictures of the Chicago Face Database were perceived as attractive as their ratings indicated, participants rated how attractive they perceived the defendant to be on a 7-point Likert scale in which 1 equalled “Extremely unattractive” and 7 equalled “Extremely attractive”. The original scale from the Chicago Face Database also used a 7-point Likert scale but 1 equalled “Not at all” and 7 equalled “Extremely”. Results of one-sample t-tests demonstrated that in this sample the attractiveness ratings of the attractive male defendants, attractive female defendants and the unattractive male defendants did not significantly differ from the obtained normed scores of the Chicago Face Database. However, in this sample the unattractive female defendants ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.11$) were rated significantly more attractive compared to the normed scores $t(34) = 2.22$, $p = .033$.

The Reysen Likability Scale. To analyse whether a halo effect, namely the likability of the defendant moderates the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision, the Reysen Likability Scale was used (Reysen, 2005). The scale consisted of 11 items which were answered on a 7-point Likert scale in which 1 equalled “Very strongly disagree” and 7 equalled “Very strongly agree”. Items on the Reysen Likability Scale were for example “I would like to be friends with this person” or “This person is likeable”. The sample in this study showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .89 which is considered good (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Sentence Length. In order to assess the sentence length for the defendant, participants were asked to indicate in an open text box for how many months the defendant should be sentenced to from 6 to 48 months. Answers of participants below the minimum or above the maximum were set to the minimum or maximum value. Two participants indicated a sentence length of zero in the open text box, which was then set to the minimum sentence length of six months.

Attitude towards Gender Roles. To determine how belief in gender roles affected sentencing decisions, endorsement of traditional gender roles were measured using the short version of the Gender Roles Beliefs Scale (GBRS)(Brown & Gladstone, 2012). The scale was a short form from GBRS and consisted of 10 items which were answered on a 7-point Likert scale in which 1 equalled “Strongly agree” 4 equalled “Undecided” and 7 equalled “Strongly disagree”. Items on the GBRS were for example “Women should have as much sexual freedom as men” or “Swearing and obscenity is more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man”. One item was reverse scored. Therefore, a higher score indicated a more feminist gender role belief. The current sample of 140 participants showed acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .70$).

Procedure

In the beginning, participants were welcomed to the survey and were told that the aim of this study was to get to know the opinion of the general public about sentencing decisions and possible factors which may affect that, to hide the actual aim of the study. Moreover, they were told about who has access to the data and that they are able to withdraw at any time without consequences. Then, participants had to fill in a consent form and had to agree that they read the information given. When they agreed to take part, they had to fill out questions regarding their age, gender, sexual orientation and nationality. Subsequently, Qualtrics assigned them randomly to one of the eight conditions. Then, participants were told that they are about to see a picture of a person and they should answer the next question while keeping in mind their initial feelings about the person they will see. They were not yet told that the person in the picture was a defendant to not influence their decisions for the following questionnaires. Subsequently, depending on their condition, they were provided with the picture of the person and participants

were asked to fill out the initial emotions form, in which the items were randomised to prevent a response bias. Following, they were shown the picture of the person again and had to rate how attractive that person was on a scale from 1 to 7. Then, while the picture of the person was still displayed, they filled out the Reysen Likability Scale. These measures were taken before the experimental manipulation to ensure that their answers were not affected by their knowledge of what the person had done. After that, the participants were provided with their case description (Appendix A) alongside the same picture of the person they received before. After reading their case, they assigned a prison time to the defendant from 6 to 48 months. Finally, participants filled out the GBRS. To control whether the sentencing decision was influenced by gender stereotypes the GBRS was filled out after the experimental manipulation. After that they had completed the study and the participants were thanked, debriefed and participants were told the original aim of the study (see Appendix B).

Data Analysis

To analyse the data the program SPSS version 28 was used. First, to test whether participants actually thought that the attractive defendants in the photos were attractive and that the unattractive defendants in photos were unattractive, two independent t-tests were conducted separately for males and females to compare the means. Then, to check a possible interaction effect between the three independent variables gender, attractiveness and type of crime on the dependent variable sentence length, a three-way ANOVA was performed. After that, two moderation analyses were executed to check whether the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision is moderated by the current level of happiness and the likability of the

defendant. Finally, a moderation analysis was conducted to test whether gender role beliefs moderated the relationship between gender and sentencing decisions.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables. The continuous variables, such as Sentencing, Positive Emotion, Negative Emotion, Attractiveness, Likability, Gender Role, are summarised by their mean and standard deviation. Noteworthy (non)correlations are discussed below.

Results of the correlation analyses revealed that there are no significant correlations between sentencing decision and any other variable.

Positive emotions and likability were found to be positively correlated $r(138) = .28, p < .001$ as well as positive emotions and attractiveness $r(138) = .35, p < .001$. Additionally, results demonstrated that people perceiving positive emotions were less likely to endorse feminist gender roles $r(138) = -.19, p = .025$.

Negative emotions and likability were negatively correlated $r(138) = .22, p = .009$ and negative emotions and attractiveness were also negatively correlated $r(138) = -.26, p = .002$.

Furthermore, results showed that attractiveness correlated positively with likability $r(138) = .58, p < .001$.

Attractiveness Manipulation Check

It was analysed whether the attractiveness manipulation, that physically unattractive defendants receive lower ratings on a 7-point scale compared to the physically attractive defendants, was achieved.

The independent t-test showed a significant difference between the physically attractive females ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.05$, $n = 33$) and the physically unattractive females ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.11$, $n = 35$) indicating that the manipulation worked, $t(66) = 10.40$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.07$.

Similar results were obtained in the male condition. The independent t-test revealed that the difference between the physically attractive males ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.35$, $n = 37$) and the physically unattractive males ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .72$, $n = 35$) was significant, $t(70) = 9.47$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.09$.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Sentencing 6-48	140	14.21	9.77	-					
2. Positive Emotion 1-5	140	1.51	.75	.05	-				
3. Negative Emotion 1-5	140	2.21	.92	.09	-.17*	-			
4. Attractiveness 1-7	140	3.50	1.68	-.02	.35**	-.26**	-		
5. Likability 1-7	140	3.56	.77	.03	.28**	-.22**	.58**	-	
6. GenderRole	140	5.60	.89	-.04	-.19*	-.04	-.07	-.15	-

1-7

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Sentencing Decision

A three-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of gender, attractiveness, and type of crime on the dependent variable sentencing decision. The results revealed a significant main effect of gender $F(1, 132) = 5.38, p = .022$ showing that males ($M = 16.10, SD = 11.48$) received harsher sentences than females ($M = 12.21, SD = 7.08$). However, there was no significant effect of attractiveness $F(1, 132) = 0.76, p = .385$ indicating no difference in sentencing between attractive ($M = 14.97, SD = 10.30$) and unattractive defendants ($M = 13.44, SD = 9.21$), and type of crime $F(1, 132) = 0.01, p = .972$ indicating no difference in sentencing between burglary ($M = 14.15, SD = 9.98$) and swindle ($M = 14.27, SD = 9.61$). Also there was no significant interaction between gender, attractiveness, and type of crime $F(1, 132) = 0.60, p = .440$. There were also no significant two-way interactions among the variables. For example, the interaction between attractiveness and type of crime yielded the highest F-value and lowest p-value $F(1, 132) = 0.21, p = .651$.

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of the assigned sentence length in months per condition.

Table 2

Mean and (SD) of Assigned Sentence Length in Months

Defendant Condition

Offence	Male		Female		Total
	Physically Attractive	Physically Unattractive	Physically Attractive	Physically Unattractive	
Burglary	16.10 (10.94)	16.61 (13.56)	12.89 (8.03)	10.94 (4.83)	14.15 (9.98)
Swindle	17.56 (11.55)	14.06 (10.31)	13.00 (10.42)	12.12 (4.33)	14.27 (9.61)
Total	16.78 (11.11)	15.37 (11.99)	12.94 (9.05)	11.51 (4.57)	14.21 (9.77)

The Effect of Attractiveness on Emotions

The three-way ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of attractiveness and type of crime on the sentencing decision. Therefore, the moderation analysis could not be conducted and instead it was tested whether perceived emotions differed based on the attractiveness. Therefore, two independent t-tests were performed to see whether there was a significant difference in initially perceived positive and negative emotions between the groups. The first t-test for the positive emotions revealed that the difference between the attractive defendant group ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.86$) and the unattractive defendant group ($M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.51$) was significant $t(138) = 4.00$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.68$. The second t-test for the negative emotions showed that the difference between the attractive defendant group ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.89$) and the unattractive defendant group ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.91$) was also significant $t(138) = -2.64$, $p = .009$, $d = -0.45$. Results indicate that participants had more positive emotions when initially seeing the attractive person and more negative emotions when initially seeing the unattractive person.

The Effect of Attractiveness on Likability

To test whether likability differed based on the attractiveness of the defendant an independent t-test was conducted to see whether there was a significant difference in likability

scores between the attractive defendant group ($M = 3.87, SD = .80$) and the unattractive defendant group ($M = 3.25, SD = .60$). The results of the independent t-test showed a significant difference between the two groups $t(138) = 5.05, p < .001, d = 0.71$, suggesting that participants liked the attractive person more than the unattractive person.

Gender Effects and Moderating Gender Beliefs

To analyse whether the observed gender difference is moderated by the participants' attitude towards gender roles, a moderation analysis using PROCESS macro version 4.3.1 written by Andrew F. Hayes in SPSS was conducted (Hayes, 2013). In PROCESS, model number 1 was utilised for the moderation and the analysis revealed a non-significant interaction effect between gender and gender belief on sentencing decisions. The interaction term was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.04, p = .844$). Still, the main effect of gender on sentencing decision was found to be significant ($\beta = -3.90, SE = 1.63, t(136) = -2.39, p = .018$) while the main effect of gender belief on sentencing decision was not significant ($\beta = -0.98, SE = 0.29, t(136) = -0.36, p = .738$).

Discussion

This study investigated the impact of attractiveness, gender of the defendant and type of crime on sentencing decisions. For this, the hypothesis of Sigall and Ostrove (1975) that attractive defendants will receive more lenient sentences than unattractive defendants when performing an attractiveness-unrelated crime was replicated. Moreover, it was hypothesised that when the crime was attractiveness-related there will be no differences in sentencing between attractive and unattractive defendants. Furthermore, this study explored the role of gender in

sentencing decisions, hypothesising that female defendants will receive more lenient sentences compared to male defendants. To test whether gender differences in sentencing arise from the notion that females need to be protected in our society, gender role beliefs were measured to see whether gender differences in sentencing decisions can be attributed to them. Additionally, this study tested whether looking at attractive defendants will result in experiencing more positive emotions while looking at unattractive defendants will result in experiencing more negative emotions. Then it was assessed whether perceived positive or negative emotions will moderate the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decisions. Finally, it was checked whether looking at an attractive defendant will trigger a halo effect resulting in attractive defendants being more liked than unattractive defendants. Therefore, it was hypothesised that the relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision will be moderated by the likability of the defendant.

The results showed no significant main effect of attractiveness and type of crime on the sentencing decision. Therefore, the results of Sigall and Ostrove (1975) demonstrating an advantage for the attractive defendant when committing an attractiveness-unrelated crime could not be replicated. However, this study demonstrated a significant effect of gender, showing that male defendants received harsher punishments compared to female defendants. The moderation analysis revealed a non-significant interaction effect between gender and gender belief on sentencing decisions. Furthermore, as expected participants indicated more positive emotions after seeing an attractive defendant and more negative emotions after seeing an unattractive defendant. Moreover, a halo effect could be observed as attractive defendants were rated as more likeable compared to unattractive defendants. However, despite these findings, sentencing decisions were not correlated to any variables tested in this study. These findings revealed that

even though participants were affected by the physical attractiveness of the defendant, the resulting effects were not associated with the consequent sentencing decision.

Attractiveness

Whereas past researchers have found that physical attractiveness is an advantage that results in more lenient sentencing decisions (Sigall & Ostrove, 1975; Stewart, 1980; Umukoro & Egwuonwu, 2013), the present study could not support this claim. Moreover, attractiveness did not interact with the type of crime as attractive defendants did not receive more lenient sentences when performing an attractiveness-unrelated crime. This limited or inconsistent influence of crime type on sentencing outcomes is also demonstrated by previous research (Fernando Rodriguez et al., 2006; Wuensch et al., 1991). Wuensch et al. (1991) for example demonstrated that the “what is beautiful is good stereotype” relies on both the type of crime and the gender of the participant deciding on the length of the sentencing. Their results indicated that only the female participants gave more lenient sentences towards the attractive male defendants but not to the unattractive male defendants, highlighting the complex relationship between attractiveness and sentencing decision. Their conclusion was that physical attractiveness is most presumably a valuable quality even in circumstances which makes it easier to take criminal advantage of others. The findings of this study are therefore in line with the lack of consistent empirical evidence suggesting that attractiveness is not a consistent predictor of more lenient sentencing decisions (Ahola et al., 2009; Jacobson & Berger, 1974). Future explorative studies which focus on qualitative data need to be conducted to gain insight of the underlying reasoning behind the sentencing decision of participants.

Gender

The findings that male defendants received harsher sentences compared to female defendants aligns with most of previous research in this field (Albonetti, 1997; Alozie & Johnston, 2000; Stacey & Spohn, 2006). The reasons for why these differences in gender exist can be attributed to various factors, including gender stereotypes, societal expectations, and differential perceptions of criminal behaviour (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). In line with expectations, male defendants received harsher sentences compared to female defendants. To explore possible reasons for the found gender differences, it was tested whether the sentencing decision was moderated by the attitude towards gender roles. Results showed no interaction effect between the Gender Roles Beliefs Scale and gender and there were no correlations between gender role beliefs and sentencing decisions. Therefore, it can be indicated that gender stereotypes of participants did not influence their consequent sentencing decision. However, according to the selective chivalry thesis women will only receive more lenient sentencing outcomes when the criminal act does not violate gender expectations. Therefore, women are seen as less dangerous when committing typical female crimes like drug use, property crime or check forgery (Fernando Rodriguez et al., 2006). Contrary, when females commit crimes which violate the traditional norms, they will be punished harsher. In this study, burglary and swindle might fall under the categories of property crime or check forgery indicating that they committed crimes which are fitting their gender which might explain the obtained results. Future research should investigate whether females are still sentenced more leniently when committing more masculine crimes like murder or crimes that involve physical violence. Moreover, research should aim to explore the reasons of participants for their sentencing decision for example in a post interview or via an open text box in an online study.

Emotions

The current study researched whether looking at attractive or unattractive faces will also result in experiencing positive or negative feelings and whether these feelings moderate the sentencing decision. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in initial feelings as participants who looked at the attractive defendant felt more positive while participants who looked at the unattractive defendant indicated more negative feelings. Moreover, results demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between looking at attractive faces and feeling more positive and a negative correlation between looking at unattractive faces and feeling more negative. However, there was no significant impact of attractiveness on the assigned sentence length, indicating that their positive or negative initial feelings did not have an effect on their evaluation of the crime. Reason for this might be that the correlations were found to be weak, proving a beauty bias, but not strong enough to impact decision making. Additionally, it has to be noted that the mean values for the obtained positive feelings after looking at attractive defendants and negative feelings after looking at unattractive defendants on a scale from 1-5 were relatively low. This showed that participants did not feel very positive or negative after looking at the face but it only proved that they felt slightly better in the attractive condition compared to the unattractive condition and slightly worse in the unattractive condition compared to the attractive. A possible reason for this might be that only static neutral faces were used in this study and that these faces did not evoke much positive or negative emotions in the perceiver. Research has demonstrated that looking at faces with a closed or broad smile led to greater rated happiness and attractiveness compared to a face with a neutral expression (Otta et al., 1996). However, research by Pataki and Clark (2004) who demonstrated that people felt better when

assuming they were about to meet an attractive individual did also not report high ratings of perceived happiness.

Likability

Generally, most of the cited studies in the introduction explaining effects of attractiveness resulting in more favourable outcomes for attractive individuals are quite old. However, newer studies as well as the findings of a halo effect in the current study indicate that the attractiveness stereotype is still stable today (Batres & Shiramizu, 2022). Even though a halo effect could be observed as attractive defendants were rated as more likeable compared to unattractive defendants, this halo did not translate into a more lenient sentencing decision for attractive defendants. This may be explained due to the fact that generally halo effects diminish as a person gets more information about another person's behaviour (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). As participants read the case description after filling out the likability scale, it is possible that this additional information led them to form more accurate judgements. Also, it is to note that results of the attractiveness manipulation check revealed that the mean attractiveness scores of attractive females and males did not indicate that they were perceived as the ideal beauty but rather as above average attractive. Research from brain imaging has revealed that the amygdala showed greater responses when highly attractive or unattractive faces were presented compared to more average rated faces. This opens up the question whether attractiveness has to be extremely high to get bigger advantages. Future research could demonstrate whether there exists a linear relationship between attractiveness and benefits gained from it. For example, it could be tested if above average attractiveness is sufficient for minor advantages like getting a free scoop of ice cream or getting off a parking ticket, but not for major advantages like getting a reduced

sentencing decision. However, in this study the effect of attractiveness should still be noticeable with above average attractive defendants (Valentine et al., 2004) as other research with similar above average attractive defendants showed an effect of attractiveness (Sigall & Ostrove, 1975).

Limitations

There are three important limitations concerning the results of this study. A first limitation concerns that results of an online survey cannot be used to make assumptions about a real life courtroom. Unlike in a real courtroom, participants in this study only had limited available information to make their decision and they had to decide on their own. In a courtroom, several judges or jury members get together to decide the verdict of an offender, limiting the impact of extralegal factors even more. Also, the assigned sentence length did not have an impact on an actual offender as participants were provided with fictional cases. This could lead to participants not taking it too seriously distorting the results. However, this limitation is hard to overcome as field research in a real life courtroom is almost impossible to conduct. As courtrooms are generally designed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved in the lawsuit, ethical considerations are raised. Often personal details and sensitive information are brought up in a courtroom which would harm the privacy rights as well as the integrity of all individuals involved. Moreover, in a courtroom it is important to maintain a fair and unbiased environment. Researchers or observers could impair or interfere with the proceedings undermining the integrity of the legal process.

A second potential limitation of this study is that only static neutral faces were used in this study. As a result, emotions could only be captured to a certain degree and therefore perceived attractiveness was limited. Research has shown that smiling faces are seen as being

more attractive compared to neutral faces with smiling being more important for female faces while being less important for male faces (Mehu et al., 2008). This might open up the question whether the attractiveness ratings of defendants in this study were realistic or whether in reality the defendants would be rated as more attractive. On the other hand, research by Morrison et al. (2013) has demonstrated that happy and neutral faces are the most attractive expressions and not statistically different in attractiveness. Moreover, they proposed that individuals are still able to detect attractiveness even in neutral faces as attractiveness is a stable property of the face which only differs slightly with facial expressions.

A third potential limitation is the representativeness of the sample in this study compared to those that actually make legal decisions. Participants in this study mainly consisted of young adults presumably without any knowledge of how the criminal justice system works. Legal professionals like judges have a thorough understanding of complex legal frameworks, regulations and legal principles. They undergo comprehensive education and training to build up expertise and they possess broad knowledge of the legal reasoning behind decision makings. In contrast, participants had to rely on their subjective feelings on how to assess the crime described in their case vignette. Therefore, the limitations of this study need to be carefully evaluated before generalising the results of this study.

Conclusion

The present study could not demonstrate that attractiveness was an advantage for the defendant resulting in a more lenient sentencing. Still, the study has shown that attractiveness generates a halo effect as attractive defendants were rated as more likeable and elicited stronger positive emotions in participants compared to unattractive defendants. These results indicate that

attractiveness seems to be not sufficient to impact high stake situations but it does influence the perception of an individual. However, the most striking outcome is the clear support for gender disparities in sentencing decisions favouring female offenders. Future research needs to establish whether the found gender differences were only obtained because the chosen types of crime did not violate gender expectations. Moreover, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding, qualitative research is necessary to generally explore the reasons for different punishments per gender. By addressing these gaps, it is possible to get closer towards a more unbiased and fair criminal justice system.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Case descriptions

Burglary: Female Physical Attractive

Name: Alexa Müller

Sex: Female

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Grand theft



The defendant is Alexa Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022. Then, the defendant illegally obtained a pass key for the building. After that, the defendant used that pass key to enter the apartment of the male neighbour and stole 5000€ in cash from the victim. After stealing the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of theft.

For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Burglary: Female Physical Unattractive

Name: Alexa Müller

Sex: Female

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Grand theft



The defendant is Alexa Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022. Then, the defendant illegally obtained a pass key for the building. After that, the defendant used that pass key to enter the apartment of the male neighbour and stole 5000€ in cash from the victim. After stealing the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of theft.

For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Swindle: Female Physical Attractive

Name: Alexa Müller

Sex: Female



Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Serious fraud

The defendant is Alexa Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022 and made the acquaintance of her victim, a man who lived in the neighbouring apartment. According to the victim, they became friends quickly. Then, the perpetrator induced the man to invest 5000€ in a non-existing company. After receiving the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of fraud. For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Swindle: Female Physical Unattractive

Name: Alexa Müller

Sex: Female

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Serious fraud



The defendant is Alexa Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022 and made the acquaintance of her

victim, a man who lived in the neighbouring apartment. According to the victim, they became friends quickly. Then, the perpetrator induced the man to invest 5000€ in a non-existing company. After receiving the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of fraud. For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Burglary: Male Physical Attractive

Name: Alex Müller

Sex: Male

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Grand theft



The defendant is Alex Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022. Then, the defendant illegally obtained a pass key for the building. After that, the defendant used that pass key to enter the apartment of the female neighbour and stole 5000€ in cash from the victim. After stealing the money, the

defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of theft.

For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Burglary: Male Physical Unattractive

Name: Alex Müller

Sex: Male

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Grand theft



The defendant is Alex Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022. Then, the defendant illegally obtained a pass key for the building. After that, the defendant used that pass key to enter the apartment of the female neighbour and stole 5000€ in cash from the victim. After stealing the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of theft.

For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute

minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Swindle: Male Physical Attractive

Name: Alex Müller

Sex: Male

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Serious fraud



The defendant is Alex Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022 and made the acquaintance of the victim, a woman who lived in the neighbouring apartment. According to the victim, they became friends quickly. Then, the perpetrator induced the woman to invest 5000€ in a non-existing company. After receiving the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of fraud. For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Swindle: Male Physical Unattractive

Name: Alex Müller

Sex: Male

Date of birth: 01.11.1995 (27)

Place of birth: Cologne, Germany

Prosecution: Serious fraud



The defendant is Alex Müller, who can be seen in the photo above. The defendant moved into a high-rise apartment in the center of Cologne in July 2022 and made the acquaintance of the victim, a woman who lived in the neighbouring apartment. According to the victim, they became friends quickly. Then, the perpetrator induced the woman to invest 5000€ in a non-existing company. After receiving the money, the defendant left the town, and shortly after was apprehended by police. Consequently, the defendant was sentenced for a serious case of fraud. For the purpose of this experiment, assume Germany is trialing using the input of the general public to help judges determine sentencing decisions. You may also assume the absolute minimum appropriate punishment for this type of crime was 6 months, even if you personally oppose prison sentences. Given that context, please indicate how many months the defendant should be sentenced to (6 to 48 months).

Appendix B**Debrief Information**

Debrief Information!

The Impact of Attractiveness, Type of Crime and Gender on Sentencing Decisions.

Thank you for completing this study.

The aim of this study was to test whether attractiveness, gender, and the type of crime committed had an impact on sentencing decisions.

To test this, you were presented with a description of a crime committed by a male or female defendant who was either attractive or unattractive. Additionally, the crime was either attractiveness related, a swindle or fraud, or attractiveness unrelated, a burglary. Then, you had to assign a prison length to the defendant.

It was predicted that participants would assign a more lenient sentence to an attractive defendant as attractive people are treated more favourably in a lot of situations. However, when the crime was attractiveness related (swindle or fraud) it was expected that participants would punish attractive defendants harsher and assign a longer sentence length as their attractiveness gave them an unfair advantage. Moreover, it was predicted that females will receive more lenient sentencing decisions due to gender stereotyping.

As stated in the beginning, participating in this study is completely voluntary. Now that you know the true aim of the study, you can withdraw from this study after reading this debrief form if you no longer wish to have your data used in this study. This will result in the destruction of all records of your participation. If you wish to allow us to use your data, you can either close this window or tab, or select "Submit my data". However, if you wish to withdraw your participation, you can select "Withdraw from this study" and your recordings will be deleted. You will not be penalised if you withdraw from the study.

If you have any questions feel free to message the researcher at t.j.ajoori@student.utwente.nl or the project supervisor at s.j.watson@utwente.nl.

If you want to know more regarding this topic and read about a study this research was based on, please have a look at:

Sigall, H., & Ostrove, N. (1975). Beautiful but dangerous: effects of offender attractiveness and nature of the crime on juridic judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 31(3), 410.