

## **The Effects of Physical Attractiveness on Political Beliefs**

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### **Abstract**

Physical attractiveness is an important social factor that affects our daily interactions. While scholars in social psychology provide evidence that attractiveness stereotypes and the ‘halo effect’ are prominent in affecting the traits we attribute to others, the interest in attractiveness has not directly filtered to questions of political behavior beyond candidates and elites. Utilizing measures of attractiveness across multiple surveys, we examine the relationship between attractiveness and political beliefs. Controlling for socioeconomic status, we find that more attractive individuals are more likely to report higher levels of political efficacy, identify as conservative, and identify as Republican. These findings suggest an additional mechanism for political socialization that holds further implications for understanding how the body intertwines with the social nature of politics.

**Keywords:** physical attractiveness, socialization, halo effects, efficacy, ideology

## **The Effects of Physical Attractiveness on Political Beliefs**

Our physical appearance is an important factor in daily social interactions. Indeed, scholars in social psychology have provided compelling evidence that attractiveness stereotypes and the ‘halo effect’ figure prominently in our daily lives, affecting the traits we attribute to others [1, 2], as well as how we are treated by others. However, such an interest in the cognitive effects of physical attractiveness effects has not directly filtered to questions of mass-level political behavior. With the importance of personal experiences and social context as agents of socialization [3, 4], and evidence that physical appearance affects life experiences [5], there is good reason to believe that individuals’ physical attractiveness may alter their political values and worldview.

Despite the social nature of politics, little ink has been spilled considering the effects physical appearance has on political life at the level of mass politics. Rather, the focus has been on examinations of how citizens perceive elites and particularly candidates [6-13]. Experimental evidence suggesting that physically attractive candidates are perceived as significantly more competent [14, 15]. Additionally, when lacking further information, voters have been shown to prefer more attractive candidates, predicting the outcomes of elections between two candidates based upon variation in appearance [16, 17].

These effects hold outside of the lab, with more attractive candidates demonstrating significantly greater electoral success, even controlling for traditional explanations of campaign outcomes [13, 18-20]. The ‘attractiveness premium’ is particularly prominent for low-information elections [21], and uninformed voters [22].<sup>1</sup>

While citizens’ vote choices are seemingly affected by the appearance of the candidates they are choosing between, how might a citizen’s own physical appearance affect how they view

the world around them? If physical appearance affects how we interact with others and our political beliefs emerge as a byproduct of our early life experiences, it stands to reason that appearance would also influence the development of individual political beliefs. Do physically attractive individuals develop in a bubble that creates a differential social experience (and subsequently different political attitudes)? In this paper, we take advantage of two distinct datasets (the 1972-74-76 ANES panel and the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study) to examine the influence of physical attractiveness on political beliefs.

Our findings across the surveys are twofold: more attractive individuals are more politically efficacious than their peers and more likely to identify as conservative and Republican than less physically attractive citizens of comparable demographic backgrounds. Though the attractiveness effects are less substantively weighty than traditional drivers of partisanship like income and education, the results are consistent across datasets, measures of attractiveness, and persist even when controlling for socioeconomic status and demographics. While thinkers and theorists have oft remarked on the health of the body politic, we show that it is important to understand how the body shapes politics.

### *The Socializing Effects of Appearance?*

While recent scholarship has suggested that many political orientations and behaviors are influenced by genetics [23-25], even this line of research concedes that social environment is an important influence in producing behavior [26]. In his discussion of neuroscience, innate behavior, and brain development, Marcus [27] uses an analogy of a book that parallels our thinking about the interplay between genes and socialization. “Nature provides a first draft, which experience then revises” (p. 34). The cumulative experiences individuals have over the

years prior to reaching adulthood have been shown to affect several choices adults make. Building from the path breaking work on socialization by Jennings and Niemi [28, 29], subsequent research has shown socialization's effects in the decision to obtain an education [30], the political views they hold as adults [3, 28] and adult political activity [31-33]. While the primary agent of socialization is thought to be the family [34], children's schools, relationships with teachers, and their social networks, historical contexts have also been shown to be potent forces in shaping adult beliefs [35-37].

In this paper, we posit the existence of another mechanism for socialization – physical appearance. Given that our appearance serves as an important factor in structuring our day-to-day interactions, we believe it also has a potent effect on the political beliefs individuals espouse in life. While race, socioeconomic status, and gender are powerful and traditional components of socialization and social interactions, it is a mistake to understate the lasting effects that variation of physical attractiveness may have on political attitudes and behavior. An individual who is less attractive and less politically efficacious may be substantially less likely to participate in politics, to seek redress for grievances, or to exercise their political rights. Physical attractiveness biases may, therefore, produce substantial biases in political activism and the propensity for individuals to be empowered in politics and government.

### Attractiveness Stereotypes and Social Experiences

Prior work in social psychology has considered the substantial role that appearance and attractiveness plays in shaping social interactions and social cognition. These studies typically utilize the framework of spillover effects or 'halo effects' on perceptions of others that occur automatically when interacting with others. Individuals perceived as physically attractive are

concomitantly attributed other positive traits. These ‘attractiveness stereotypes’<sup>2</sup> lead people to evaluate attractive individuals as more intelligent [2, 39-41] and more successful in life [42-44].

Furthermore, these experiences begin early in life. Attractive children have been shown to experience warmer treatment from their own parents as well as by perfect strangers [45-48]. Over a lifespan, these patterns of treatment appear to have a pronounced effect on the personality traits more attractive individuals exhibit in social situations, *appearing* to be more confident, extroverted, happier, and healthier as they reach adulthood [42, 49, 50].<sup>3</sup>

The mechanism for this process is a simple one. By virtue of the treatment they receive due to their appearance, individuals become more likely to internalize positive or negative behavioral characteristics [52-55], altering their behavior. This effect is potentially exacerbated by behavioral expectations, as posited by expectancy theory, which asserts that individuals alter their behavior in social situations based upon what they perceive to be expectations regarding their behavior [56].

These social interactions not only influence behavioral characteristics, but also have meaningful influences on not only perceived, but also actual life successes. As would be expected, better-looking students are perceived as being more capable [43, 57]. However, the advantages do not end there. Students with more attractive personalities, or are seen as well-groomed earn higher GPAs in high school [58], in addition to receiving higher scores on standardized tests [59]. More attractive individuals may also have greater levels of educational attainment, with evidence suggesting those who are viewed as better looking spend significantly more time in school [60, 61].

Appearance influences not only educational attainment and success in the classroom, but also experiences in the workplace. The seminal paper examining the relationship between

physical appearance and income finds both a “plainness penalty” and “beauty premium” in adult earnings [62]. Further work exploring this domain has confirmed these findings [63, 64], particularly among female workers [65]. This “beauty premium” is attributed to increased confidence and communication skills [66], again, which arguably are a product of differential treatment and experiences by virtue of being more or less attractive.

### Attractiveness Effects on Political Beliefs

How might these appearance-based experiences translate into political behavior? When evaluating the political sophistication of others, physically attractive individuals are seen as more knowledgeable and persuasive, and are more likely to be sought out by others as political informants regardless of their actual levels of political information [67]. We posit that interactions that more attractive individuals have with others should have powerful and lasting effects on how those individuals come to understand not only their social world, but the political world as well. We see clear parallels between the impact of a lifetime of differential treatment due to one’s appearance and the more specific process of political socialization, through which long-term political orientations are inculcated beginning at a young age.

Disentangling the effects of political socialization is a perpetual challenge, and determining the influence of physical attractiveness on political socialization is difficult because it broaches the interaction between physical attractiveness and household socioeconomics. It is plausible that physical attractiveness is partially determined by the socioeconomics of the household; children from households who can better afford and value cosmetics like grooming, expensive clothing, and dental braces may engender the potential for attractiveness boosts in socialization. In other words, part of the halo effect may rest in the socioeconomics of

upbringing which would then shape individual political efficacy and ideological leanings. While socioeconomic shape worldview and potentially evaluations of attractiveness, physical appearance is arguably antecedent because it influences those socializing experiences. For example, Langlois et al [68] find that parents treat children differently based on physical attractiveness which means that our earliest interactions are altered by attractiveness.

Analytically, researchers can attempt to control quantitatively for socioeconomic status (which we do in our modeling), but encapsulating socialization in social science models and particularly the influence of attractiveness remains challenging. Given these considerations, there are clear reasons why political attitudes and beliefs like efficacy are influenced by physical attractiveness.

Efficacy, or one's sense that they are capable of having a meaningful influence on the political world [69] is our first political orientation of interest in this analysis. Efficacy has been shown to have a significant influence on an individual's engagement in politics, with more efficacious individuals reporting increased attention to and knowledge about politics, as well as an increased propensity to participate.

We would expect that attractive individuals should feel a stronger sense of efficacy, as a consequence of their socializing experiences. More attractive individuals are treated differently than less attractive individuals, are given greater assistance during social interactions, and have greater propensities toward life success. Being treated as more successful leads individuals to internalize these feelings and behave as if they are more successful. Therefore, they should be more likely to believe they have a greater ability to affect the world around them, and that their decisions will be influential. We would expect that more attractive individuals would feel a greater sense of political efficacy.

H1: More attractive individuals should express higher levels of political efficacy

We turn next to consider two of the most fundamental orientations for an understanding of how citizens engage with politics – ideology and partisanship. Both are thought to be important lenses through which citizens view the world, as well as powerful influences on the attitudes they hold.

Ideology is an overarching belief system that structures individual attitudes toward the proper ends for society and the means for achieving those ends. While past scholarship has raised questions about the ability of the average citizen to espouse a coherent ideology [70], citizens are not entirely ‘innocent of ideology’ [71]. Those individuals coming of age in politically engaged households and/or environments are more likely to espouse coherent belief systems in adulthood, as ideology is thought to be an orientation that is transmissible.<sup>4</sup> Beyond this however, ideology may also be an orientation that develops as a product of individual experiences more broadly, as citizens develop their sense of the proper ends for government and the means by which those ends should be attained.

Partisanship, much like ideology, is an orientation that is a lens through which citizens view the political world [73, 74]. Unlike ideology, partisanship is less a belief system, and more a long-standing psychological attachment to or social identification with a political party [75] which reflects shared interests with members of the party. Partisanship is one of, if not the most influential orientation individuals hold toward the political system, influencing the candidates that citizens choose to support [76], and the positions they take on issues [77], (but see Carsey and Layman 2006; Highton and Kam 2011). In addition, partisanship is said to allow voters to estimate issue positions of candidates under conditions of limited information [80], and influencing how citizens attend to politics and the opinions they hold [81, 82]. As with ideology,

there is compelling evidence that partisanship is informed by experiences that individuals have while coming of age politically, including influence from one's family and peer group.

While we concede that a good amount of partisanship is rooted in socialization in the family and genetics (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005), physical attractiveness should also influence partisan identity. Because attractive individuals benefit from social interactions and are generally given more attention and granted more expertise, their passage through life may be 'easier' (compared to less attractive individuals). Therefore, on average, they may not recognize the challenges others face in life. Such reasoning is consistent with work in psychology on the 'just world' hypothesis, in which those who succeed are seen as harder-working or more deserving than those who fail [83], reasoning which has been shown to underlie attractiveness stereotyping [84]. In a sense, attractive individuals have a blind spot that leads them to not see the need for more government support or aid in society. Given that this is one of the tenets of the more liberal citizens, as well as supporters of the Democratic Party, we would expect that more attractive individuals would develop a worldview that is less supportive of government intervention and aid to others.

Having not faced the challenges of other citizens, more attractive individuals should be less supportive of remedying these challenges for the general public. Even though this blind spot may not be universally held and that physically attractive individuals do not always have easier lives, on average, physically attractive individuals face fewer hurdles navigating the social world. Consequently, we would expect that more attractive individuals would be more likely to identify as both conservative, and, relatedly, with the Republican party.<sup>5</sup> One refinement to this expectation is that partisanship may yield a cleaner relationship than ideology. As noted above, ideology is less firmly held in the mass public and individuals vary substantially in the meaning

and identification of ideology [70, 86]<sup>6</sup>. In contrast, party and partisanship are a stable and largely fixed point of reference in American politics, with the public able to coherently differentiate between the two parties and their ideological differences, brands, and broad tenets [87]. Thus, we may expect that partisanship has a more robust relationship with physical attractiveness than ideology.

H2a: More attractive individuals should be more likely to self-identify as conservative.

H2b: More attractive individuals should be more likely to identify with the Republican Party.

### *Connecting Appearance to Politics*

The paucity of work examining the political implications of physical appearance at the individual level is partially due to a lack of datasets containing both measures of attractiveness and viable political variables. To test the above hypotheses, we take advantage of two relatively unique datasets: the 1972-74-76 American National Elections Study (ANES) panel study and the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS).

The two datasets not only allow us to replicate and provide robustness checks for our findings, but also allow us to mitigate concerns regarding potential biases in assessments of individuals' appearance. The conceptualization of what is attractive could, in theory, vary somewhat across individuals, although evidence suggests that criteria for attractiveness appear to be consistent *within* cultural groups [88], be universal and determined by social consensus [45, 89], and stable over time [90]. Additionally, recent research has demonstrated relative consistency across evaluations of appearance, regardless of who is doing the evaluating [18, 85].

## Variables

As specified in the above hypotheses, our key dependent measures are political efficacy, ideology, and partisanship.<sup>7</sup> External efficacy is an additive index of two items with binary responses asking whether the respondent feels they have any say in government and whether government officials care what they think, with yes indicating higher efficacy and no lower efficacy. For ideology and partisanship, we rely on the traditional seven-point scales demonstrating not only attachment to a worldview, but also the strength of that attachment, with items coded to run from most liberal/Democratic to most conservative/Republican.<sup>8</sup>

In the ANES, our measure of attractiveness is taken from an interviewer's single, subjective rating following the completion of the interview. Similarly to the traditional ANES interviewer assessments, these were made on a five-point scale. In this case, interviewers were asked to rate the respondent on a scale from 1 (homely) to 5 (strikingly handsome or beautiful).<sup>9</sup>

In addition, to serve as a replication and extension, we supplement this measure with a more detailed item collected in the WLS, which consists of normed ratings from 12 evaluators (6 men and 6 women), collected entirely distinctly from the interview process. Rather than a measure taken by a single interviewer, attractiveness ratings were collected separately by a series of coders. Respondents' high school yearbook photos from 1957 were collected and rated by twelve individuals (six men and six women), with the subsequent scores being normed to remove coder effects.<sup>10</sup> This exogenous, more robust measure of appearance safeguards the validity concerns of the ANES measure, and the longer duration of the time series gives us greater leverage on the socializing effects of appearance on political behavior. Together, we believe these distinct assessments of appearance will provide us with a valid picture of how physical attractiveness influences adult political beliefs.

Yet we are cognizant of the possibility that any individual assessment could be conflated with characteristics such as socioeconomic status; our models also take into account measures of respondents' age,<sup>11</sup> income,<sup>12</sup> education,<sup>13</sup> gender,<sup>14</sup> and race<sup>15</sup> to mitigate these concerns. We control for demographic and socioeconomic factors in our models because they are standard and powerful explanations for individual political attitudes, allowing for a more conservative test of the independent effects of physical appearance. To facilitate comparisons between coefficients, all variables are rescaled to run from 0 to 1.

### Analyses

Our analyses begin with a measure from the pre-election wave of the 1972 ANES. Interviewers were, in addition to the other assessments, asked to evaluate respondents' appearance. This is the *only* wave where attractiveness was evaluated. Because the 1972 wave was the start of a panel, we can examine not only whether a relationship exists between interviewers' perceptions of respondents' physical attractiveness and political beliefs, but also the extent to which the relationships persist over time.<sup>16</sup> The 1972 ANES consisted of pre- and post-election waves, with 2,191 completing both waves. Follow-ups were conducted following the election in 1974, and finally, a pre- and post-election survey was fielded in 1976. We focus our analyses initially on those respondents who completed the pre-election wave in 1972 (when key interviewer assessments were completed), and subsequent analyses on the 1,624 respondents completing the 1974 re-interview and the 1,320 respondents who completed all three waves of the panel.

To test the above hypotheses, we examine the effects of attractiveness on political efficacy and political worldview (ideology and partisanship). Each of the measures are regressed

on the interviewer's assessment of the respondents' attractiveness and controls for respondents' age, income, education, gender, and race. Socioeconomic factors like income that may influence partisanship, ideology, and potentially pollute our measure of attractiveness are added as controls in each model. Taking advantage of the panel nature of the data, we estimate separate models (where the data is available) for each of the three waves.<sup>17</sup>

### *Results*

We begin by first considering the relationship between physical appearance and political efficacy. The results of these ordered probit models appear in Table 1. Across the waves, more attractive individuals are more likely to hold efficacious beliefs, as posited by H1. Only in the second wave does the effect of attractiveness on efficacy fail to reach conventional levels of significance, and it approaches it closely. Physically attractive people would seem to not only have an easier time navigating the social world, but feel more efficacious in the political world as well. Our socioeconomic control variables are in the expected direction and significant; higher education and income corresponds to higher feelings of efficacy. Though socioeconomic factors are stronger predictors of efficacy, the attractiveness effects are not negligible and appear consistently connected to one's feelings of efficacy.

<Table 1 Here>

Our second analysis of the ANES considers the role of physical appearance on the core political beliefs of ideology and partisanship. The results of the initial OLS regressions testing H2a and H2b are presented in Table 2. Our results for ideology are decidedly mixed. In 1972 and 1974, attractiveness is not related to ideology. However, the effect of attractiveness on ideology is significant and in the hypothesized direction in the final wave of the panel; more

attractive individuals are more likely to identify as conservatives.<sup>18</sup> Our findings for partisanship are more robust with attractiveness consistently influencing partisanship in the expected direction across all waves. More attractive individuals are more likely to identify as Republicans, rather than Democrats, as expected in H2b. Our socioeconomic control variables behave as expected, with higher income individuals more likely to identify with the Republican Party and identify as more conservative.

<Table 2 Here>

These results lend positive evidence to the socializing experiences expected in our first hypothesis. Respondents with higher physical attractiveness are more likely to identify with the Republican Party. Moreover, we also should note that these effects persist across the panel. While the substantive effects are not as large as the more traditional, socioeconomic explanations for political worldview that we include as controls, they are present and persistent.

Taken together, these results present compelling evidence that individual physical appearance not only plays a compelling role in how citizens view the political world. More attractive individuals are more politically efficacious which illustrates the moderating effect that appearance has in the process of political socialization. The impact of appearance persists across waves, suggesting that these effects are representative of an underlying process of socialization into politics, as well as to broader society. More attractive people appear to have different experiences with the world than the less attractive, and these experiences translate into greater degrees of engagement with the political realm.<sup>19</sup>

Yet we have concerns that these effects may be tied to a unique period of time, or are simply an artifact of interviewer biases. While the era being examined was far from being unrepresentative of the quintessential American political experience, many would claim that

politics has changed greatly from the 1970s. As robustness checks, we test for attractiveness effects using additional, more recent dataset, while also examining the effects of varied measures of attractiveness.

### *Exogenous Attractiveness?*

While we believe that the interviewer's subjective ratings of respondent characteristics in the ANES are relatively unbiased and have attempted to account for factors that could potentially influence the interviewers like SES, our ratings of appearance are still potentially endogenous. Furthermore, they are the product of a single interviewer's evaluations and could also be biased by the predilections of that individual, rather than representing a more global evaluation of their appearance. While this could overstate the effects presented in the previous analyses, it could potentially also understate the impact of appearance on political beliefs.

To safeguard against this possibility and as a robustness check, we utilize the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS). The WLS is a longitudinal study of 10,317 respondents graduating from Wisconsin high schools in 1957. Data was collected across several waves from the respondents, their parents, and, in certain waves, selected siblings. For our purposes, we examine data collected in 2004 and 2011.

We replicate the findings from the ANES using the normed assessment of the respondents' physical appearance from the WLS (originally measured on an 11-point scale by each rater, which we rescale to run from 0 to 1).<sup>20</sup> Though the WLS does not have a measure of political efficacy, it does contain ideology and partisanship. The outcomes of interest, therefore, are the individuals' self-reported partisan identification and ideology. Ideology is measured using the traditional 7-point ideology scale (coded from extremely liberal to extremely

conservative). Ideology items are only assessed during the 2004 and 2011 waves of the survey. Partisanship is measured as a 5-item scale, as respondents were asked if they identified as either a Republican Independent, Democrat, or were uncertain. Those identifying as uncertain or identifying with third-parties were coded as independents, but results are unchanged if they are omitted from the analyses. Partisanship is only measured in the 2004 and 2011 waves of the survey. We also include controls for age, education, income, and gender in the estimated models. All independent variables are coded from 0-1 to ease interpretation of effects and increase comparability between coefficients.

The results in Table 3 serve as a compelling corroboration of the prior results from the ANES. As in the previous models, we see that more attractive individuals are more likely to identify as more conservative. We also see that attractive individuals are also more likely to self-identify as Republican. The socioeconomic variables behave as expected with higher incomes corresponding to more Republican and conservative identification. Further, women in the sample were more likely to identify with the Democratic party and as liberal.

<Table 3 here>

These results yield further evidence that attractiveness plays a role in shaping citizens' views of their political reality, significantly influencing partisan identification and ideological worldview. It does not appear that the ANES results are illusory due to the era of the data or the measurement of attractiveness. We have replicated our previous findings while diminishing the applicability of the critique that the interview process biases our observed measure of attractiveness. These effects are present even when controlling for the important socioeconomic variables of education and income. It is often said that demography is not destiny, and for our purposes, neither is attractiveness. The primary causal drivers of partisanship are still family,

genetics, and socioeconomics. In other words, we are cognizant that attractiveness is not the be-all and end-all for political socialization, but across our analyses, physical attractiveness does have a significant and robust influence on political efficacy, ideology, and partisanship. The social nature of politics engenders an environment where our physical bodies can shape our political interactions and beliefs.

### *Conclusion*

Politics is at its heart a social endeavor. At their foundation, individuals' views regarding the proper means to and ends of politics is a combination of inherited characteristics and learned behaviors that are a product of their social environment. Over the years, we have learned much about the separate effects of these influences, with genetic explanations for political behavior being privileged in some situations, and socialization in others [23]. In this paper, we consider the political implications of a factor that encompasses both processes – physical appearance. Arguably, appearance is a product of genetics, inherited from one's parents, but also affects how individuals are treated, and thus experience the world around them.

Given the substantial influence of attractiveness on social interactions and outcomes, it makes sense that attractiveness would further alter political interactions and beliefs. Yet, attractiveness, beyond the elite-level of political candidates, is rarely examined in political behavior. Our evidence shows that more physically attractive individuals are more politically efficacious. Further, we find that attractive individuals are more likely to identify with the Republican Party and more likely to be conservative.

While an interesting set of findings, there are larger implications given the evidence that attractive individuals are more politically efficacious and more likely to participate politically.

With the demonstrated importance of political activists and opinion leaders in mobilizing citizens [92], and influencing the views less-engaged citizens hold [93-95], and the greater social influence more attractive individuals are thought to have, we may surmise that more attractive individuals may hold political sway over others in their social networks, regardless of their actual levels of effective political knowledge. Research in a similar vein has demonstrated that more attractive individuals are subjectively perceived as more intelligent and politically knowledgeable, even after accounting for their objective levels of political information [67]. If attractive individuals are also more efficacious and more likely to persuade others, we may have further concerns for the quality of opinion leadership and participation. While it may be tempting to conceive of attractiveness research on its surface as shallow or secondary to other components of socialization, it is a mistake to understate the lasting effects that a lifetime of differential treatment may have on political attitudes and behavior. A person who is not blessed with good looks will be less likely to feel empowered, to participate in politics, to seek redress for grievances, or to exercise their political rights. Physical attractiveness research at the elite and mass levels can illuminate biases that produce inequality in political activism and the propensity for individuals to be empowered in politics and government.

If attractive individuals are more efficacious and likely to lean conservative, do these results imply that Republicans have an electoral advantage? A host of variables influence elections, and especially in close races, even a substantively small factor may swing political outcomes. Recent research suggests that conservative leaning candidates in the U.S. and Europe are more physically attractive on average than their left leaning counterparts, which under some conditions leads to an electoral advantage (Berggren et al 2017). At the mass level, if attractive individuals are more likely to be conservative and be more politically efficacious, the result

could be an advantage at the ballot box, particularly if there are differential participation rates. Although it is tempting to weigh these implications, our analysis cannot speak directly to this question, and given the multivariate influences on partisanship and participation, we are hesitant to make firm claims on whether a Republican electoral advantage manifests itself at the ballot box.

As with all research, there are limitations to our results. Finding reliable and valid measures of attractiveness is challenging. Many of our analyses rely on a single, subjective assessment of an individual's physical appearance taken at a particular moment in time, rather than a measure captured repeatedly. It is possible that the subjective assessment is somehow contaminated by other factors that are a part of the interview process, including respondents' responses to the survey. We have attempted to mitigate this concern by utilizing the WLS sample to corroborate our ANES results. Using an attractiveness measure that avoids the ANES interviewer evaluation pitfalls, we have corroborated and bolstered our results. Moreover, we are comforted by extant work suggesting that evaluations of attractiveness are unaffected by characteristics of the interviewer and the respondent [44]. Additionally, we see that significant effects of attractiveness persist across waves of the panel and while controlling for socioeconomic variables, suggesting that the subjective measure is in fact a proxy for our underlying mechanism.

In this paper, we attempt to bring forth a novel factor (in mass political behavior) that affects citizen socialization into adulthood and concomitantly into the political world. While a well-researched topic in social psychology and social life, we feel these findings are informative in further understanding the motivations of political behavior. Future work could build upon these findings by considering and attempting to measure directly the processes through which

physical appearance alters how individuals are perceived and treated politically, and by capturing directly using experimental methods how these processes are altered with subtle variations in measurement of attractiveness. Our physical body is frequently overlooked in political science where the competition is framed around hearts and minds, but this analysis shows that our physical attractiveness can significantly shape our political behavior.

**Table 1. Relationships Between Attractiveness and Efficacy, ANES**

	<b>1972</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1976</b>
Attractiveness	0.33* (0.14)	0.34+ (0.18)	0.35+ (0.20)
Age	0.10 (0.11)	-0.12 (0.15)	0.16 (0.19)
Education	1.08** (0.09)	1.06** (0.11)	1.09** (0.12)
Income	0.57** (0.09)	0.60** (0.11)	0.55** (0.14)
Female	0.005 (0.05)	0.01 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)
Nonwhite	-0.22** (0.07)	-0.07 (0.10)	-0.06 (0.12)
Cut 1	0.26 (0.10)	0.29 (0.13)	0.38 (0.17)
Cut 2	1.06 (0.11)	1.09 (0.14)	1.25 (0.18)
Wald $\chi^2$	306.16	233.21	163.99
N	2546	1574	1189

Estimates are ordered probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses; + significant at 10%; \* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%. DV: political efficacy, from 0 (low external efficacy) to 1 (high external efficacy).

**Table 2. Relationships Between Attractiveness and Political Worldview**

	<b>1972</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1976</b>
<i>Ideology</i>			
Attractiveness	-0.06 (0.14)	0.22 (0.17)	0.37* (0.18)
Age	0.63** (0.12)	0.78** (0.16)	0.99** (0.17)
Education	-0.19+ (0.10)	-0.21 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.12)
Income	0.41** (0.09)	0.46** (0.12)	0.60** (0.13)
Female	0.03 (0.05)	0.02 (0.06)	0.002 (0.06)
Nonwhite	-0.52** (0.08)	-0.62** (0.10)	-0.59** (0.11)
Constant	3.83** (0.10)	3.52** (0.14)	3.39*** (0.16)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.06	0.07
N	2056	1580	1283
<i>Partisanship</i>			
Attractiveness	0.52* (0.23)	0.69* (0.29)	0.72* (0.33)
Age	0.61** (0.19)	1.01** (0.26)	1.45** (0.30)
Education	0.67** (0.15)	0.66** (0.18)	0.94** (0.19)
Income	0.38* (0.15)	0.56** (0.19)	0.62** (0.22)
Female	-0.03 (0.08)	0.03 (0.10)	0.005 (0.11)
Nonwhite	-1.14** (0.11)	-1.33** (0.13)	-1.55** (0.15)
Constant	2.89** (0.17)	2.40** (0.23)	2.18** (0.27)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.08	0.12
N	2524	1582	1283

Estimates are OLS coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses; + significant at 10%; \* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%. DV: ideology/Partisanship, from 1 (strong Liberal/Democrat) to 7 (strong Conservative/Republican).

**Table 3. Wisconsin Longitudinal Study**

	2003-5 Wave		2011 Wave	
	Ideology	Partisanship	Ideology	Partisanship
Attractiveness	<b>0.27*</b> (0.11)	<b>0.58**</b> (0.14)	<b>0.28*</b> (0.14)	<b>0.60**</b> (0.16)
Age	0.07 (0.10)	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.08 (0.09)	-0.14 (0.10)
Education	<b>-0.44**</b> (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	<b>-0.73**</b> (0.06)	<b>-0.27**</b> (0.06)
Income	<b>0.56**</b> (0.16)	<b>1.33**</b> (0.18)	<b>1.28**</b> (0.21)	<b>1.46**</b> (0.20)
Female	<b>-0.37**</b> (0.04)	<b>-0.19**</b> (0.05)	<b>-0.35**</b> (0.04)	<b>-0.24**</b> (0.05)
Constant	<b>4.59**</b> (0.08)	<b>2.91**</b> (0.10)	<b>4.72**</b> (0.09)	<b>3.00**</b> (0.10)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.02	0.05	0.02
N	5247	5247	4294	4294

Estimates are OLS coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses; + significant at 10%; \* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%. DV: 1 (Democrat) to 5 (Republican), and 1 (strong liberal) to 7 (strong conservative).

## Appendix

### *ANES Question Wording*

#### Efficacy items:

- Do people like R have any say in what the government does?
- Do officials care much what people like R think?

#### Ideology item:

- We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

#### Partisanship items:

- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?
- Would you call yourself a strong Democrat/Republican, or a not very strong Democrat/Republican?

### *Wisconsin Longitudinal Study Question Wording*

#### Ideology item:

- Where would you place yourself on a Liberal and Conservative political scale (7-pt. scale; Extremely Liberal to Extremely Conservative)?

#### Partisanship Item:

- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or other? (probe for leaners versus pure Independents)

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive review of candidate attractiveness effects as well as other forms of nonverbal communication, see 7. Dumitrescu, D., *Nonverbal Communication in Politics: A Review of Research Developments, 2005-2015*. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2016. **60**(14): p. 1656-75.

<sup>2</sup> A term coined by 38. Dion, K., E. Berscheid, and E. Walster, *What is Beautiful is Good*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1972. **24**(3): p. 285-90..

<sup>3</sup> While generally equivalent across gender, the effects are somewhat more pronounced among men 51. Zebrowitz, L.A., M.A. Collins, and R. Dutta, *The Relationship between Appearance and Personality Across the Life Span*. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1998. **24**(7): p. 736-49..

<sup>4</sup> Work considering how pre-adult experiences translate into political orientations suggests that rearing styles have a profound impact on adult ideology, notably those children who come from more authoritarian households, who tend to endorse more conservative ideologies 72. Fraley, R.C., et al., *Developmental Antecedents of Political Ideology: A Longitudinal Investigation From Birth to Age 18 Years*. *Psychological Science*, 2012. **23**(11): p. 1425-31..

<sup>5</sup> A recent paper by Berggren et al 85. Berggren, N., H. Jordahl, and P. Poutvaara, *The Right Look: Conservative Politicians Look Better and Voters Reward It*. *Journal of Public Economics*, 2017. **146**(1): p. 79-86. provides further support for this hypothesis, with their finding that politicians who lean right ideologically are more likely to be viewed as attractive than those who lean to the left.

<sup>6</sup> The relationship of attractiveness to ideology may be weaker in the ANES analyses than the WLS, due to the time period of our data. Politics today are more ideologically sorted than in previous generations 71. Levendusky, M., *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became*

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*Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. 2009, Chicago: University of Chicago Press., and the ANES data comes from the 1970s where ideology was less clearly sorted between political parties. Hence further reason to replicate our findings with a second, more recent dataset, the WLS, which measures political outcomes in the 2000s.

<sup>7</sup> Political worldview measures consist of ideology, coded from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative), and partisanship, coded from 1 (strong Democrat) to 7 (strong Republican). We opt to code the variables this way because it allows us to maximize the variation in strength of attachment to a political worldview as a function of physical appearance and demographic factors. Supplementary analyses in which we collapse these variables to ordinal scales provide similar patterns of results to those reported here.

<sup>8</sup> External efficacy items are whether the respondent feels they have any say in government, and whether officials care about citizens. All items are recoded to 0 (low efficacy) or 1 (high efficacy), creating a three-point scale running from 0 (low external efficacy) to 2 (high external efficacy).

<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the battery asked respondents to evaluate the respondents' physical appearance, taking into account age and sex of the respondent. The attractiveness-rating item was completed at the end of the interviewer's subjective evaluation battery.

<sup>10</sup> Coding occurred in two waves – in 2004 and 2008. Yearbook photos were cropped and converted to grayscale to ensure comparability, and were rated by individuals from roughly the same birth cohort as those they were evaluating. For more details on the coding, see Meland 91.

Meland, S.A., *Objectivity in Perceived Attractiveness: Development of a New Methodology for Rating Facial Attractiveness*, in *Department of Sociology*. 2002, University of Wisconsin, Madison..

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<sup>11</sup> Age is measured in years, ranging from 18-98 in the ANES data, and 62-73 in the WLS data.

<sup>12</sup> Income is measured categorically, ranging from \$0-\$35,000 in the ANES, and \$0-\$710,000 in the WLS data.

<sup>13</sup> Education is measured in years of formal schooling obtained in the ANES and WLS data.

<sup>14</sup> Gender in the ANES and WLS is coded 1 for Female, and 0 for male.

<sup>15</sup> Race is coded as 1 for nonwhite, and 0 for white in the ANES. In the WLS there is insufficient racial variance to take race into account.

<sup>16</sup> As noted above, attractiveness ratings tend to remain consistent across the lifespan, and appear to be relatively invariant based upon the rater.

<sup>17</sup> As attractiveness is only measured in the first wave, we are assuming that individuals' physical attractiveness has remained constant over the course of the panel.

<sup>18</sup> The ideology effect may be driven by a commonly documented phenomena of politics at the time, that most citizen were in fact, 'innocent of ideology' 74. Campbell, A., et al., *The American Voter*. 1960, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.. This does open the door to the possibility that the lack of ideological sorting in the population may make ideology more difficult to cleanly analyze in the 1970s (compared to the ideological and partisan sorting of today). Due to the differential complexity in individual ideology and the lack of ideological constraints, the analysis is challenging and inconsistent results are not unexpected.

<sup>19</sup> Similar patterns of results are found using data from the 1995 Social Influence on Health Study conducted among a sample of 1,139 adults residing in the Detroit area. These analyses, which also use an interviewer's subjective evaluations of the respondents' appearance, demonstrate that more attractive individuals are more likely to identify as Republican, conservative, and report higher levels of efficacy. These results are not shown.

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<sup>20</sup> As with the ANES, interviewers were asked to assess respondents' cooperation and engagement with the interview, as well as the respondents' appearance following its termination. Interviewer characteristics are again unavailable to account for potential biases due to age, race, or gender of the interviewer.