

# Intrigue or Trust: The Influence of Female Attractiveness

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## Abstract

- **Purpose** – investigate the effects of attractiveness on decision-making. **Study** – Modified the trust game. Participants were presented with facial stimuli (3 attractive, 3 unattractive.) and descriptions. Hints were implemented to understand motives. **Results** – A significant effect in male participants, who took more hints when presented with attractive faces. **Discussion** – More interest in attractive people in men.

## Introduction

### Background

- The Trust Game (Berg et al., 1995).
- Good gene theory: attractiveness is an indicator of good genes. Men have evolutionary preference for an attractive partner (Howard et al., 1987).
- People are more likely to trust an attractive person (Wilson & Eckel, 2006).

### Previous Findings

- Faces provide important information about trustworthiness from age 5 (Ewing et al., 2015; Todorov et al., 2008).
- A typical-looking face is more trustworthy.
- In the trust game, more money is usually given to attractive people (Smith et al., 2009).

### Importance

- We interact with strangers everyday
- Interactions rely on our quick judgements on physical appearance.
- Just because someone looks trustworthy does not mean they are.
- It is important to know what influences our quick decisions.

### HYPOTHESIS

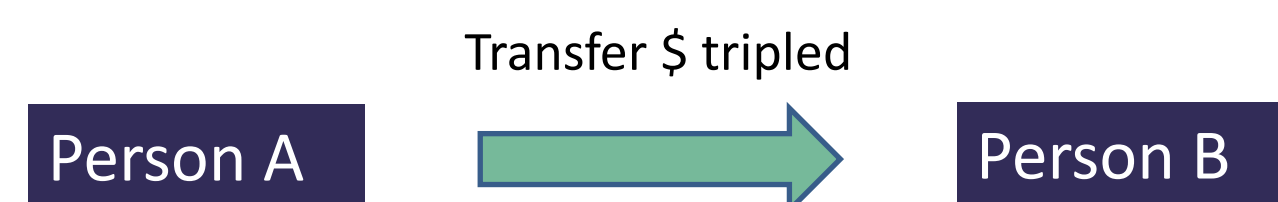
- Participants are more likely to ask for a hint when they see an unattractive face, compared to when they see an attractive face.
- This is hypothesized because people would need more information to trust an unattractive person.

## Methodology

### Participants

- Initial  $N = 234$ . 20 people were excluded from analyses. Final  $N = 214$ .
- $M_{age} = 22.83$ ,  $SD_{age} = 5.42$ .
- 53% identified as a woman and 45% identified as a man.
- Cultural Identification of participants: 28% East Asian, 28% identified as Middle Eastern, 21% Caucasian, 7% South Asian, 5% Hispanic, 4% Black and 7% other.

### Design and Procedure



Trust game with manipulation for hint taking

Variables:

DV: Hint taking (scores 0-3)

IV: Attractiveness - 2 levels

#### 1. Attractive



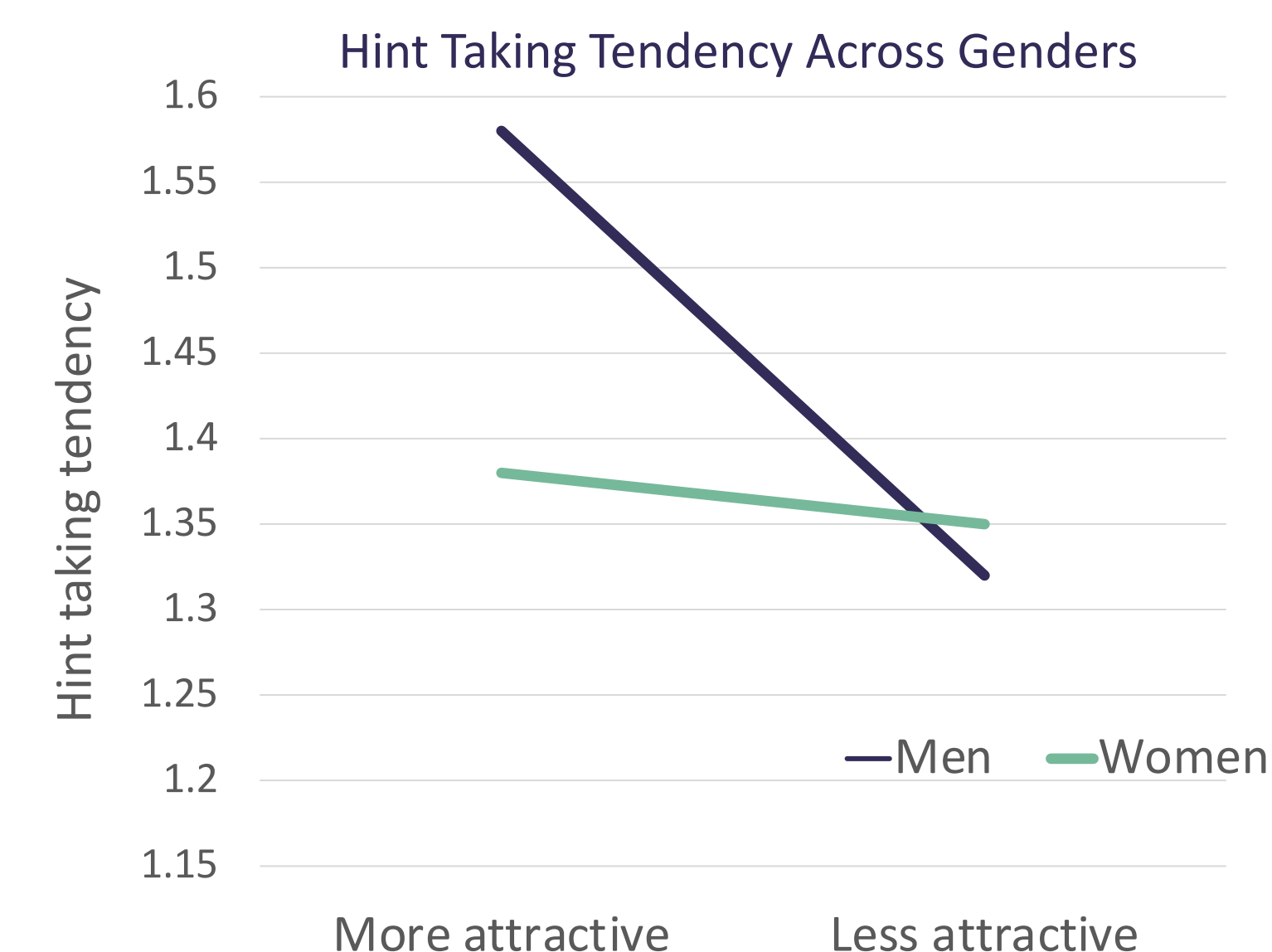
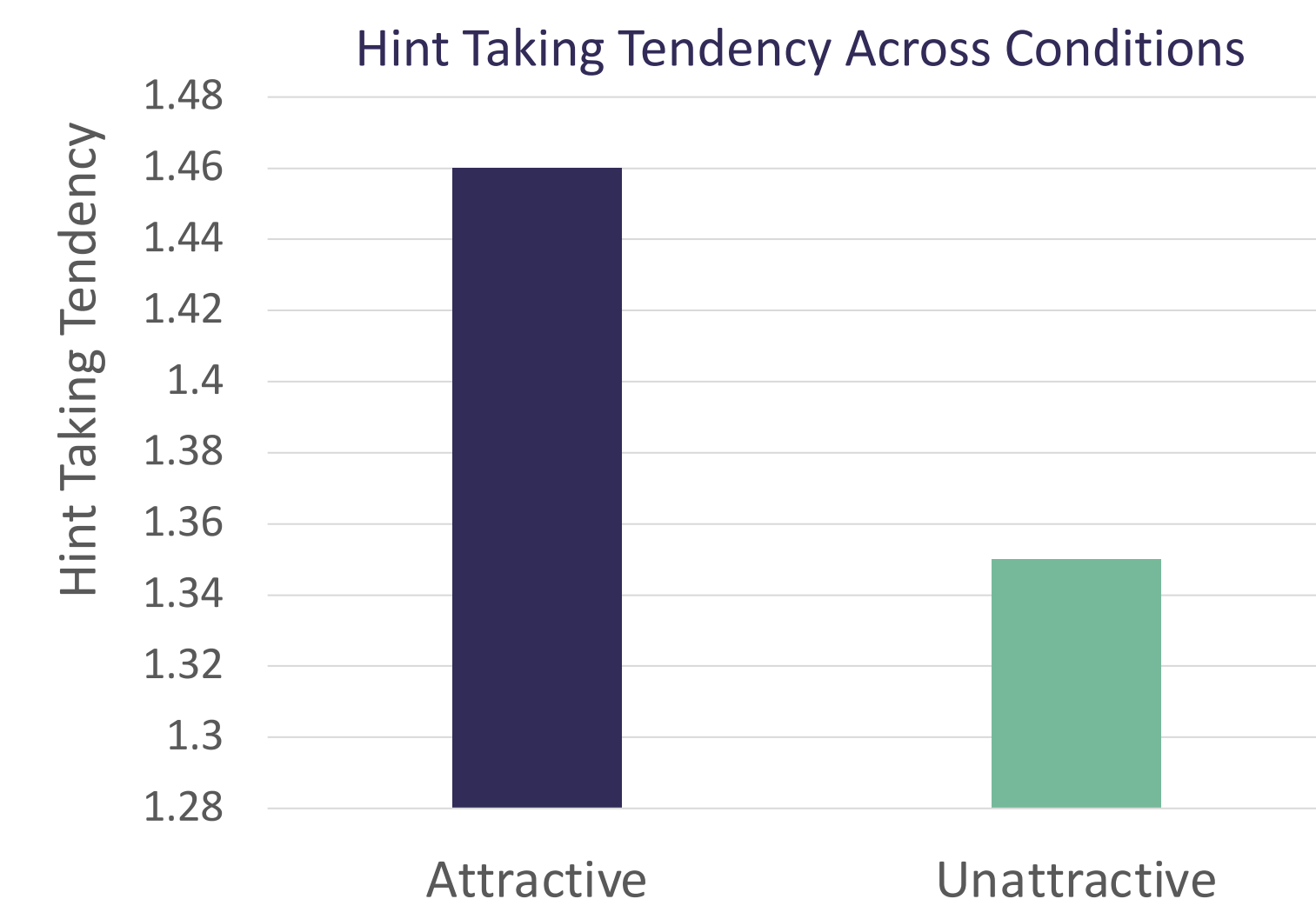
#### 2. Unattractive



Retrieved from the London Lab Database.

## Results

- We failed to reject the null hypothesis.
- Results were significant in the opposite direction. This means, participants took more hints when seeing attractive faces.
- There was no difference in hint taking tendency for women. However, men chose more hints when shown an attractive face.
- $t(213) = 1.8$ ,  $p > .05$ , small effect ( $d = 0.123$ )



## Discussion

- More interest in attractive people.
- Less willingness to spend money to get to know unattractive people.
- Effect more pronounced in men.

### Implications

- Support for the good gene theory.
- Indicates men pay more attention to pictures compared to descriptions.
- Applied to online dating platforms.

### Limitations and Future Directions

- Only female faces were used.
- Only Caucasian faces were used.
- Use more trials in the game where participants have the chance to play with their partner.
- Design the game in a way to have participants be more engaged.
- Option to transfer varying amounts of money
- Input an attention check.