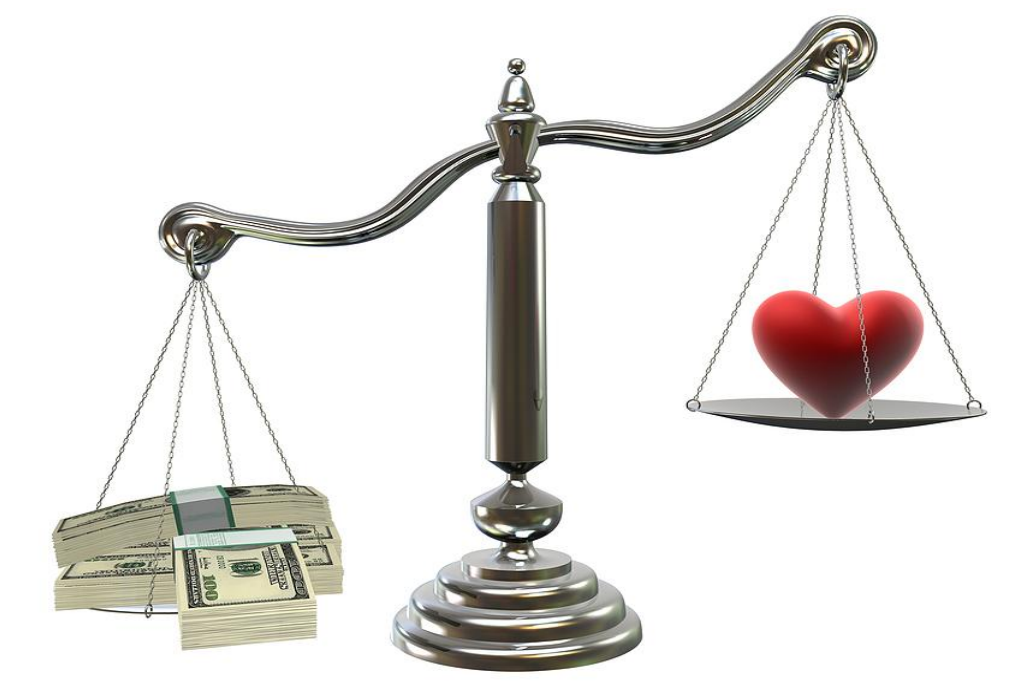


A Penny Saved is a Partner Earned: The Romantic Appeal of Savers

Jenny G. Olson and Scott I. Rick



Overview

- The desire to attract a romantic partner often stimulates conspicuous consumption (e.g., Griskevicius et al., 2007), but it is unclear whether lavish spending actually helps to attract potential mates.
- The present research examines how chronic saving and spending habits influence **initial** attraction, both romantic and physical.
- There are at least two reasons why savers may be preferred to spenders: 1) greater financial resources and 2) greater general self-control.
- Savers are likely to benefit from perceptions of high self-control, which is related to enhanced relationship quality, smooth daily interactions, and healthy eating and exercise habits (Tangney et al., 2004; Vohs et al., 2011).

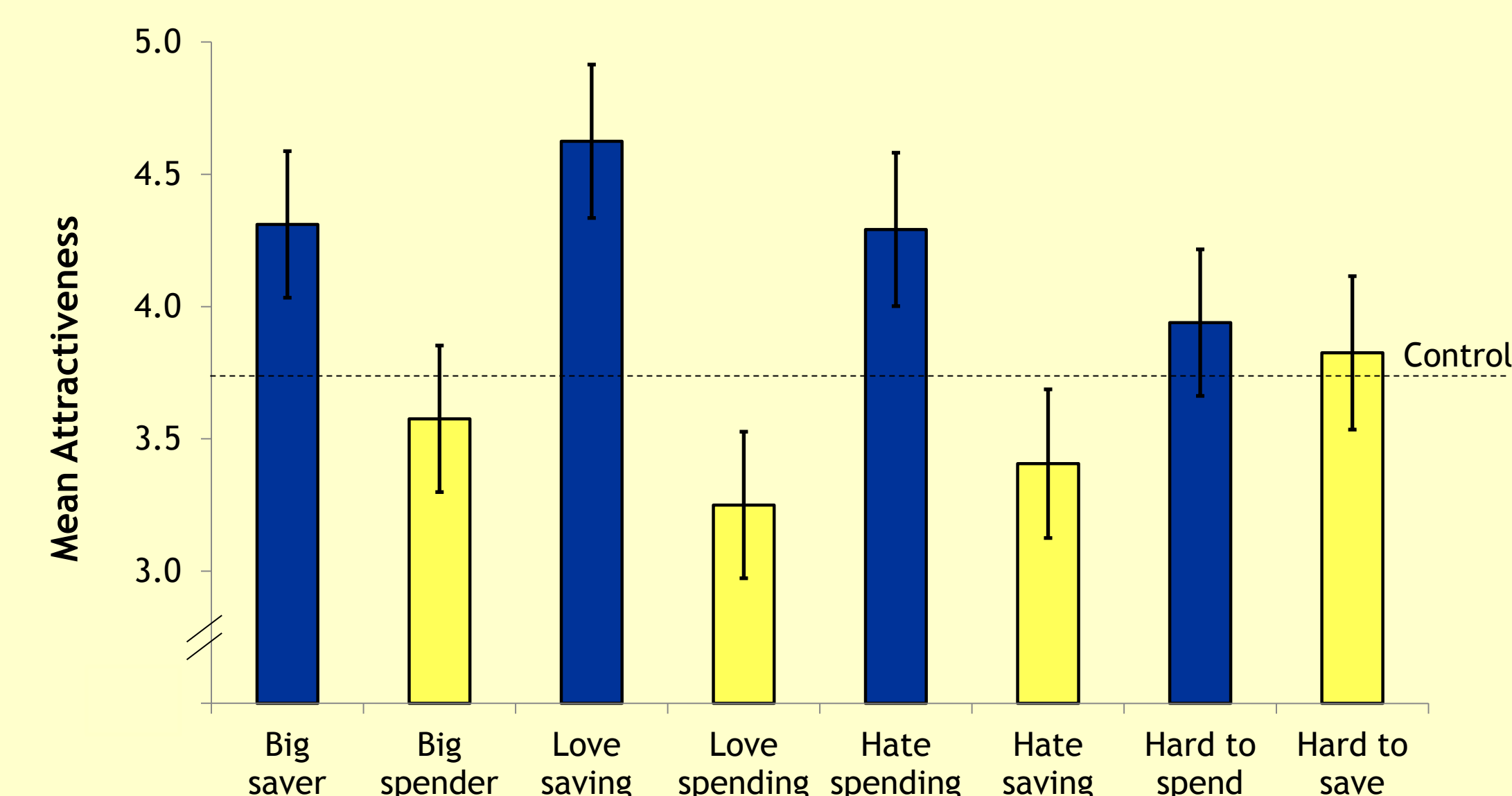
Experiment 1: Who is More Attractive?

Method:

- Adults ages 18-30 ($n = 282$, 35% female)
- Ps were randomly assigned to one of nine conditions where they viewed an opposite-sex dating profile.
- The key manipulation was how the target described his or her own spending habits (a control group received no description).
- DV = romantic attractiveness index ($\alpha = .94$)

Results:

- Savers are more attractive than spenders, regardless of framing.



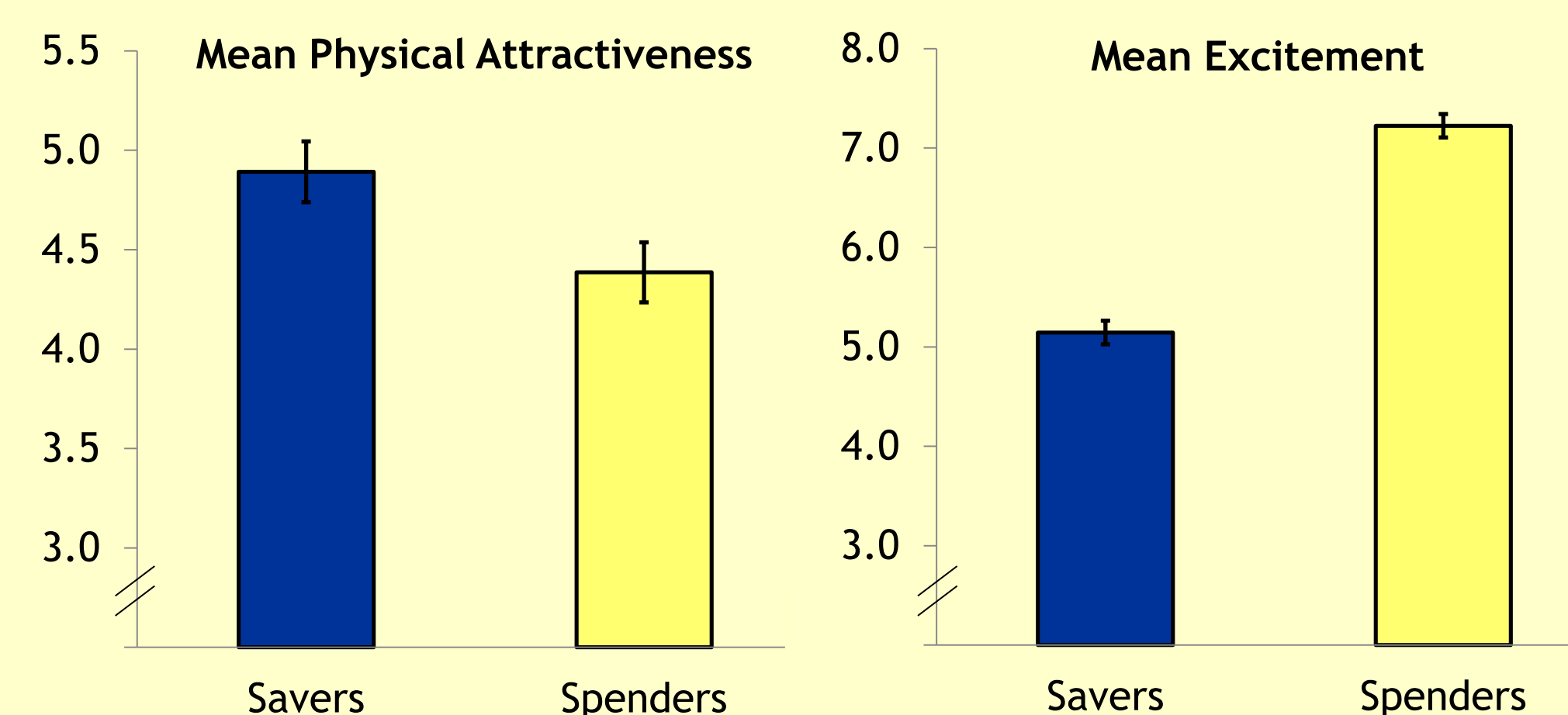
Experiment 2: Are Savers Physically More Attractive? Is this a Halo Effect?

Method:

- Adults ages 18-25 ($n = 198$, 37% female)
- Ps were presented an opposite-sex dating profile, with the target describing themselves as either a saver or a spender.
- High self-control should favorably bias perceptions of physical attractiveness, but not excitement level.
- DVs = physical attractiveness index ($\alpha = .97$) and perceived excitement index ($\alpha = .86$)

Results:

- Savers are more physically attractive, but still less exciting.



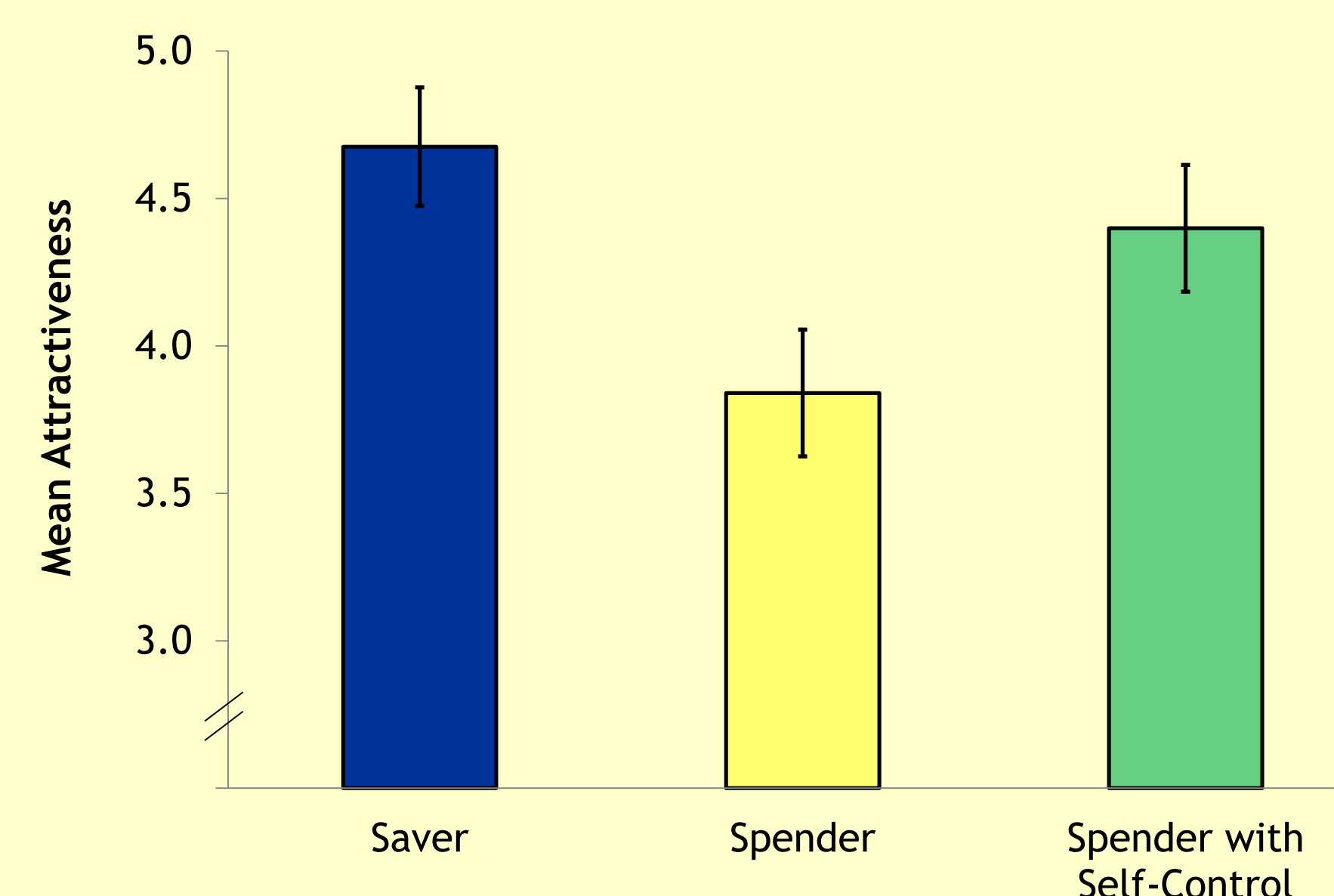
Experiment 4: Does Having General Self-Control Enhance a Spender's Appeal?

Method:

- Adults ages 18-25 ($n = 148$, 28% female)
- Ps viewed a dating profile of saver, a spender, or a spender who claimed to possess high general self-control (i.e., "Although I spend a lot of money, I generally have a lot of self-control").
- The target's savings account was held constant at \$5,000.
- DV = romantic attractiveness index ($\alpha = .95$)

Results:

- Savers were more attractive than spenders; however, high self-control enhances the desirability of spenders.
- Results support the role of general self-control as the primary psychological mechanism underlying the appeal of savers.



Dating Profile
Pictures Used in
All Experiments



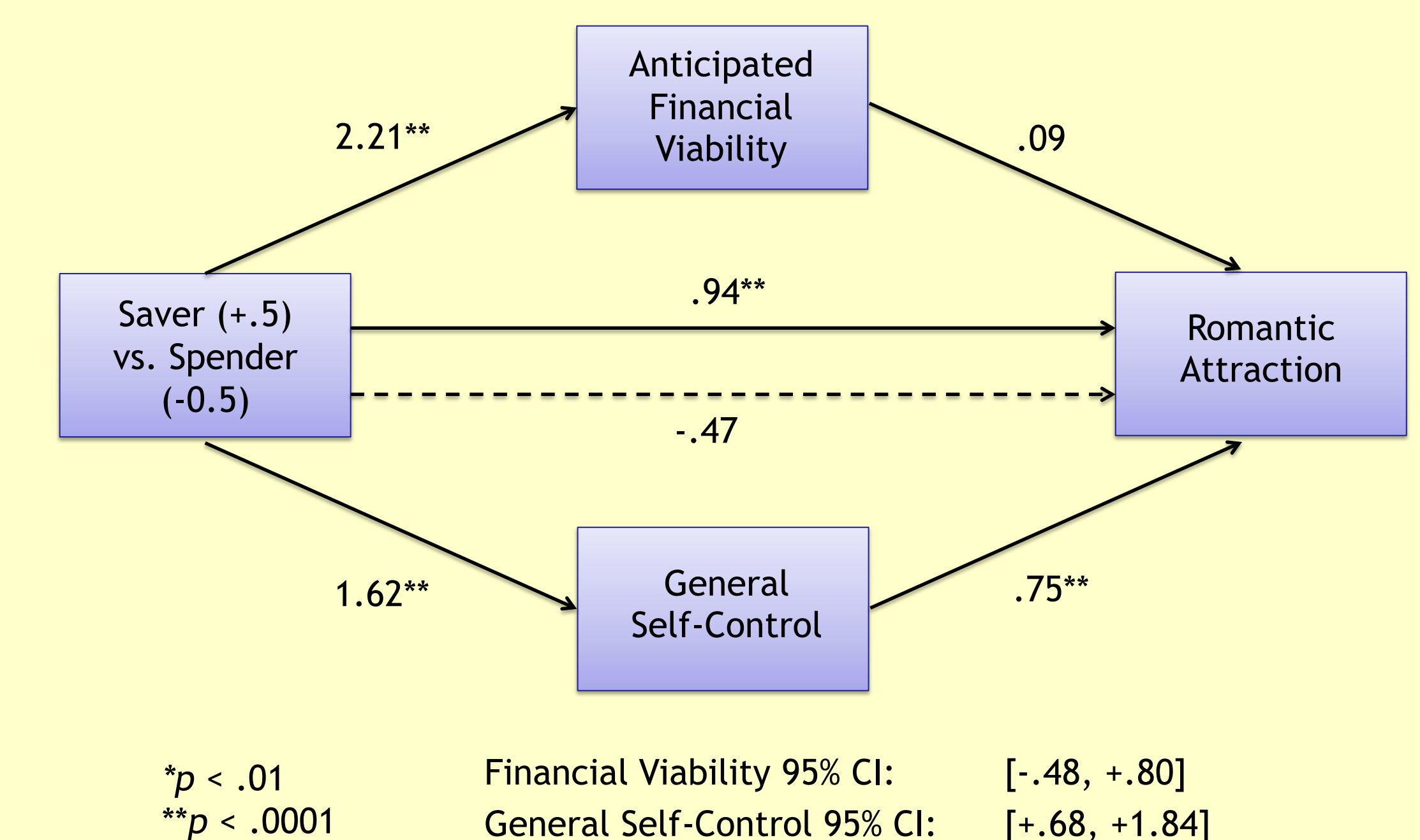
Experiment 3: Why are Savers More Appealing than Spenders?

Method:

- Adults ages 18-32 ($n = 103$, 33% female)
- Ps were presented an opposite-sex dating profile, with the target describing themselves as either a saver or a spender.
- DVs = romantic attractiveness index ($\alpha = .95$), anticipated financial viability index ($\alpha = .97$), and general self-control index ($\alpha = .89$)

Results:

- Both constructs mediate the appeal of savers independently.
- Entered simultaneously, general self-control mediates the relationship of habits on attraction, above and beyond anticipated financial viability.



Conclusion

- The desire to attract a mate stimulates spending, but our work suggests that chronic savers are generally more attractive than chronic spenders.
- Savers are even more physically attractive than spenders, but this is not an indiscriminate halo—savers are still viewed as less exciting.
- Saving signals future financial viability and the possession of general self-control, and both contribute to the preference for savers over spenders. However, the possession of general self-control appears to be the primary reason why savers are preferred over spenders.

Comments Welcome!
Email: jennygin@umich.edu