



# Do Attractive People Live More Meaningful Lives?

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## Introduction

Over the past years, meaning in life has become a popular topic of interest throughout the world of research and the general population's quest to discover a more enjoyable lifestyle.

Scholars have once said that meaning in life is a rare commodity that arises from deep philosophical reasoning, however current research suggests that finding meaning in one's life is a default state that arises from everyday experiences (Heintzelman & King, 2014).

One's appearance is an aspect of life that no one can ignore and everyone is judged by their looks whether it happens consciously, or not. In some cases, physical appearance enhances one's journey through life, this would be the case in which the individual exceeds in looks, but on the other hand, those who are perceived to be less attractive may experience more challenges and suppressions on a day to day basis.

We are proposing the first studies, that we know of, to suggest the link between physical attractiveness and meaning in life.

## Methods

### Study 1:

**Participants:** 305 (214 female) Mizzou students, aged 18-31 (M=20.1, SD=2.1)

**Procedure:** Participants were asked to respond to questions regarding their own physical attractiveness, meaning in life, and other important measures.

### Study 2:

**Participants:** 598 (282 female) Amazon Mechanical Turk, aged 18-80 (M=37.7, SD= 11.9)

**Procedure:** Participants were asked to rate not only their own levels of physical attractiveness and meaning in life, but also asked to rate the levels of meaning in life and physical attractiveness of people presented to them in photographs.

### Study 3:

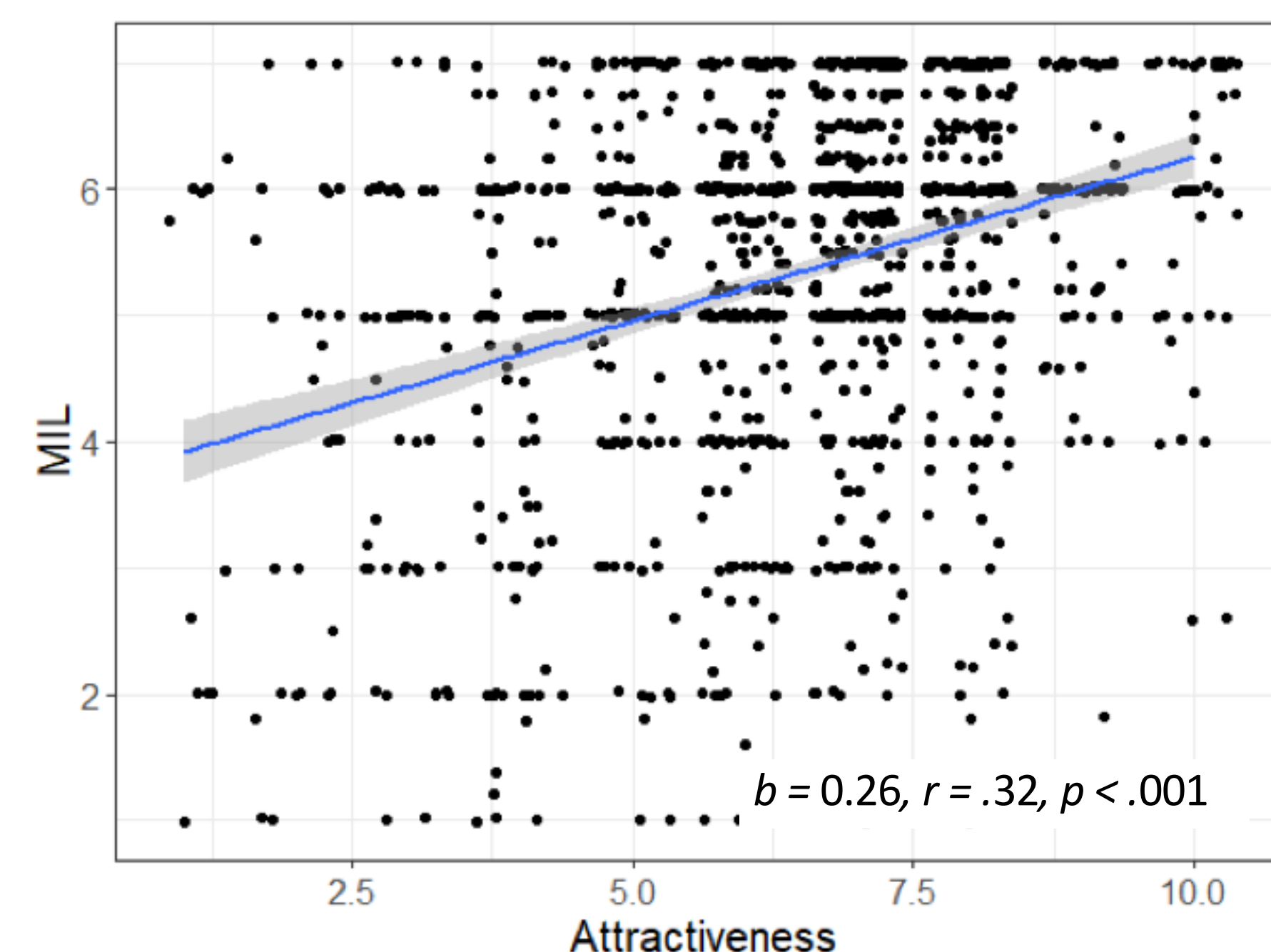
**Participants:** 353 (261 female) Mizzou students, aged 18-27 (M=18.5, SD=1.1)

**Procedure:** Participants responded to self-report measures and then were prompted to take a photograph of themselves. Photographs of the participants were judged by raters from Amazon Mechanical Turk.

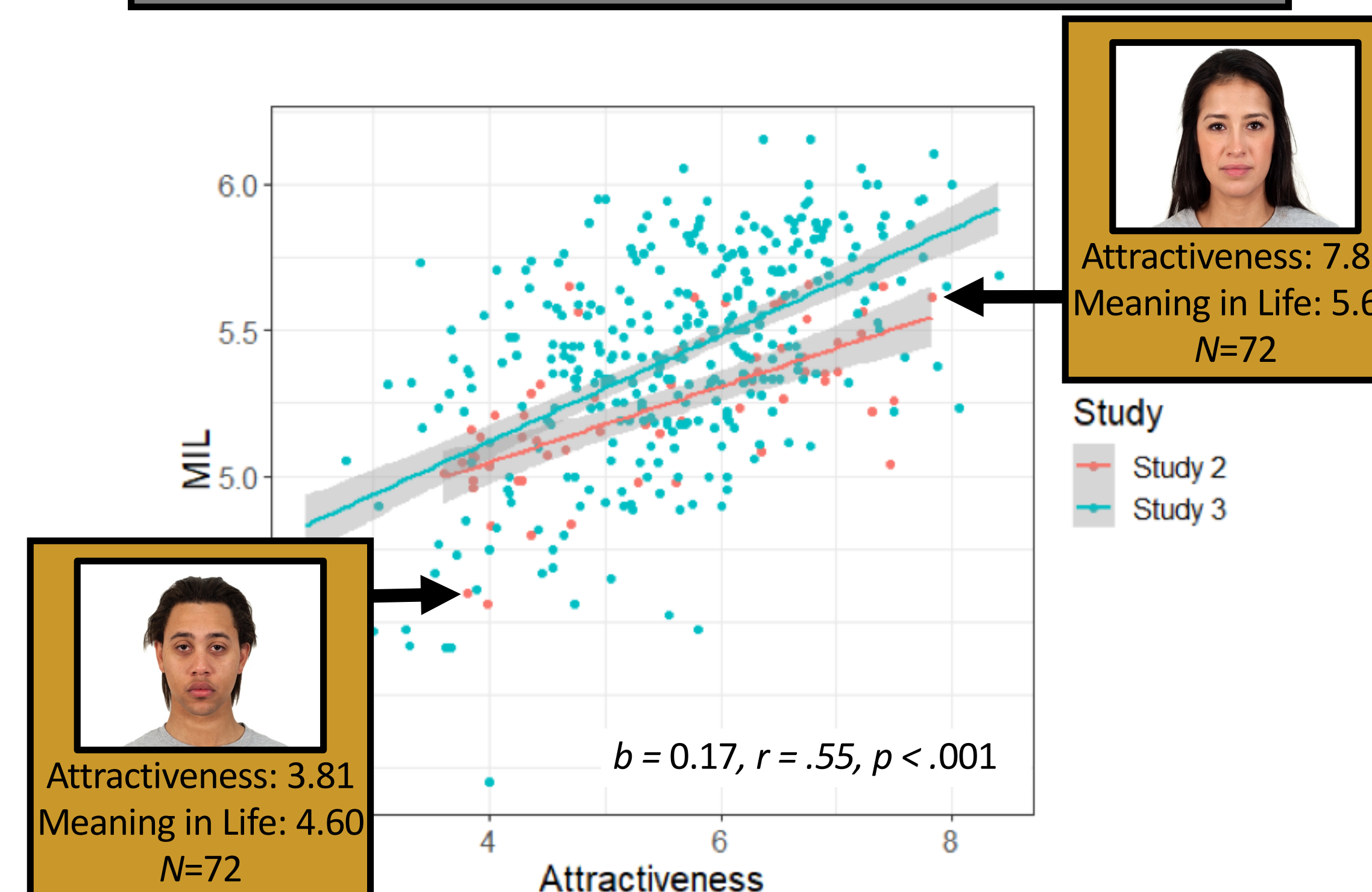
Across studies, meaning in life was measured on a scale ranging from 1-7 and attractiveness ranging from 1-10.

## Principle Results

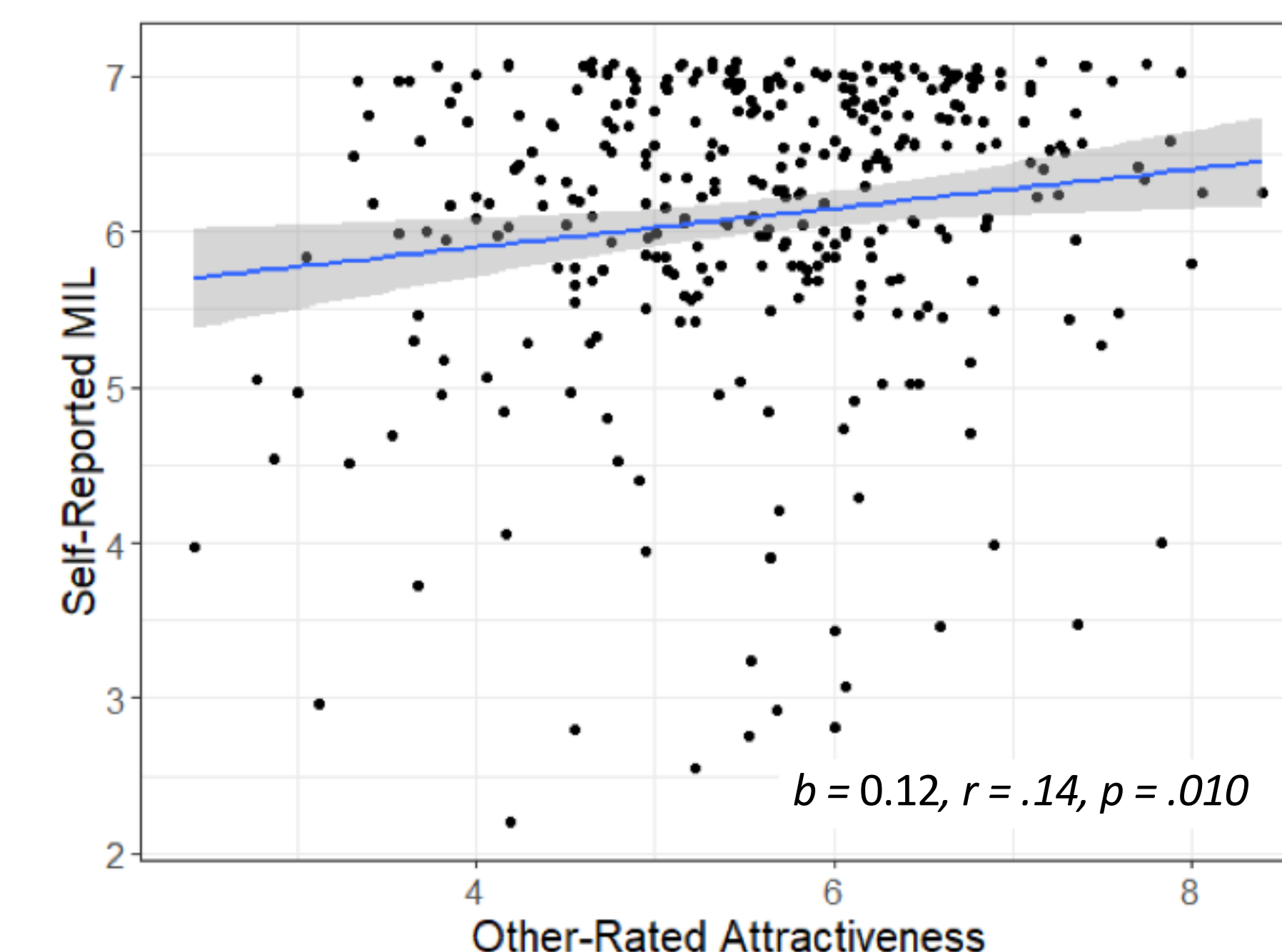
Self-Reported Meaning in Life and Attractiveness (across all three studies)



Perceived Meaning in Life and Attractiveness (Studies 2 and 3)

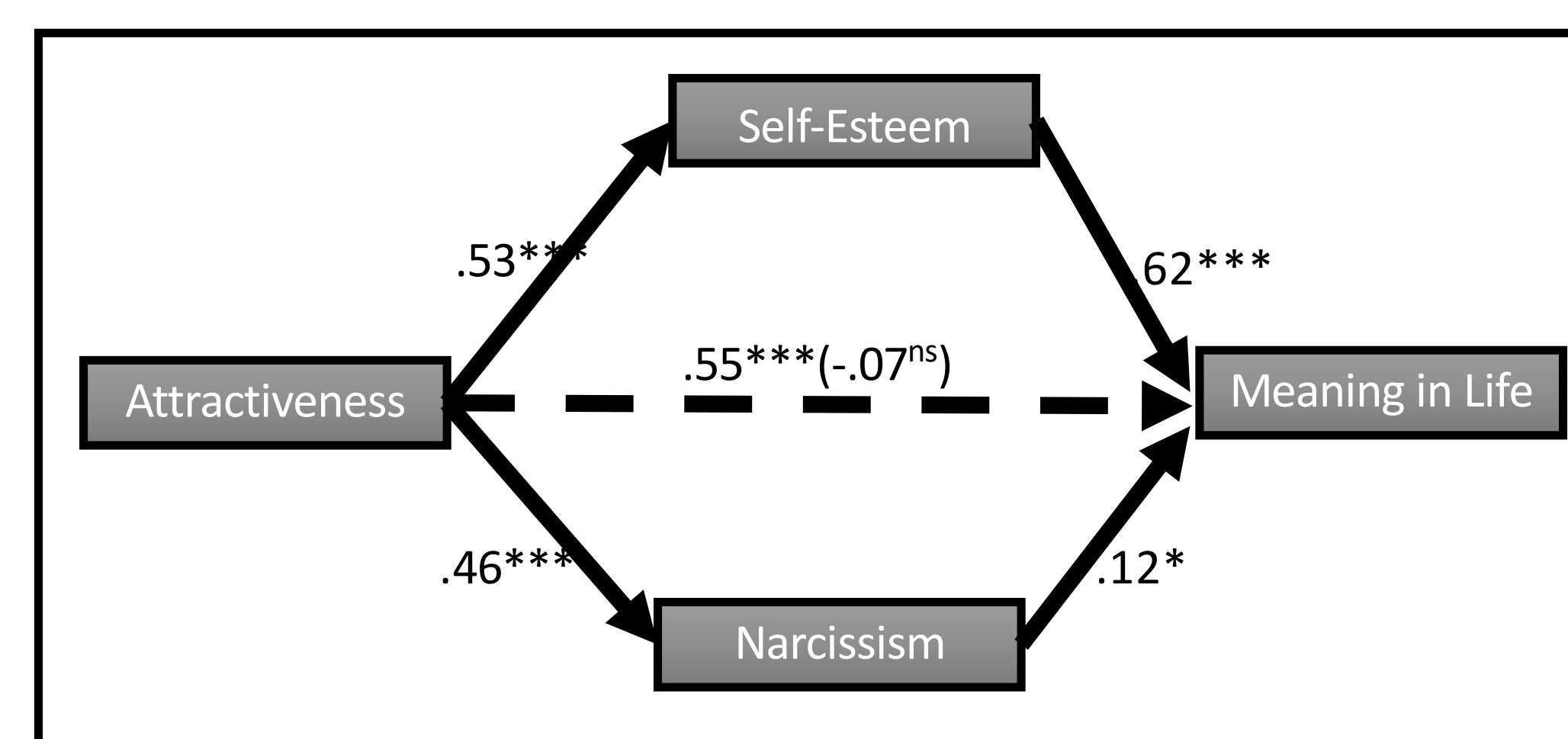


Self-Reported Meaning in Life and Perceived Attractiveness (Study 3)



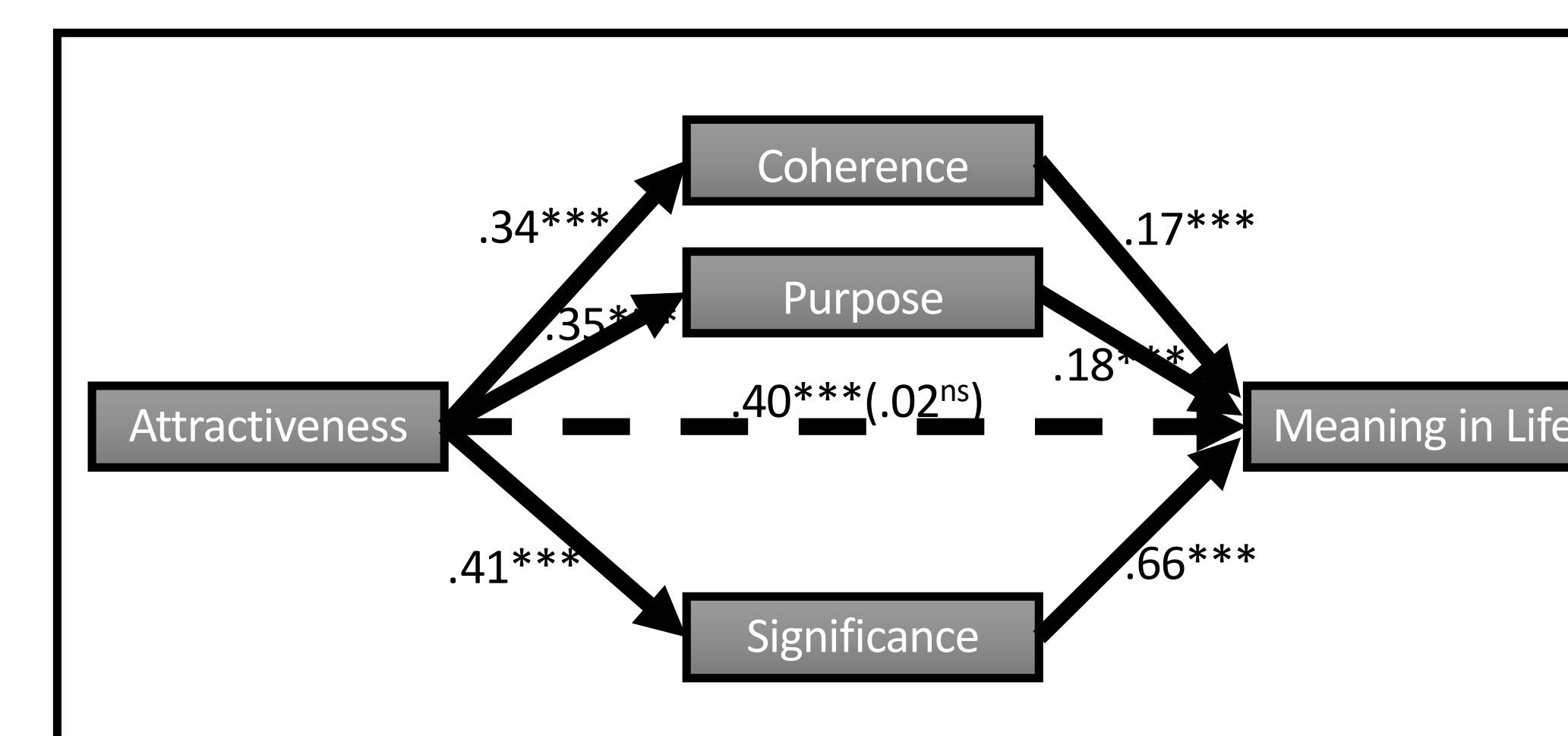
Note: Each participant measured their own meaning in life followed by taking a photo of themselves. Online participants rated those photographs on physical attractiveness.

Study 1: Possible Explanatory Variables Results



Note. Standardized coefficients are presented on the graph. The path from Attractiveness to MIL after controlling for the mediators is in parentheses.  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Study 3: Meaning in Life Facets Results



Note. All of the variables found in this chart are self-reported, however the same relationship between the variables can be found in their other-reported counterparts.

## Discussion

People who are perceived to be physically attractive are also assumed by others to live a more meaningful life than those who are less attractive. This finding extends within the individual; someone who finds themselves to be attractive will also indicate that they have meaning in their life. We ruled out alternative explanations (e.g., halo effect, response bias) for this relationship by demonstrating that internally rated meaning in life is linked to outside perceptions of attractiveness.

Within the person, the link between meaning in life and attractiveness is fully explained by self-esteem and narcissism, with self-esteem being the stronger mediator in the relationship.

While all three facets of meaning are mediators of the link between meaning in life and attractiveness, significance emerged as the strongest explanatory factor. That is to say that the reason why meaning in life is influenced by attractiveness is because attractiveness is linked to the feeling of one mattering more.

## Reference

Heintzelman, S. J., & King, L. A. (2014). Life is pretty meaningful. *American Psychologist*, 69(6), 561.  
Ma, Correll, & Wittenbrink (2015). The Chicago Face Database: A Free Stimulus Set of Faces and Norming Data. *Behavior Research Methods*, 47, 1122-1135.