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Attractive women face prejudice in the courtroom, study says

Women charged with murdering an abusive spouse are more likely to be deemed guilty if they have blonde hair and “smooth, harmonious facial features”.

BY [ALEX WARD](#)

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Whilst various studies have linked physical attractiveness to success in the workplace, sexually appealing women do not have the same luck the courtroom, according to a new study.

The report, conducted by the University of Granada using surveys of Spanish policemen found that attractive women accused of murdering their partners were more likely to be found guilty than their “ugly” counterparts.

For the study, two scenarios of domestic homicide were drawn up in which the female defendant claimed to have murdered her abusive spouse in self-defense.

In the first scenario, the defendant was described as an attractive, well-dressed, childless woman working as a financial consultant.

In the other, the defendant was portrayed as a timid housewife with two young children and “jarring facial features”.

The researchers then asked the 169 participating police officers to take on the

American Model Kate Upton. Photo: ©Terry Richardson



role of the jury and were asked questions over the defendant's culpability and the amount of “control” each woman had in their respective scenario.

The researchers found that the timid, unattractive mother-of-two was attributed significantly less culpability than her high-flying, attractive counterpart.

According to the researchers, the unattractive woman's story was perceived to be more credible because it ultimately fell in-line with the archetype “battered woman” narrative.

“When dealing with a non-prototypical battered woman – in other words, someone who does not conform to society's idea of such women – they were seen to have more control over the situation, which in legal terms can translate as a higher degree of guilt”, noted lead-researcher Antonio Herrera.

Another variable that affected the policemen's judgments was how “sexist” the respondent was. Those who scored higher on the “macho-scale” found the attractive woman to have more control over the situation, rendering her guiltier of the crime.

So for once, being attractive isn't an asset. Unfortunately for me, the same can't be said for men.

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