

Name _____

Date _____

Reading Assessment

“Ugly Kids...”

Select the most appropriate response for each question.

1. In the first paragraph, researchers were said to have made a “startling assertion.” Which of these best defines “assertion?”
 - a. A peculiarly strong breath mint
 - b. A groundbreaking discovery
 - c. A denial of the obvious
 - d. A project that took many long years of research and analysis

2. In paragraph 5, the article mentions “seat belt use increasing in direct proportion to attractiveness.” Which of the following would be the best demonstration of this relationship?
 - a. Cute kid, buckled into the cart twice.
 - b. Cute kid, buckled in before the cart moves.
 - c. Average-looking kid, buckled in while the mom talks on her cell phone.
 - d. Unattractive kid, allowed to drag behind the cart by holding the safety belt.

3. By using the context of the sentence, interpret the sentence in paragraph 6.
 - a. The prettier kids were allowed to wander away because parents didn’t mind other people seeing their good-looking child.
 - b. This had no relevance to the research. Parents just let their kids wander around at the supermarket.
 - c. If a parent loses track of their less attractive child, they tend not to lose any focus because of it.
 - d. Let the ugly kid leave! Maybe they’ll never come back and the parents can try to have a better looking one next time.

4. In paragraph 10, Dr. Frans de Waal is reported to be “skeptical” of the findings from this study. Which of these terms or phrases best defines “skeptical?”
 - a. You could see his bones.
 - b. He is a doubter.
 - c. He likes to skip rather than walk.
 - d. He is impartial and does not have an opinion on the issue.

5. Socioeconomic status is brought up in paragraph 11. Which of these is another example of socioeconomic status?
 - a. The annual gross income of a household.
 - b. Number of cohorts in a household
 - c. Living conditions for a family (homeless, no running water, etc.)
 - d. Any of the above.

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Ugly Children May Get Parental Short Shrift

By **NICHOLAS BAKALAR**

Parents would certainly deny it, but Canadian researchers have made a startling assertion: parents take better care of pretty children than they do ugly ones.

Researchers at the University of Alberta carefully observed how parents treated their children during trips to the supermarket. They found that physical attractiveness made a big difference.

The researchers noted if the parents belted their youngsters into the grocery cart seat, how often the parents' attention lapsed and the number of times the children were allowed to engage in potentially dangerous activities like standing up in the shopping cart. They also rated each child's physical attractiveness on a 10-point scale.

The findings, not yet published, were presented at the Warren E. Kalbach Population Conference in Edmonton, Alberta.

When it came to buckling up, pretty and ugly children were treated in starkly different ways, with seat belt use increasing in direct proportion to attractiveness. When a woman was in charge, 4 percent of the homeliest children were strapped in compared with 13.3 percent of the most attractive children. The difference was even more acute when fathers led the shopping expedition - in those cases, none of the least attractive children were secured with seat belts, while 12.5 percent of the prettiest children were.

Homely children were also more often out of sight of their parents, and they were more often allowed to wander more than 10 feet away.

Age - of parent and child - also played a role. Younger adults were more likely to buckle their children into the seat, and younger children were more often buckled in. Older adults, in contrast, were inclined to let children wander out of sight and more likely to allow them to engage in physically dangerous activities.

Although the researchers were unsure why, good-looking boys were usually kept in closer proximity to the adults taking care of them than were pretty girls. The researchers speculated that girls might be considered more competent and better able to act independently than boys of the same age. The researchers made more than 400 observations of child-parent interactions in 14 supermarkets.

Dr. W. Andrew Harrell, executive director of the Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta and the leader of the research team, sees an evolutionary reason for the findings: pretty children, he says, represent the best genetic legacy, and therefore they get more care.

Not all experts agree. Dr. Frans de Waal, a professor of psychology at Emory University, said he was skeptical.

"The question," he said, "is whether ugly people have fewer offspring than handsome people. I doubt it very much. If the number of offspring are the same for these two categories, there's absolutely no evolutionary reason for parents to invest less in ugly kids."

Dr. Robert Sternberg, professor of psychology and education at Yale, said he saw problems in Dr. Harrell's method and conclusions, for example, not considering socioeconomic status.

"Wealthier parents can feed, clothe and take care of their children better due to greater resources," Dr. Sternberg said, possibly making them more attractive. "The link to evolutionary theory is speculative."

But Dr. Harrell said the importance of physical attractiveness "cuts across social class, income and education."

"Like lots of animals, we tend to parcel out our resources on the basis of value," he said. "Maybe we can't always articulate that, but in fact we do it. There are a lot of things that make a person more valuable, and physical attractiveness may be one of them."