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## A Look into Lookism: An Evaluation of Discrimination Based on Physical Attractiveness

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**A LOOK INTO LOOKISM: AN EVALUATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION BASED ON PHYSICAL  
ATTRACTIVENESS**

by

**Cherea Hammer**

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of the requirements for the degree**

of

**DEPARTMENTAL HONORS**

in

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in the Department of Psychology**

**Approved:**

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## Abstract

Discrimination in employment on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, and other federally protected categories is well recognized as a social problem and anti-discrimination legislation works to limit the impact of discrimination on marginalized populations. However, most people do not consider discrimination based on physical appearance. “Lookism” captures the idea that an individual can be discriminated against based on their physical appearance or physical attractiveness and can also be called physical attractiveness discrimination. In recent years, the prevalence of the issue of physical attractiveness discrimination has been brought to the attention of professionals dealing with employment and has been researched by scholars in both psychology and business. It has been found that physically attractive individuals are consistently chosen over less physically attractive individuals for job interviews and are also more likely to be hired for positions. Physical attractiveness has also been found to positively impact wages, hours of work, and promotion opportunities while an individual is employed, as well as reduce their likelihood of being terminated. This article will explore the implications of physical attractiveness discrimination as it relates to different aspects of the employment process such as application for employment or hiring decisions, promotions, wages, and termination decisions. It will also consider some possible solutions to the issue of physical attractiveness discrimination, such as the possibility of expanding existing laws to cover physical attractiveness or conducting interviews via telephone instead of in person. Lastly, directions for future research in this area will be explored including how the individual’s emotional needs and health may be affected by this type of discrimination.

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## A Look Into Lookism: An Evaluation of Discrimination Based on Physical Attractiveness

The terms racism and sexism are fairly common terms used in society. Most individuals know that racism is discrimination against a person due to their race and sexism is discrimination against a person due to their sex. These and other types of discrimination such as discrimination based on religion, national origin, or disability have all been fairly well studied. However, lookism is not a common phrase or a commonly studied subject.

Lookism can also be called physical attractiveness discrimination. It is discrimination toward an individual because of the attractiveness or unattractiveness of their physical characteristics. Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) studied physical appearance and how appearance impacted individuals' lives. They found that attractive individuals were viewed to have more desirable personality traits, be better spouses, have happier marriages, as well as have better social and professional lives. Overall, the researchers found that attractive individuals were perceived to have happier and more successful lives in general than unattractive individuals. This even extended to career outcomes. Individuals who were attractive were predicted to have happier professional lives and secure a more prestigious job.

Due to the possibility that physical attractiveness may lead to better outcomes in life in general and employment specifically it begs the question why more research has not been completed on the subject. A search of the PsycINFO database for physical attractiveness discrimination yielded 116 titles; however, when race discrimination is

searched, 6,655 titles are found. It is clear that physical attractiveness discrimination is extremely under researched in comparison to other types of discrimination.

Though there is not a substantial amount of research on lookism or physical attractiveness discrimination some researchers have explored how it can affect employment. Hosoda, Stone-Romero, and Coats (2003) conducted a meta-analysis on this topic analyzing 27 articles from the existing literature. Overall, attractive individuals were subject to an array of more favorable job outcomes, which includes selection, performance evaluations, and hiring decisions, than unattractive individuals. These findings suggest that it may be beneficial for researchers and professionals in the employment field to be aware of this research and understand how physical attractiveness has been found to affect employment outcomes, so that this kind of discrimination can be possibly mitigated in the workforce.

The purpose of this article is to compile research on the topic of lookism or physical attractiveness discrimination as it relates to employment factors to better inform both researchers and professionals. Previous researchers have compiled research on this topic before, but not as it relates to all employment factors such as wages, evaluations, terminations, and others. Previous compilations of the research have also not extensively explored the solutions proposed by researchers. This article will explore research on physical attractiveness discrimination that spans not only the selection process of employment, but employment factors that are present after the employee is hired. This article will also explore some solutions that have been proposed by researchers that include using federal, state, and local laws and statutes, changing employment processes, and raising overall awareness.

### **Application and Interviews**

One of the most thoroughly investigated areas of physical attractiveness discrimination in employment is in the selection of applicants. In a study conducted by Shannon and Stark (2003) participants were asked to choose one interview candidate from a pool of nine mock applicants. Participants were given a photo of a man varied between three levels of attractiveness; attractive, neutral, and unattractive to accompany each one of nine similar resumes for each applicant. The results of the study indicate that attractive individuals have a higher rate of selection. These results occurred even after participants in the study had filled out an attitudes questionnaire on which that they disagreed with the idea that appearance should play a role in the assessment of applicants. Gilmore, Beehr, and Love (1986) also found that even with an interview transcript provided, attractive applicants were still more likely to be hired. Rooth (2008) explored the effects of physical attractiveness when applications were sent to real employers for actual positions instead of having participants pretend they are hiring an applicant for a position. The researchers sent out fabricated applications in reply to 1,970 authentic job postings. Two applications were sent to each position; applications included pictures of an attractive individual or an unattractive individual. This addition of a picture was normal for the application environment and therefore, did not have any adverse affect on the experiment. The dependent measure for the study relied upon whether the company invited both applicants to be interviewed, one applicant to be interviewed, or neither of them to be interviewed. The results indicated that unattractive individuals have a lower likelihood of being called back for an interview. Thus, even in the actual workforce physical attractiveness discrimination exists.



Researchers have manipulated many different variables in these studies in order to see if attractiveness would still play a role in the employment decision. Gender, job type, prestige of job, qualifications of the applicant, experience of the evaluator, and more have all been manipulated by researchers in order to assess how physical attractiveness affects employment in conjunction with these variables.

### **Gender**

Researchers have investigated the impact that the gender of the applicant will have on physical attractiveness in relation to selection decisions for employment. Abramowitz and O'Grady (1991) had participants evaluate ten fabricated job applications for a peer counseling position. Subjects were given a job description, ten folders containing application information for each applicant, and a black and white photograph varying between high and low attractiveness and varying gender as well. Subjects were then asked to both rank and rate the applicants. The researchers found a significant interaction effect for the gender of the applicant and their attractiveness. It was found that overall attractive women were evaluated more positively than men and unattractive men were rated the most negatively. In contrast, Cann, Siegfried, and Pearce (1981) found that physically unattractive female applicants were evaluated the least highly in the hiring process and therefore, were less likely to be hired. Cash and Kilcullen (1985) found that overall more attractive applicants of both genders were preferred over unattractive applicants of both genders. However, the study also indicated that though unattractive applicants of both genders were rated equally, attractive male applicants were rated above attractive female applicants. Therefore, between the studies presented it is unclear whether either gender of applicant has a greater opportunity of being hired if they are

attractive. However, it is clear that attractiveness for either gender does play a role in hiring decisions.

In the study by Abramowitz and O'Grady (1991) researchers also wanted to assess if there would be an interaction effect between the gender of the applicant, the gender of the participant, and physical attractiveness. Thus they had both men and women participate in the study and varied the gender of the applicants. The researchers discovered that the gender of the participant in the study did not matter, attractive individuals were chosen over unattractive individuals, thus same-gender and opposing gender evaluations were consistent. Luxen and Vijver (2006) also explored the interaction of the gender of subjects, mock applicants, and physical attractiveness. The researchers found that, similarly to the previous study, both male and female undergraduate participants are more likely to hire attractive individuals of either gender. The same effect was also found when the study was replicated with professionals who have experience selecting individuals for positions. These studies both indicate that the gender of the evaluator does not interact with the gender of the subject when it comes to physical attractiveness discrimination and that this effect probably also generalizes to the workforce as the effect was also found in professionals as well as undergraduates.

### **Type of Job**

In line with the exploration of how gender affects physical attractiveness discrimination, researchers have also investigated whether the gender stereotype of the job moderates the effect of physical attractiveness. In other words, does physical attractiveness affect a situation if an applicant of a specific gender is applying to a position generally occupied by his or her own gender or the other gender? Cash, Gillen,

and Burns (1977) conducted a study with directors of businesses who were provided with a resume package that included a mock applicants qualifications and a picture of a male or female that was either of high or low attractiveness. However, in order to manipulate the job type, the subjects also received a job descriptions booklet that contained descriptions of potential jobs that were stereotyped as masculine, feminine, or neutral type jobs. For neutral jobs attractive applicants of either gender were assessed as more suitable than unattractive applicants. The study also found that when applying to an in-role job (i.e., a female applying for a feminine job or a man applying to a masculine job), attractive applicants were favored over unattractive. However, there was no effect for attractiveness found for out-of-role jobs or jobs stereotypically occupied by the other gender.

A study by Jawahar and Mattson (2005) extended the research on these out-of-role jobs in studying the interaction between gender, sex-typed jobs, and attractiveness. Subjects were assigned to one of three job-types - male, female, or gender neutral - and received a file containing the background information about four applicants including a passport photo of a male or female that was classified as either attractive or unattractive and information on the job position in question. Participants were then asked to make decisions regarding the hiring of these individuals by rating each and picking a candidate for the job. The results indicated that overall, attractive applicants were more likely to be hired over unattractive applicants. However, in contrast to the study by Cash, Gillen, and Burns (1977) an effect for out-of-role jobs was observed. Specifically, attractive men were more likely to be hired for a female dominated job than unattractive or less

attractive men and attractive women were preferred for a male dominated job over unattractive women.

However, attractiveness is not always beneficial to applicants in an employment situation. In a study by Heilman and Saruwatari (1979) the effects of physical attractiveness and gender were tested for positions considered managerial or non-managerial. Participants in the study were provided with packets containing completed application forms for non-managerial and managerial positions all of which were equivalent in qualifications to the other applications for that specific position. Each application had an attractive or unattractive male or female picture attached. Participants were then asked to evaluate how likely they would be to hire the applicant and how qualified the applicant was for the position. It was found that attractive men in comparison to unattractive men were evaluated more desirably in both managerial and nonmanagerial positions. However attractiveness only led to women being evaluated more desirably in the nonmanagerial condition. This same effect held true for the decision to hire the applicant as well. The researchers termed this finding that attractiveness was a disadvantage to certain individuals applying to specific positions the “beauty is beastly effect.”

Johnson, Podratz, Dipboye, and Gibbons (2010), further explored the occurrences where physical attractiveness is a disadvantage or the “beauty is beastly effect.” In the study participants were given the name of a job that was either masculine or feminine where appearance was either unimportant or important as well as a picture of a male or female that was considered attractive or unattractive and asked how suitable they believed that individual to be for that position. In line with previous research, the results

indicated that overall attractive applicants were rated as more suitable for employment. Attractiveness was not found to be beneficial for men applying to masculine jobs as opposed to feminine jobs. However, it was found that attractiveness was beneficial to women when applying for feminine jobs and masculine jobs for which appearance was important, but unattractiveness was beneficial to women when applying for a masculine job where appearance was not important. Therefore, the “beauty is beastly effect” was only found for masculine jobs in which physical appearance is unimportant.

Johnson, Sitzmann, and Nguyen (2014) conducted a study to attempt mitigate the effects found in the previous study. The authors theorized that acknowledging physical appearance would lead to a female applicant being more positively viewed for a male dominated position. Participants were asked to evaluate four finalists for a job in construction, which is a masculine stereotyped job and for which attractiveness is not important. The application packet for each applicant contained an interview transcript and a picture of the applicant that was either attractive or unattractive. In the interview transcript physical appearance was acknowledged by a phrase similar to “I know that I don’t look like your typical construction worker but—“ Participants were then asked to disclose how likely they were to hire this applicant. A significant interaction between attractiveness and disclosure was observed in the study. Thus, the study indicated that acknowledging appearance reduces the previously discussed beauty is beastly effect.

A study done by Desrumaux, Bosscher, and Leoni, (2009) also examined physical attractiveness and sex-typed jobs. Participants in this study received a job description as well as a resume, and photograph of the applicant. The job descriptions the participants were given were either for stereotypical male jobs or stereotypically female jobs. The

participants then had to rate the fabricated male and female applicants on hire-ability for that position. The researchers found that being unattractive was more of a detriment to applicants who were applying for female sex-type jobs rather than male sex-type jobs overall. With this study as well as the few studies before it discussing sex-type jobs, it is unclear whether attractiveness overall helps an individual or hurts them in applying to jobs stereotypically occupied by the other gender.

Researchers also have explored if the effect of physical attractiveness would be different for jobs for which physical attractiveness was relevant or not. Beehr and Gilmore (1982) conducted a study that evaluated this interaction. Participants in the study were given a job description that either created a relevance for physical attractiveness in the job or not, a resume with a picture that varied in attractiveness, and an interview transcript. The results indicate that applicant attractiveness and the relevance of attractiveness to the position interact to affect the hiring decision. More attractive individuals were hired for the position for which physical attractiveness was relevant. Johnson, Podratz, Dipboye, and Gibbons (2010) also found the same effect in their study that was discussed earlier in this section. Attractive applicants were rated as more suitable for occupations where appearance was perceived as important than for jobs for which appearance was perceived as unimportant.

### **Prestige of Job**

Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) in conjunction with discovering that more attractive individuals were more likely to enjoy more fulfilling occupational lives, as discussed earlier in this article, also explored occupational success in terms of prestige or status. The study found that attractive stimulus subjects were more likely to be placed in a

job with higher prestige than less attractive individuals. A study by Croxton, Rensselaer, Dutton, and Ellis (1989) explored the role that physical attractiveness would have in the selection decision if the level of prestige a job possessed and sex-type were varied. Participants in this study were shown a picture of a male or female that was low or high in attractiveness and were asked to rate this person in terms of how successful the participant felt the pictured individual would be in a specific job that was labeled as either low or high in prestige and varied between male, female, or neutral stereotyped. It was found that individuals of high attractiveness were judged as more likely than an unattractive person to be successful in occupations of high prestige that were stereotypically male or neutral. Therefore, the research suggests that most of the time individuals of high attractiveness are selected for positions of high prestige.

### **Qualifications**

In a study by Watkins and Johnston (2000), the interaction between application quality and physical attractiveness was explored in relation to who was selected for employment interviews. The participants for this study were given a job advertisement for the position, a resume for a fabricated applicant that was either of high or average quality, and a photograph of a woman that was rated as either average or attractive looking or no photograph at all. The participants were then asked to rate both the quality of the application and how likely they were to offer to interview the applicant. The results of the study indicated that when the resume was of high quality, attractiveness had no influence on participant's opinion of application quality. However, when the resume was of average quality and an attractive photograph was used the application was judged more favorably than the same resume that had no photograph attached, implying that

attractiveness apparently improved the resume quality. Also the study found that an attractive photograph improved the rated quality of an average quality resume to that of a high quality resume with an attractive photo. As for the decision regarding interviews, the results were similar to those found for the quality of the application. If the resume was of high quality the photograph did not improve the applicant's likelihood of receiving an offer to interview. Also, if the resume of average quality was attached to an attractive photograph, the applicant was more likely to be offered an interview than resumes without photographs. Finally, if the photograph provided to participants was attractive, the results indicate that whether the resume was of high or average quality the applicant was more likely to be extended an offer to interview. This study indicates that attractiveness can increase the perceived quality of an average application so that it is judged as equal with a high quality application and of higher quality than an application without attractiveness indications. The study also implies that attractiveness can increase the probability of proceeding to an interview after the application process. Dipboye, Arvey, and Terpstra (1977) also studied how qualification interacted with physical attractiveness in respect to the hiring process and found that physical attractiveness had a more substantial effect if the candidate had a resume with low qualifications than if the candidate had a resume with high qualifications. In essence, the participants were willing to hire highly and moderately attractive candidates over an unattractive candidate with similar qualifications.

Dipboye, Fromkin, and Wiback (1975) conducted a similar study specifically involving scholastic qualifications, rather than just a resume. The results of this study also indicated, similarly to the previous study, that attractive candidates were ranked



above unattractive candidates that possessed equal scholastic qualifications. This study furthered the effects of the previous study because the same effect of qualifications and physical attractiveness was found in a study that utilized professionals in the field as participants, suggesting that this effect may also be present in the workforce.

In all the studies cited for the manipulation of qualifications it was found that when an individual possesses high qualifications attractiveness does not have an affect on selection decisions; however, if qualifications of an applicant are average or low attractiveness can increase an applicant's chances of being selected. The theory behind this finding is that evaluators will use primary skills relevant to the occupation in decision making first, but if those are inconclusive or inadequate evaluators will move to secondary sources such as attractiveness (Watkins & Johnston, 2000).

### **Experience of Evaluator**

Marlowe, Schneider, and Nelson (1996) added another level of depth to attractiveness research in employment by assessing the effect of the experience of the decision maker or manager on bias shown to individuals of different levels of attractiveness. Participants in this study were supervisors or managers of financial institutions who had different levels of experience measured by the number of performance reviews they had completed during their career. The participants were given a brief description of the program applicants would be applying to, resumes for applicants, and a photograph for each resume that varied in gender and two levels of attractiveness (highly attractive or marginally attractive). Participants then assessed if the applicant was suitable to be hired for their organization. The researchers found that managers of all experience levels exhibit some attractiveness bias. However, it was also

found that the attractiveness bias decreased the more experience a manager had. This implies that managers with the least experience will display the most discrimination based on attractiveness and that even when a manager is very experienced attractiveness still influences hiring decisions to some degree.

### **Contact with Evaluator**

The study by Luxen and Vijver (2006) discussed earlier in the section also evaluated how the amount of contact an individual would have with the person would affect the influence of physical attractiveness on the hiring process. In this experiment the students were either told they were hiring a person that would be working on the same project as them or a different project. When the students were told the applicant was for a different project, no preferences regarding attractiveness were seen; however when the students were told that the applicant would be working on the same project, the students preferred more attractive applicants overall. The professionals also used in this study were then given the same conditions - that the individual selected would be hired for a position that came in frequent contact with the evaluator or a position where the hire would not come in contact with the evaluator. The results were similar to those found with undergraduate students. Thus, even in the professional workforce, attractiveness will exhibit a stronger role in the selection process if the decision maker will come in frequent contact with the individual.

### **Dress**

Researchers have also investigated how dress and attractiveness interact in employment decisions. Bardack and McAndrew (2001) varied the dress or type of clothing of the stimulus person between appropriate and inappropriate for a job interview

along with varying attractiveness between three levels; low, average, and high. Subjects of the study were asked to view an applicant from one of the three levels of attractiveness who was dressed either appropriately or inappropriately for the interview and evaluate if this applicant should be hired for an entry-level position. The study found that in general the attractive applicant was hired more than the unattractive applicant. In relation to dress, when the unattractive applicant dressed appropriately there was only a marginal increase in the chance of hiring from 68 percent to 75 percent. However, if the attractive applicant dressed appropriately it increased the likelihood of being hired from 82 percent to 100 percent. Also it was found that if the attractive applicant was not dressed appropriately that applicant was still hired over an appropriately dressed applicant who was less attractive. Therefore, it appears that physical attractiveness is more influential in the hiring decision than the dress of the applicant.

### **Other Employment Factors**

Though the majority of research has been done on physical attractiveness discrimination in the application or selection process, some researchers have evaluated the effects of attractiveness on employment factors beyond the application process. These factors include wages, raises, evaluation, hours worked, promotion, and termination.

#### **Wages/Income**

A study was conducted by Hamermesh and Biddle (2001) that used data from three household surveys, two from the United States and one from Canada, to assess how physical attractiveness would affect earnings. During this study, interviewers were asked to rate participants' physical appearance on a scale that ranged from strikingly handsome or beautiful to homely. The study found that overall more attractive people earned more,

but this effect was much smaller than the penalty individuals received for being unattractive. Specifically men who are unattractive earn about 9 percent less than men who are average in attractiveness and men who are above average attractiveness earn 5 percent more than those of average attractiveness. For women the penalty for being unattractive in wages was discovered to be about 5 percent and the premium for being attractive was about 4 percent. This implies the difference between men who are unattractive and attractive is about 14 percent and the difference between unattractive and attractive women is about 9 percent. This effect was still found to be present when occupational beauty, or how much beauty is associated with the occupation, was held constant.

Harper (2000) conducted a similar study using data from the National Child Development Study in Britain. A teacher rated physical attractiveness of the individual when the individual was a child and then the child was followed throughout the years to assess wages. The unadjusted data showed the same effect as can be observed in the Hamermesh and Biddle (2001) study, attractive individuals receive a higher wage than unattractive individuals. The unadjusted data revealed a 19.5 percent wage gap between attractive and unattractive male workers and a 13.1 percent gap between attractive and unattractive female workers. Harper then put controls in place for occupation and the penalty for unattractiveness was still found to be 15 percent for men and 11 percent for women.

Borland and Leigh (2014) used data on the Australian population to evaluate the effect of beauty on household income and hourly wage. The physical attractiveness of the participant was rated by an interviewer using a similar method to the one used by

Hamermesh and Biddle (2001). The data shows that above-average looking males have a 15 percent premium in their income and below average looking men suffered a penalty of 25 percent. This same effect was not found for females in this data. When hourly wages were assessed, beauty was found to have an effect. The effect again was significant for men and not women. It was found that attractive males earn a 7 percent premium in wages and unattractive males receive a 13 percent penalty.

A similar study was also conducted in Germany (Pfeifer, 2012). Pfeifer used data from the German population to examine the effect of physical attractiveness on earnings in Germany. Similarly to the studies by Borland and Leigh (2014) and Hamermesh and Biddle (2001) an interviewer rated the participant's attractiveness. The results of the study indicated that attractive people generally earn higher wages than less attractive people. The study also indicated that for men the penalty in wages for unattractiveness is more substantial than the premium for attractiveness. This same effect was not discovered for women in the study.

Overall, it seems the effect of physical attractiveness on wages is similar between all of the countries discussed in these studies- across countries, there is a premium for attractiveness and a penalty for unattractiveness. Also the penalties for unattractiveness generally exceed the premiums afforded for attractiveness. Therefore, it is clear that attractiveness to some degree affects wages positively and unattractiveness affects wages negatively.

Researchers have not only studied how attractiveness has affected wages in general they have also begun to add to the research by adding interactions with other factors similarly to the research for application and interview. For example, Judge, Hurst,

and Simon (2009) studied how appearance and intelligence interact to predict income. Researchers used data from the Harvard Study of Health and Life Quality, in which income and intelligence were measured using a survey and a cognitive test. Physical attractiveness was measured, as usual, using photographs of participants that were rated as attractive and unattractive by another group of participants. The study found that physical attractiveness did influence income. Even when the researchers included intelligence in the analyses, it was found that attractiveness still increased income potential.

In conjunction with all the previously discussed studies that used archival data, other researchers have conducted lab studies to simulate the same effects. Jackson (1983) studied the effect of physical attractiveness on salary. However, Jackson added to the literature and split the occupations into different gender stereotypes; masculine, feminine, and neutral. Participants viewed applicant information to which a photo of an attractive or unattractive male or female was attached. Participants were then asked to suggest a starting salary for that applicant and it was found that across all positions, attractive individuals of both genders were offered higher starting salaries than unattractive individuals. Therefore, this study indicates that both genders exhibit a wage effect for attractiveness regardless of the type of job for which they are being evaluated.

Dipboye, Arvey, and Terpstra (1977) also studied the effects of physical attractiveness on salary. The researchers manipulated qualifications of the applicants between low and high as well as physical attractiveness for this study. Overall the study found that highly attractive and moderately attractive candidates were offered higher salaries than unattractive applicants. It was also found, similarly to the research on

qualifications in the application and interview section of this article, that if an applicant had lower qualifications, attractiveness assisted the applicant in obtaining a higher salary. However, there were no significant differences between low, moderately, and highly attractive individuals in terms of salary if the applicant was highly qualified for the position. Hung-Lin (2008) studied wages in regards to physical appearance, as well as good academic background. This study surveyed female college graduates from Taiwan about their employment status, grades, height and weight, along with participants' satisfaction with their looks. Hung-Lin found that graduates who viewed themselves as good looking earn 3.4 percent more than those who do not. The study also found that physical attractiveness was not more important than academic prowess in regards to wage. Both of these studies add to the idea that those who make employment decisions will use primary qualifications in making employment decisions first and then use secondary characteristics like attractiveness as discussed in the application and interview section.

Heilman and Saruwatari (1979) also included a salary component in their study. Participants in the study were asked to suggest the starting salary for job candidates applying to managerial and non-managerial positions. Congruent with the other pieces of the study, attractiveness was beneficial to men in both managerial and non-managerial positions and attractiveness was only beneficial to females for non-managerial positions. In fact it was found that participants recommended that unattractive females be paid more than attractive females in managerial positions, which was the only time in the research for wages and salary that exhibited the beauty is beastly effect and attractiveness was a

detriment to employee pay. Thus, this study implied that the “beauty is beastly” effect does not only occur for application and interview processes.

Andreoni and Petrie (2008) also explored the existence of the beauty premium in the labor market by setting up a public goods game. The authors argued that while not a direct test of the beauty premium, it could assist in exploring how differentiations in wages could emerge in the labor market. Participants were split into groups. Each participant had a choice to invest 20 tokens each round in a public or private good and were “paid” based upon their investment in private good and the group’s investment in the public good. Participants earn more when they invest in private goods. Group members are provided with a photograph of each participant and those photographs are displayed at the top of the computer screen on which participants make decisions. The total contribution to the public good is displayed after each round of the game, in one condition of the experiment players are aware of what each individual contributed and in the other they are only aware of the total. In the condition where participants could only see the total contribution to the public good, attractive individuals made 7 percent more than those of mid-attractiveness and 12 percent than unattractive individuals (Andreoni & Petrie, 2008). These are similar to the Hamermesh and Biddle (1994) study discussed previously in this section. However, this effect is negated when participants know what each person contributed. Therefore, this study suggest the effects of the wage gap between attractive and unattractive individuals can be replicated outside of data and also that this effect can be negated by other factors added to the situation. This implies that the wage premium and penalty findings may not always hold true if participant’s contribution is disclosed.



Deryugina and Shurchkov (2015) also studied the beauty premium that exists for attractive individuals in the workforce by conducting a laboratory experiment. Participants were either assigned to be employers or employees in the study. Employers in the experiment were able to see “resumes” that were built by answers employees gave to the experimenters at the beginning of the study as well as photographs of the employees. Employees in the experiment would then complete tasks that were related to bargaining, data entry, or data analysis. Both the worker and the employer would make predictions as to how the employee would do on the task and payoffs were determined by the accuracy of their guesses. Then employers would submit a wage bid for the worker. It was found that for the bargaining task there was a significant beauty premium, which consisted of a 16% increase in the wage offer from the employer, and on the other two tasks the beauty premium is not present. A beauty penalty was actually found for attractive workers in the data entry task. However, this premium was removed when the researchers controlled for performance predictions. It was also found that when performance was revealed in another round of the experiment, the attractiveness discrimination also vanished. Therefore, it can be concluded that for different types of work, as well as if performance of employees is revealed, the beauty premium may be nonexistent in contrast to previous research on this subject.

### **Raise**

Heilman and Stopeck (1985) examined physical attractiveness in relation to different employment factors, including raises, for managerial and non-managerial positions. In this study, subjects were given a packet containing performance review of four employees for each condition of managerial and non-managerial, a cover page

detailing each employee's current position, and a photo on the review form of the applicant - each was varied between male and female as well as attractive and unattractive. After participants had studied the materials for each applicant they were asked to evaluate the employee's performance and the employee's potential for a raise. For male employees, attractiveness did not have an effect in either the managerial and non-managerial conditions. For females, however, attractiveness worked in their favor only if the position was non-managerial. If the position was managerial attractiveness led to less positive ratings. The participants in the study also recommended a dollar amount for a raise, which exhibited no effect for men or non-managerial females in regards to attractiveness. However, when the employee was female and the position was managerial in nature, attractiveness again acted as a disadvantage for the employee.

### **Evaluations**

Drogosz and Levy (1996) extended the literature on physical attractiveness discrimination by exploring how evaluations may be affected. Participants of the study were given a packet which presented the current job of the employee, which was varied between male-typed, neutral-typed, and female-typed, ratings on each employee's performance in their respective job, and a photograph that varied between male and female as well as attractive and unattractive. After viewing the packet, participants were asked to evaluate the performance of the employee. Researchers discovered only a main effect of attractiveness, thus implying that regardless of gender or type of job, attractive employees were evaluated more favorably than unattractive employees.

In contrast to this overarching benefit for attractive individuals in evaluations, Heilman and Stopeck (1985) found in congruence with the other pieces of this study that

attractiveness had no effect on the appraisal of male employees between managerial and non-managerial positions, but was beneficial for females only if the position was non-managerial. Again, it was found that if the position was managerial, attractiveness placed females at a disadvantage in receiving a complementary performance evaluation. Thus, it is clear that the beauty is beastly effect is also present in performance evaluations.

### **Hours Worked**

In the study by Borland and Leigh (2014), which was discussed earlier in the section it was also found that beauty or attractiveness has an effect on hours of work as well. Males who were more attractive were found to work longer hours in 2009. This effect was reversed for females; therefore more attractive females worked less.

### **Promotion**

In the study by Marlowe et al. (1996), which was discussed in the application and interview section of this work, the researchers also wanted to determine if attractiveness would have any effect on progression in an organization. Therefore, in this study the researchers also asked participants to rate the progression they expected the applicant to make in relation to an executive vice-president position in the company. The researchers found that managers perceived more attractive applicants to be more likely to be promoted to this high level position if they were hired for the current opening. Morrow, McElroy, Stamper, and Wilson (1990) found similar results, highly attractive individuals were more recommended for the promotion and evaluated to have a better opportunity for future success.

Chung and Leung (2001) studied the effects of performance information and physical attractiveness on promotions. Managers were used as participants for this study

and asked to assess six mock employees and select one for a promotion in a company. The managers were given a report of the employee's performance varied between two conditions, good or mediocre, as well as a photograph varied between three conditions, very attractive, moderately attractive, or unattractive. The study discovered that if performance was good, physical attractiveness had little effect on the promotion decision. However, when performance was mediocre, attractiveness was a factor in the promotion decision and more attractive employees were promoted more often. This again is similar to the findings discussed previously in this article about qualifications. It seems that regardless of the employment factor qualifications will always react to physical attractiveness in the same manner.

In the study by Heilman and Stopeck (1985) the same beauty is beastly effects were found for promotion. Attractiveness had no affect for males in either condition, promotion was judged to be more favorable for women when the position was non-managerial, and when the position was managerial unattractive women were more preferred.

### **Termination**

Commisso and Finkelstein (2012) explored the effect of attractiveness on employment termination decisions. Participants of the study were given a letter that contained a poor performance evaluation for an employee, a job description, and an employee badge that contained a picture of a female employee varied across three levels of attractiveness; unattractive, moderately attractive, and extremely attractive. The participants were then asked to make a decision as to whether they would terminate this employee based on the information they had been given. The results of the study indicate

that participants were more likely to terminate unattractive employees than either condition of the attractive employee. Thus, it seems that attractiveness may also have a role in termination decisions as well.

### **Obesity**

Physical attractiveness to this point has mostly been discussed in terms of facial attractiveness, as that is what most researchers use to study the phenomenon of lookism or physical attractiveness discrimination. However, some researchers interested in studying links between attractiveness and employment outcomes have come to realize that sometimes attractiveness is not only portrayed by the face, but by the body. Obesity has become a growing health problem, especially in the United States. According to Ogden, Carroll, Fryar, and Flegal (2015), as of 2014, 36.5 percent of adults were considered obese. Therefore, it is no surprise that obesity has begun to be studied in relation to discrimination in the hiring process. According to Klassen, Jasper, and Harris (1993) obese individuals frequently feel as if they have been treated unfairly and discriminated against in the work place. The remainder of this section explores if individuals who are obese or overweight do face discrimination in employment factors.

In a study by O'Brien, Latner, Ebner, and Hunter (2013), the effects of obesity on multiple employment aspects were evaluated. The subjects in this study were given a booklet containing a fictitious applicant's resume, photo, and a personnel suitability rating scale. The photo was manipulated for differentiation in obesity levels by using a pre surgery and post surgery photo from bariatric surgery patients. Participants were then asked to evaluate the applicant's leadership potential, predicted success, likelihood of being selected for the job, and salary. The researchers found that obese applicants were

rated lower on all factors than average individuals. This suggests that obesity discrimination is overarching across many factors of employment.

Grant and Mizzi (2014) conducted a study in which body weight was examined in terms of hiring for positions that were considered either visible or non-visible.

Participants were given job description for a customer service representative that involved selling products in shopping centers or over the phone. Participants were also given a resume for a female applicant that included a wallet size full body picture that was varied between overweight and average. The study found that regardless of the visible or non-visible condition of the position overweight applicants were judged to be less employable than average weight applicants. Rothblum, Miller, and Garbutt (1988) also conducted a study examining how obesity would affect women job applicants. The results of the study indicated that obesity did create a negative reaction to the job candidate when compared with a non-obese candidate.

Researchers have also explored the effect of obesity on the invitation to interview for a position. In the Rooth (2008) study that was discussed earlier in this article the applications were sent with a photograph of an obese applicant and the other a normal weight applicant, who were considered unattractive and attractive respectively. As a reminder, the dependent measure for the study was whether the company invited both applicants to interview, one applicant to interview, or neither to interview. The researchers found that applications with the photograph of an obese male had a 7 percent lower chance of being invited to interview than average weight males and applications with the photograph of an obese woman had an 8 percent lower chance than average weight females.

Cawley (2003) studied specifically how obesity can affect the wages of an individual. Cawley used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) and conducted interviews with participants either yearly or every two years from 1979 to about 2000. Participants recorded their own weight throughout those years and height every few years so that BMI could be calculated. Hourly wage of the participants calculated annually by the NLSY. When results were reported they were split by the gender and race of the participants. Cawley found that BMI as well as weight in pounds for females in general had a negative affect on wages. However, the effect was found to be largest for white women for whom being 64 pounds above the mean weight implied a decrease in wages of about 9 percent, which equates to around 1.5 years of education or three years of employment experience. Broken down even further it was found that white females classified as overweight earn 4.5 percent less than those classified as having a healthy weight and those who are classified as obese earn 11.9 percent less. For black and Hispanic females the effect of weight was less prevalent, but it was still present when comparing those classified as obese to those of a healthy weight. This same effect was found for Hispanic males. For white males BMI and weight had no effect on wages and a higher BMI and weight increased wages for Black men. Thus for all women and at least Hispanic males it seem the findings of the previous study hold true and wages are negatively affected by weight and BMI.

Loh (1993) also studied weight in relationship to wages. Loh used data from the National Longitudinal Survey Youth Cohort and took information on weight and wages for participants. Through analysis of the data researchers found that in contrast to the previously discussed article by Cawley (2003), obesity did not affect wage levels for the

participants. However, it was found that obesity did affect wage growth. Obesity caused wages to grow at a slower rate than should have been expected for an average weight person. This effect was especially prevalent for men in the study. Therefore using the results from both studies on wage, it could be possible to infer that obesity affects both the wage level and growth of an employee.

Klassen, Jasper, and Harris (1993) investigated how obesity would affect an employee's desire to work with an individual, suggestions for discipline in regards to undesirable behavior in the workplace, and perceptions on the probability that the problem behavior will reoccur. Participants and fabricated employees in this experiment were all women. Participants were provided with nine summary sheets for fake employees; this sheet included whether the employee had been obese as well as the current height and weight of the employee. Along with the summary sheets, participants were provided with a description of a work-related issue that involved the employee. Descriptions of employee actions in these sheets portrayed stereotypical behavior for thin, obese, or average women and were varied between the height and weight sheets so that they could be described as having a thin, average, or obese body. The results of the study indicated that weight or body build had a negative effect on the participant's desire to work with a specific individual. However, the results did not show that there was any effect when it came to the discipline of the employee. The authors argue that it may be because individuals prefer to act in socially desirable way, which prohibits that a person be disciplined, based upon their weight.



Through this research it can be concluded that obesity does in fact have a negative impact on employment factors. Therefore, obese individuals should be considered for protection under the same format as physical attractiveness.

### **Solutions**

It has been clearly established by the previous sections that physical attractiveness discrimination is prevalent in the workplace. Researchers have suggested a few different solutions to combat the problem of physical attractiveness discrimination. The first suggestion is that physical attractiveness should be added to protected classes under Title VII or the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act. Researchers have also suggested that physical attractiveness should be protected under local or state statutes. Outside of using legal action researchers have proposed that changes to the hiring system could be made to mitigate the effects of physical attractiveness in the hiring process. Other researchers argue that just being aware of this discrimination could assist in mitigating these effects.

### **Law**

**Title VII.** Title VII is a section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects employees from discrimination based on certain protected classes such as race, color, sex, religion, and national origin. Currently, some legal cases involving physical attractiveness discrimination have made it court by fitting cases to Title VII by arguing that cases involving physical attractiveness were motivated by gender, national origin, or other protected class under that Title (Zakrzewski, 2005; Friedrichs, 2015).

Friedrichs (2015) argued that often sex discrimination protected by Title VII is used because attractiveness discrimination cases promote typical gender roles. She

demonstrated that many cases brought forward on the basis of appearance discrimination have been female employees against male employers and therefore, concluded that it should be a women's issue and because of the sex differences suggests that physical attractiveness discrimination could be included as a subcategory under sex discrimination protected by Title VII. This would be a good suggestion if earlier research in this article had not found that men also experience negative effects based upon attractiveness or that sometimes physical attractiveness discrimination occurs when individuals are evaluating those of the same gender.

Thus, if cases involving physical attractiveness cannot prove that discrimination was also clearly motivated by sex discrimination or any of the other explicitly protected characteristics in Title VII this part of the Act can provide no protection for the employee (Zakrzewski, 2005). Thus, an employee's options for seeking legal action for physical attractiveness discrimination is to attempt to fit the claims into a category protected by Title VII or abandon their claims all together (Friedricks, 2015). This leaves an opening for attractiveness discrimination to remain legal. As long as employers ensure discrimination does not fall within one of the protected classes they are allowed to hire on whatever basis they choose, including attractiveness (Zakrzewski, 2005).

Due to the fact that it can be difficult to prove that cases of physical attractiveness were connected to one of the protected characteristics in Title VII, some researchers argue that Title VII should be extended to include physical attractiveness as a protected class (Zakrzewski, 2005). If physical attractiveness is included in as its own protected class, under Title VII instead of as a subset, researchers suggest that it may be able to assist more people and therefore be more effective (Friedricks, 2015). However,

researchers stress the importance of the protections only covering immutable or unchangeable characteristics if physical attractiveness is included under Title VII otherwise the law will become unclear and exceptions will be interpreted too liberally (Zakrzewski, 2005).

Researchers have presented some issues with modifying Title VII to include physical attractiveness discrimination. One issue is that physically unattractive individuals are not as uniform and easily discernable as those of the other protected classes under Title VII. This stems somewhat from the fact that attractiveness and unattractiveness cannot be easily measured or classified, unlike other protected classes such as race or national origin that are more clearly categorized. However, Zakrzewski (2005) argued that courts are used to making rulings that are moderately subjective that would match the level of subjectivity that physical attractiveness discrimination cases would present.

**Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act.** Other researchers have proposed that it is possible to extend the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA to cover physical attractiveness discrimination (Crow, 1992). The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that an individual has a physical or mental impairment or be perceived as having a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities. Crow (1992) argued that unattractive individuals are disadvantaged in a society that values beauty and therefore unattractiveness may impair an individual's ability to fulfill major life activities specified under the ADA and therefore unattractive individuals may qualify. Crow mostly applied this argument to those with a disfigurement in their appearance or who are obese, which could classify them as unattractive and be easily

perceived by others (1992). Crow also argued, that some unattractiveness, like obesity, may stem from a hereditary or genetic disposition, which an individual cannot control, which adds to the validity that they are predisposed to be impaired in life (1992).

However, currently the ADA does not include common physical attributes like height and weight or any deviations in physical appearance that do not result from a health condition in its coverage (Toledano, 2013).

The Rehabilitation Act has similar requirements to that of the ADA; however, any business that receives federal funding is required to comply. The Rehabilitation Act also defines a disabled individual as an individual who possesses a mental or physical impairment or is perceived as having such an impairment. This Act has been used before to protect individuals with more nontraditional disabilities such as epilepsy, tuberculosis, and back conditions, to name a few. The flexible nature of this Act creates an ideal medium for adding physical attractiveness to protected classes under federal legislation (“Facial,” 1987). In fact, this Act has all ready been used to benefit individuals that are obese, which is considered under the realm of physical attractiveness discrimination (Crow, 1992). Therefore, it would not impossible to continue to use and expand this Act to further cover individuals who experience physical attractiveness discrimination.

**State and local statutes.** Some researchers observe that it may be impractical to attempt to add physical attractiveness discrimination into federal law and assert that state and local control may be a better option (Zakrzewski, 2005). A few states and other local entities have already taken it upon themselves to include physical attractiveness in legal Acts. Michigan’s Elliot-Larsen’s Civil Rights Act includes height and weight as protected classes from discrimination. The District of Columbia Human Rights Act has not only

included height and weight, but prohibits all appearance-based discrimination. The exact language of the Act prohibits discrimination based on “personal appearance” which according to the definition provided in the act includes body characteristics, dress, and personal grooming. However, it still requires that an employee maintain cleanliness as well as comply with uniforms or other specified standards as long as those standards are specific and written, the standard is equally maintained across employees of the same level or class, and there is a realistic business related purpose behind the standard. Santa Cruz, California has also enacted an ordinance to prevent physical attractiveness discrimination as it related to height, weight, and other physical characteristics. The physical characteristics in this ordinance are expressly defined as those that existed from birth, obtained in an accident, or those that resulted from disease. All of these acts also contain some sort of exception clause such as a bona fide occupation qualification or business necessity doctrine that can be applied if discrimination must exist due to safety or other valid business reason as determined by a court of law (Zakrzewski, 2005).

Gumin (2012) recommended that state and local statutes like those discussed above be used to combat appearance discrimination. Gumin asserted that those already in place do not cause any unnecessary burden on administrative bodies or the courts. She did caution, however, that those writing that legislation should follow the framework previously laid by Title VII and ensure that exceptions to these statutes are only obtained in narrowly restricted situations. However, other researchers argue against the use of these statutes due to the issue that it may lead to unequal coverage between locations (Zakrzewski, 2005).

**Cultural and other issues.** Along with the logistics issues of adding physical attractiveness discrimination to federal laws or state and local statutes presented in the previous sections, researchers also foresee that there may be some cultural and human difficulties in attempting to remove physical attractiveness discrimination from employment culture. One such cultural issue is presented by Zakrzewski (2005), who indicated that many people see attractiveness as something that is changeable due to the many appearance-altering procedures and products available in our society. This makes classification of unchangeable characteristics a complicated distinction. Toledano (2013) argued that it may also be hard to include physical attractiveness in discrimination legislation due to the fact that attractiveness is not one single trait, but is multiple visual traits incorporated with social values, making attractiveness an umbrella term. There is also a concern about whether the culture will be able to completely abstain from attractiveness discrimination in employment due to the fact that attractiveness is so heavily valued in society. Toledano (2013) suggests that it is impossible to expect individuals to change their mindset in one aspect of their lives only. From the human perspective, another possible issue with attempting to mitigate this form of discrimination is that it is often unconscious and thus it may be hard to prove that an employer's actions were based on discrimination (Friedricks, 2015).

### **Changes in the Employment Process**

Due to the logistic and other issues with trying to include physical attractiveness in discrimination legislation some researchers argue that using the law to prevent physical attractiveness discrimination is not the answer. These researchers suggest that the solution to the issue of physical attractiveness discrimination may exist in reform of the

hiring process and other employment aspects by human resource departments and management (Toledano, 2013). One such reform that researchers suggest for the hiring process would be to conduct interviews over the telephone, where physical attractiveness cannot play a role because the face-to-face component has been removed. The same goal is accomplished through the suggestion to do as symphony orchestras do and conduct interviews from behind screens where employers cannot see the applicant, but are able to discern important personality characteristics from the voice of the applicant (“Facial,” 1987). Farley, Chia, and Allred (1998) conducted a study in support of the idea that physical attractiveness discrimination can be neutralized simply by not being able to see the individual. During the study attractive and unattractive fake job applicants were verbally described through a comment made by a coworker to participants who would make a decision as to who was better for the position and it was found that unattractive applicants were considered a better fit for the position. The researchers argued that verbal descriptions or just not being able to see a likeness of the individual may cause individuals to perceive an employment situation differently. Another suggestion researchers have is to involve multiple people in the interviewing process instead of having one person who interviews the applicant and a different person who actually reaches the hiring decision. In this model a separate individual would interview the applicant and create a written record of relevant information for the job and observations of the applicant not related to attractiveness. The interview would then pass this information on to the actual decision maker who would then make the hiring decision (“Facial,” 1987). Luxen and Vijver (2006) also suggested using more than one decision-maker in the hiring process to prevent physical attractiveness discrimination.

### **Increasing Awareness**

Some researchers in the field imply that simply raising awareness about the issue of physical attractiveness discrimination may assist in mitigating the effects (Agthe, Sporrle, & Maner, 2010; Luxen & Vijver, 2006; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996; Cann, Siegfried, & Pearce, 1981; Shannon & Stark, 2003; Watkins, 2000). Cann, Siegfried, and Pearce (1981) argued that although awareness may not eliminate the effects at first, it is the first step toward extinguishing that bias. If employers are aware of the bias, they may take steps to decrease this type of discrimination and be able to increase the efficiency of their organization in the hiring process as well as in other employment factors (Shannon & Stark, 2003). Shannon and Stark (2003) also proposed that those seeking employment be aware of the biases that may affect their prospects for being hired. This way individuals can attempt to minimize the amount of discrimination they may face as much as possible. Commisso and Finkelstein (2012) suggested that implementing trainings and designing materials to instill objectivity and avoid bias in an interview or other aspects of employment, especially as it relates to physical attractiveness discrimination or bias, may aid in decreasing the bias. Watkins (2000) suggested that along with trainings and materials to assist in reducing physical attractiveness discrimination, group discussions in the workplace might also be beneficial, as it has been seen to be effective in reducing bias for other types of biasing errors.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research**

This article provides clear evidence that physical attractiveness in some manner affects employment outcomes. Discrimination was found to frequently inhibit



unattractive individuals, however, the beauty is beastly effect is also something that should be considered when attractiveness becomes a detriment to some individuals applying for certain positions. Discrimination was also found to be wide ranging across employment factors. The selection process, as well as wages, evaluation, termination and other factors of employment were found to be affected by physical attractiveness discrimination. Physical attractiveness discrimination not only occurs in terms of facial attractiveness, but also bodily attractiveness as shown by the employment discrimination that is also present for obese and overweight individuals.

Solutions for this type of discrimination were also discussed. It is important that professionals are aware of these proposed solutions and also know some of the positives and negatives of applying each of them. Overall, there is not a general consensus from researchers on what policy makers and professionals should do to overcome this discrimination. Therefore, it is important for policy makers and professionals to know these solutions and their possible flaws in order to make future changes and policies to be able to prevent further discrimination based on physical attractiveness.

Researchers looking into this area of discrimination still have further aspects that need to be researched. For other types of discrimination, such as race, sex, religion, age, researchers have done studies on how discrimination affects the self-esteem, physical health, psychological health, job performance, job satisfaction, and job attitudes of an individual (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016; del Carmen Triana, Jayasighe, & Pieper, 2015; Miller & Travers, 2005; Every & Perry, 2014; Macdonald & Levy, 2016; King, Dawson, Kravitz, & Gulick, 2012). However, the same research has not been conducted with physical attractiveness discrimination. This would be important to

investigate so that professionals and researchers can understand not only how physical attractiveness discrimination negatively affects employment factors, but the impact it has on the well-being of the individual as well. Researchers have also suggested many solutions and discussed some of the pros and cons of this research, but no studies have been conducted as to their actual effectiveness, especially when it comes to changes in the hiring process. Researchers should conduct studies to evaluate if solutions like telephone or behind screen interviews will be effective in offsetting the discrimination from physical attractiveness and if these solutions are found to be effective professionals should implement them into actual hiring practices.

Physical attractiveness can influence individuals' lives in various different ways, employment outcomes being an especially important aspect that can be influenced by this factor. The topic of physical attractiveness discrimination should be further studied and explored so that it can be understood to the same degree that other types of discrimination are. Thereby, individuals, especially professionals, will be able to not only understand lookism and physical attractiveness discrimination, but also be able to develop the means to protect against it.

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### Reflective Essay

My capstone was a perfect conclusion for my undergraduate experience. Being divided between business and psychology because of my two majors and also having a minor in Human Resource Management made looking at employment discrimination a perfect fit for me. This particular type of employment discrimination fit especially well into my education because it was not a well studied or discussed topic in either my psychology or business classes. This gave me an opportunity to expand my knowledge and learn about a topic that not many people in either of my disciplines have much knowledge of. Completing this capstone did not only add to my undergraduate education, but also helped to prepare me for my future goals. My eventual goal is to be a professional in the field of human resource. My capstone project not only prepared me to be aware of this particular type of discrimination in the workplace, but also to be aware of other types of discrimination and I also gained an understanding of the methods to protect against discrimination in general. This awareness and understanding will help me to become a better employee and human resource professional in the future.

This project, by nature, helped to broaden my experience across disciplines because it incorporates both psychology and business. Therefore, I was able to gain more understanding of this issue from both perspectives and integrate that into my final product. It also promoted critical thinking about topics within both of my majors. I had to gain an understanding of how this discrimination would relate to an employee's psychological well being, understand how this discrimination affected each aspect of

employment, and understand laws and statutes often discussed in the business field to see how this type of discrimination could potentially fit into those protections.

My advice to future honors students in picking a topic for the capstone project is to not only pick something that can integrate knowledge from your major and previous studies in school, but also pick something that can apply further than that. Pick something that may be able to apply to your professional life and that gives you an understanding of topics others may not be aware of. Finally, pick a topic that will be interesting for you to study and that you will find excitement in exploring. That was a great asset to me while completing my project. I picked a topic that was interesting that I enjoyed studying and learning about.

Through this project I also gained more experience with research within both my majors. Due to the nature of employment discrimination different facets of physical attractiveness discrimination have been studied by researchers in psychology as well as in business. This gave me an opportunity to further explore the literature in both my disciplines, but particularly the business literature. In my undergraduate career I have mostly had experience with the research presented in psychology, but this project gave me an opportunity to explore and better understand business literature as well. I now have better skills with reading scholarly articles in general and in reading both types of research related to my fields.

The research part of this project did hold challenges, however. The first challenge with researching this topic specifically is that there is not a substantial amount of research for it. This made it difficult to find relevant articles and required some methods of finding articles I had not had to use before. This project forced me to pay attention to the

references used in other articles in order to locate more research. It also gave me an opportunity to expand my ability in using key words to search for articles, as I had to try many different terms and term combinations to find the articles I needed. Reading as much research as this project required was also challenging for me, as I had never completed such an extensive project before. It was difficult to keep track of every article I read and what exactly that article said. Thus, I started an annotated bibliography that assisted me in organizing my research and I was actually able to use that bibliography as an honors contract. My advice to future honors students is not to get overwhelmed with the researching process. Get creative in the ways that you find articles and use the tips that your professors have given you about using the references from other articles and different ways to use key words. I also advise future students to read articles for your project often and organize a method from the beginning of your project to keep track of what you are reading and how you may use it in your final product.

While completing my capstone I was also able to develop a better relationship with my mentor. I had worked with Dr. Galliher as a statistics tutor for two semesters and had a fairly good relationship with her when I asked her to be my mentor for my capstone project. She was a wonderful support and advisor not only for this project, but also for me in other aspects of my undergraduate education and in my future plans. My advice to future honors students is to pick a mentor that you feel comfortable with and that you have interacted with frequently in your undergraduate career. My project went much smoother due to the incredible mentor that I was fortunate to work with.

Finally, this project added something of value to the business community especially. This is a type of discrimination that not many professionals or individuals in

the workforce generally know about. Completing my capstone on this specific topic I hope will expand awareness of physical attractiveness discrimination for those who read it and therefore prepare them to see this type of discrimination. Through this spread of awareness I hope that more action will be taken to protect against this discrimination and thus overall better the work force.

Overall, I am grateful for the opportunity I had to complete this project. Though there were challenges during the project, it was worth it for the triumphs such as finally seeing the word count on the document read 10,000 words or presenting at the student research symposium. This project was beneficial for me to complete as it added to my undergraduate education and prepared me for my future in human resource. It also provided me with a mentor and advisor that not only supported me through this project, but also will continue to advise and assist me as I move forward with my future plans. My final advice to the future honors students who may be reading this reflection is that this type of project is going to be somewhat challenging and long, but it is doable and also rewarding. Do not ever give up on yourself in this process, because at times the project may seem daunting. Go talk to your mentor and the honors staff during these moments because they will be there to help and support you. My other advice is to make friends with others completing their capstones the same semester you are, they become a great support system and can give you the encouragement you need to get through whatever difficulty in the project you may be facing at that time. Finally, I can assure you that when you are done with the project you will feel so accomplished and proud knowing that you have completed something challenging that required a lot of time and effort and that is definitely worth it.

### Author Bio

Cherea Hammer will graduate from Utah State with bachelors' degrees in both Psychology and Economics with minors in Human Resource Management and Business. While at Utah State, Cherea was a member of the Honors Program as well as Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology. She was listed on the Dean's List in the Psychology Department over multiple semesters and received the A-pin award multiple times for her academic achievements. Cherea also had the honor to receive the award for Outstanding Student in the Psychology Department for the 2016-2017 school year. She also found a passion for travel and international culture during her time as an undergraduate when she accepted the opportunity to travel to Eastern Europe with the Huntsman Business School's Go Global Program. Outside of her academic pursuits, Cherea volunteered during all four years of her undergraduate education at the English Language Center assisting individuals of international backgrounds in learning English and accumulated over 100 hours of service there. She also participated in organizations such as the USU Residence Hall Association, held a position as a research assistant, was employed as a Supplemental Instruction Leader, and job shadowed in the Human Resource Department at Utah State. In the future, Cherea hopes to use her combination of degrees and minors to successfully obtain a career in Human Resource, a field that includes both her interests in business and people, and then go on to obtain a Master of Human Resource and a Master of Business Administration degree.