



Perceptions of facial dominance, trustworthiness and attractiveness predict managerial pay awards in experimental tasks

Laura S. Fruhen^{a,*}, Christopher D. Watkins^b, Benedict C. Jones^c

^a School of Psychology, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

^b Division of Psychology, School of Social and Health Sciences, Abertay University, Dundee, Scotland, United Kingdom

^c Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 September 2014

Received in revised form 4 July 2015

Accepted 7 July 2015

Available online 4 September 2015

Handling Editor: William Gardner

Keywords:

Level of management

Face perception

Pay

Reward

Contingency model of leadership

ABSTRACT

Positive associations between physical attractiveness and employee reward are well-documented within the organisational literature. Although the impact of facial cues to trustworthiness and dominance on a number of social outcomes has been established outside of the workplace, the extent to which they, in addition to attractiveness, affect *pay* at different managerial levels is yet to be investigated. This paper presents research into this issue using a face payment task for shop floor managers (Retail Managers) and senior managers (Heads of Retail Operations). Evaluations indicated that all three facial cues were positively associated with awarded pay at both managerial levels. Moreover, attractiveness had a significantly stronger link with shop-floor managers' than senior managers' pay, whereas perceived trustworthiness and perceived dominance had significantly stronger links with pay for senior managers than shop-floor managers. It further emerged that women were paid more in this experimental task where pay was awarded solely based on facial features and that the facial features were more predictive of women's than men's pay. Awareness of the role of physical cues in pay awards can be considered by organisations to reduce biases in remuneration.

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Appearance and social interactions

Despite laws that attempt to rationalise decision-making processes in order to ensure equitable treatment of people, our social judgements of others often do not demonstrate such rational and deliberate processing (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Stereotypes are a ubiquitous feature of human behaviour and interaction (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000; Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Indeed, the folk belief that appearance provides a valid guide to character is present even in relatively well-educated samples (Hassin & Trope, 2000). Judgements based on outward appearance can influence many important social outcomes related to how we treat and choose our social partners (see Langlois et al., 2000 for a review) and select our political leaders (see Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Little, Burriss, Jones, & Roberts, 2007; Todorov et al., 2005). Notably, Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) demonstrated that children who are unfamiliar with election candidates can accurately predict election outcomes from facial photographs. In fact, the children completed this task with accuracy levels comparable to adults, which speaks to the implicit nature of leadership preferences (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009). This paper adds to this literature by investigating the extent to which salary awards are influenced by appearance cues that imply desirable traits in managers.

* Corresponding author at: School of Psychology, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia. Tel.: +61 8 6488 2188.
E-mail addresses: laura.fruhen@uwa.edu.au (L.S. Fruhen), c.watkins@abertay.ac.uk (C.D. Watkins), Ben.Jones@glasgow.ac.uk (B.C. Jones).

Building on classic studies in social psychology of the suite of positive attributions that are afforded to physically-attractive individuals (e.g. Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; reviewed in Langlois et al., 2000), the role of appearance-driven judgements in our social lives also applies in the workplace (reviewed in Little & Roberts, 2012). For example, height is positively correlated with workplace success and income (see Judge & Cable, 2004 for a meta-analytic review) and is positively associated with judgements of charisma and perceived competency in leaders (Blaker et al., 2013; Hamstra, 2014). In addition, measures of physical attractiveness are positively linked with performance in mock and real job interviews (Chiu & Babcock, 2002; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996), salesperson performance (Ahearne, Gruen, & Jarvis, 1999) and income (Frieze, Olson, & Russell, 1991; Judge, Hurst, & Simon, 2009). Moreover, CEOs of financially-successful companies are more likely to have 'robust' facial features, as indexed by a higher facial-width-to-height ratio, than their relatively less successful peers (Wong, Ormiston, & Haselhuhn, 2011). People have been found to infer power-related traits from pictures of German CEOs' faces, and these judgements are positively correlated with their companies' actual net profits (Rule & Tskhay, 2014). Other recent work has reported that perceived 'tallness' in the face and facial adiposity (i.e. fatness) are associated with judgements of leadership ability (Re & Perrett, 2014; Re et al., 2012, 2013). Collectively, these findings suggest that physical appearance plays a role in the workplace and particularly in our views of others' leadership abilities.

Facial cues, managerial roles and leadership theory

Information provided by the face has an important function in how we interact with others (Bruce & Young, 1986; Goldstein, Chance, & Gilbert, 1984; Stangor & Schaller, 1996; Todorov, Said, Engell, & Oosterhof, 2008) and categorise them (e.g. Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003; Mason, Cloutier, & Macrae, 2006; Todorov, Olivola, Dotsch, & Mende-Siedlecki, 2015). Facial cues are thought to play a greater role in social judgements than other physical characteristics such as bodily appearance (Currie & Little, 2009; Furnham, Lavancy, & McClelland, 2001). Recent data-driven analyses demonstrate that our social judgements of faces can be modelled on two primary dimensions of perceived trustworthiness (degree of perceived *intent* to inflict harm) and perceived dominance (degree of perceived *ability* to inflict harm; Oosterhof & Todorov, 2008). Studies have found general physical attractiveness to be associated with monetary reward of employees (e.g., Frieze et al., 1991; Judge et al., 2009), but this has not been studied for facial attractiveness. Further, the corresponding relationships between remuneration and perceived trustworthiness and dominance derived from physical cues are yet to be investigated. In light of the role of these two dimensions in our assessment of others as social partners, the critical function of facial cues for social interactions, and the association between other physical appearance cues and pay, it is predicted here that perceived trustworthiness and dominance derived from facial cues, in addition to perceived physical attractiveness, will also affect managerial pay awards.

Although the current study is concerned with managerial rewards, it is relevant to leadership for two reasons. First, leadership and management represent distinct, yet related issues (Day, 2001). While leading and managing have been proposed as two different processes, leaders and managers are not necessarily different people (Bass, 1990; Kotter, 1990). Indeed, managerial success requires good leadership (Yuki, 2006) and this is likely to be reflected in lay perceptions of leadership and management. Leadership is a critical part of managerial roles. However pay is awarded in consideration of the whole range of activities in which managers engage. Thus in the current study, the term manager is used as an occupational title, as this most accurately describes the organisational positions studied.

Second, although the current study refers to managerial pay for the above reasons, its theoretical assumptions are derived from implicit and biosocial perspectives on leadership. Implicit leadership theories traditionally propose that naive individuals develop personal assumptions of what traits and abilities are ideal in leaders through socialisation and experience (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). The implicit assumptions that lay individuals hold concerning leadership have been found to reflect eight leader attributes, namely sensitivity, dedication, tyranny, charisma, attractiveness, masculinity, intelligence, and strength (Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994). Studies show that maleness (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011) and height (Blaker et al., 2013) are implicitly associated with more positive leadership perceptions. These findings illustrate that evaluations of leaders can be derived from very limited and superficial cues to leadership, which supports the limited-capacity model of implicit evaluations of leadership described by Lord and Maher (1991). This model refers to principles of simplification in information processing that individuals apply so that they require only very little information, or simplified cues in order to explain others' behaviour. Pre-existing schemas and simplified knowledge structures support individuals to arrive at adequate rather than optimal responses (Lord & Maher, 1991). The present study bases its investigation of perceptions of facial cues and their association with assigned pay to managers on these propositions of the limited-capacity model.

Biosocial leadership theories propose that leadership preferences have evolved based on the benefits to one's reproductive fitness that are accrued from selecting an effective leader (Spisak, Dekker, Krüger, & Van Vugt, 2012a). These leadership theories extend implicit leadership theory by proposing that leadership preference has also been shaped by cooperation and conflict in our evolutionary past (Spisak et al., 2012a). From an evolutionary perspective, preferences for physically attractive individuals are thought to reflect preferences for individuals of good underlying physical condition (e.g., Krupp, DeBruine, & Jones, 2011; Sell, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2009). Preferences for individuals who are able to confer fitness benefits onto recipients through resource-pooling or collaboration are thought to underpin preferences for trustworthy looking individuals (see Watkins, DeBruine, Little, & Jones, 2012 for discussion). Finally, preference for physical dominance in leaders has been proposed to reflect preferences for individuals who are better-placed to represent their group against others via their formidability as well as the threat they pose to rival groups when competing for resources (e.g. 'parochial altruism'; see Choi & Bowles, 2007; Van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007). In addition to the implicit value of the traits implied by facial cues, evidence suggests that social judgements based on facial cues have a degree of accuracy (e.g., Penton-Voak, Pound, Little, & Perrett, 2006; reviewed in Todorov et al., 2008, 2015). Collectively, implicit preferences for traits

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