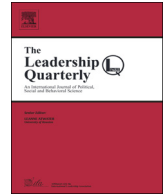




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## The Leadership Quarterly

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua)

## Beauty is in the in-group of the behelded: Intergroup differences in the perceived attractiveness of leaders

Kevin M. Kniffin <sup>a,\*</sup>, Brian Wansink <sup>a</sup>, Vladas Griskevicius <sup>b</sup>, David Sloan Wilson <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Cornell University, Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, USA

<sup>b</sup> University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management, USA

<sup>c</sup> SUNY Binghamton, Departments of Biological Sciences and Anthropology, USA

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 14 January 2014

Received in revised form 12 August 2014

Accepted 6 September 2014

Available online xxxx

Handling Editor: John Antonakis

## Keywords:

Physical attractiveness

Evolutionary psychology

Familiarity

Leadership

Followership

## ABSTRACT

Physical attractiveness is most commonly presumed to be an exogenous characteristic that influences people's feelings, perceptions, and behavior across myriad types of relationships. We investigate the opposite prediction in which feelings toward other people influence the perceptions of others' attractiveness. Focusing specifically on subordinates' perceptions of leaders of in-groups and out-groups, we examine whether group membership moderates familiarity in relation to ratings of physical attractiveness. Studies 1 and 2 show that subordinates rate the leaders of their in-groups as significantly more physically attractive than comparably familiar out-group leaders. Our findings have relevance for understanding the interactive roles of physical attractiveness within contemporary organizational environments and help to account for variance in interpersonal perceptions on the basis of group membership. In contrast with research traditions that treat physical attractiveness as a static trait, our findings highlight the importance of group membership as a lens for perceiving familiar leaders' physical attractiveness.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

The notion that attraction between sexual partners evolved in support of reproduction and adaptive bonding has been closely explored (e.g., Diamond, 1997; Eastwick, 2009; Eastwick & Finkel, 2012). In contrast, questions involving attraction between leaders and followers – de facto partners within functional groups – have not been studied with comparable focus. In one example, Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, and Strack (1995) report that men who are primed with power in an experimental setting rate confederate women as more attractive than men in conditions that are power-neutral; however, the opposite dynamic of followers' perceptions of leaders has not been a focus of previous research. Given the importance of followers' attraction to leaders across organizational types, though, the value of understanding this aspect of “followership” (Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008; Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011) is clear.

Familiarity of leaders can be reasonably assumed for followers and, consequently, the “mere exposure” literature (e.g., Jones, Young, & Claypool, 2011; Zajonc, 1968) would suggest that followers in freely-formed organizations will find leaders more attractive as a function of exposure. Without considering questions related to leaders and followers, Norton, Frost, and Ariely (2007, 2011) have recently argued that familiarity tends to decrease attractiveness while Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick, and Finkel (2011a, 2011b) have endorsed a form of the “mere exposure” view. In a related set of papers, researchers have considered the degree to which personality traits and relationship variance might moderate the influence of familiarity on the perceptions of others' attractiveness (e.g., Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2011; Eastwick & Hunt, 2014). Surprisingly, those debates have not considered the hypothesis that familiarity's relationship with attractiveness can be moderated by the variable of in-group/out-group membership. To address that

\* Corresponding author at: Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University, Warren Hall 111, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA.  
E-mail address: [kmk276@cornell.edu](mailto:kmk276@cornell.edu) (K.M. Kniffin).

important question, the present research is designed to examine whether followers' perceptions of leaders' physical attractiveness might be moderated by the alignment of values between followers and leaders within naturalistic groups where familiarity with the leaders of the in-groups and out-groups is prevalent.

Consistent with Bamberger and Pratt's call for studies of "organizations and institutions other than conventional businesses" (2010, p. 665), we present two studies that focus on perceptions of political leaders' physical attractiveness. Significant prior research has been conducted on the importance of political leaders' physical appearance (e.g., Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Atkinson, Enos, & Hill, 2009; Benjamin & Shapiro, 2009; Leigh & Susilo, 2009; Rule & Ambady, 2010; Spisak, Dekker, Krüger, & Van Vugt, 2012; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005); however, the previous research has not considered the degree to which familiarity with specific political leaders might – as a function of whether one supports or opposes the leaders – influence how the leaders are perceived. In light of the multidisciplinary literatures that we review, our expectation is that subordinates within a group (e.g., political party) tend to view their leaders as more physically attractive when compared with ratings provided by followers of comparably familiar but rival or competitive groups' leaders.

The notion that group membership can significantly influence or filter interpersonal perceptions and dynamics has been demonstrated for other variables including the value that people place upon their relative standing within groups (e.g., Frank, 2012; Kniffin, 2009) and the degree to which gossip is likely to be self- or group-serving (e.g., Kniffin & Wilson, 2005, 2010). In the current research, our approach can be formulated as a moderation hypothesis whereby followers' ratings of leaders' physical attractiveness will be congruent with partisan group affiliations when followers are familiar with leaders but no such effect will be present when leaders are unfamiliar to the followers. Even for short-term activity groups that last for the duration of a single meal, Kniffin and Wansink (2012) focus on perceived appearances and conclude that "it seems plausible that strangers who eat with each other might develop enhanced perceptions of each other's physical attractiveness" after sharing a lunch or dinner.

**Hypothesis.** Congruence in perceptions of physical attractiveness will exist between the party affiliation of raters and leaders exclusively when the relationship between followers and leaders is familiar.

## Perceptions of beauty

The dominant approach to studying physical attractiveness tends to treat physical attractiveness as an independent variable (e.g., Eastwick, Luchies, Finkel, & Hunt, 2014) and presumes that there are objectively visible traits such as facial symmetry that are universally regarded as attractive or unattractive (e.g., Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005). Against this backdrop, researchers from multiple disciplines have found robust patterns whereby physically attractive people tend to enjoy better outcomes whether the situation involves interviewing for a new job (e.g., Agthe, Sporrle, & Maner, 2011; Luxen & Van de Vijver, 2006; Madera & Hebl, 2012), gaining promotions (e.g., Dickey-Bryant, Lautenschlager, & Mendoza, 1986; Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003), or political election (e.g., Benjamin & Shapiro, 2009; Berggren, Jordahl, & Poutvaara, 2010; Poutvaara, Jordahl, & Berggren, 2009). Similarly, researchers have suggested that the effectiveness of individual educational and group counseling leaders will vary as a function of physical attractiveness (e.g., Pan & Lin, 2004). More broadly, studies have shown that chief executive officers with relatively wide faces (Wong, Ormiston, & Haselhuhn, 2011) or "baby faces" (Livingston & Pearce, 2009) appear to oversee relatively successful firms. Similarly, Rule and Ambady (2011) have reported that managing partners at top-ranked law firms whose faces are rated as "powerful" tend to be the most profitable or productive. The basic assumption of this work is that physical attractiveness is an objective characteristic whose perception is universally shared and favorably valued.

On the basis of recognizing physical attractiveness as an objectively measurable trait, researchers have focused on the inferences that people draw from perceptions of others' appearances. Articulated by statements that include "What is Beautiful is Good" (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010), "You Can Judge a Book by its Cover" (Yamagishi, Tanida, Mashima, Shimona, & Kanazawa, 2003), and *Beauty Pays: Why attractive people are more successful* (Hamermesh, 2011), the common framework is that physical attractiveness functions as a kind of "halo effect" (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) that "unwillingly contributes to person perception" (Vogel, Kutzner, Fiedler, & Freytag, 2010). Previous research suggesting that people can infer a person's competence (Poutvaara et al., 2009), political affiliation (Bull & Hawkes, 1982; Rule & Ambady, 2010), or sexual orientation (Freeman, Johnson, Ambady, & Rule, 2010) on the basis of facial images using "thin slice" stimuli illustrates the range of inferences that seem to be drawn from physical appearances.

Notwithstanding the dominant approach to studying physical attractiveness as a static or fixed trait, there is evidence that contextual variables such as macroeconomic conditions (Pettijohn & Jungeberg, 2004; Rule & Tskhay, 2014), altruistic behavior (Farrelly, Lazarus, & Roberts, 2007; Kniffin & Wilson, 2004), and a rater's own physical appearance (Montoya, 2008) or relationship status (Lydon, Meana, Sepinwall, Richards, & Mayman, 1999; Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990) can modify people's perceptions of others' physical attractiveness. In a more interactive example, Cunningham (1986) focuses on the correlations between myriad physical dimensions and ratings of physical attractiveness; however, he also accepts that the correlations are not necessarily unidirectional – in either of the directions ("Beautiful to Good" or "Good to Beautiful"). An illustration of Cunningham's (1986) article is his partial conclusion that "A wide-eyed, open and happy look may have lead to the belief that the target was innocent and friendly and that perception of guileless sociability may have lead to the rating of attractiveness" (p. 933). Similarly, in their qualified "What is Beautiful is Good, But ..." review, Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, and Longo (1991) suggested that physical appearances "should thus be relatively less important in perceptions of friends, acquaintances, family members, and coworkers than in perceptions of strangers" (p. 122).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10439512>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10439512>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)