



“You sound perfect for the job.” The effect of vocal versus physical attractiveness on ratings of personality and employability

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### ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the comparative influences of facial versus vocal attractiveness on initial impressions of female job applicants. To investigate which stimulus provided a stronger cue to applicants' personality and employability ratings, 57 students rated an attractive and an unattractive applicant for these traits. Judgements were either based on images of their faces, or recordings of their voices. Thus, a 2 (interviewer gender) x 2 (stimulus) x 2 (attractiveness) x 2 (order) design was used. It was found that attractive candidates were preferred over their unattractive competitors and particular preference was given to vocal attractiveness, suggesting this to be the stronger cue to implicit personality theory. The existence of female intrasexual competition in the occupational context was also investigated, although no effect of interviewer gender on applicant success was found. The conclusions are discussed in terms of the existing biases of the employment process. Implications for particular interviewing techniques are discussed and directions for future research into this important topic are proposed.

KEY WORDS:	“WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL IS GOOD” STEREOTYPE	VOCAL ATTRACTIVENESS	FACIAL ATTRACTIVENESS	EMPLOYABILITY	GENDER
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## Introduction

In a world where our senses are continuously bombarded with new information, our brains have developed outstanding ways of maximising our knowledge with minimal effort. Stereotypes, for example, allow us to make numerous inferences about a person, their intelligence, their personality, and their competence, based on the most subtle of cues. The stereotype of beauty equating to good fortune is something that has been widely affirmed through narratives such as 'Cinderella', the story of a beautiful woman marrying her prince while her 'ugly' sisters jealously look on. This idea has recently received a great deal of *empirical* attention since the discovery of the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype in which attractiveness is seen to equate to the possession of other desirable qualities (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972). The nature and origin of this stereotype have since come under investigation. It has been explained by implicit personality theory in which the positive or negative information we have about a person is generalised to make assumptions about the positivity or negativity of their other traits. According to Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, and Longo (1991), inferences of others' various personality characteristics are made from knowledge of their category memberships, for example as attractive or unattractive. Certain expectations then become associated with membership of either the attractive or unattractive category, for example that "what is beautiful is good", thus forming this stereotype; but why is it of such importance and interest?

One reason for the great empirical attention that has been received by the stereotype is its seemingly innate and automatic nature. In one study, the gaze of infants as young as 14 hours old was monitored to find that they looked at attractive faces for longer than unattractive faces (Slater, Von der Schulenburg, Brown, Badenoch, Butterworth et al., 1998). These results suggest an innate predisposition to prefer what is perceived to be attractive. Furthermore, even when participants' attention was removed from a person's physical attractiveness with a Stroop test, evidence for the stereotype still emerged (van Leeuwen & Macrae, 2004). Due to the seemingly unavoidable nature of the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype, it is no wonder that many have sought to learn more about it, what physical qualities equate to beauty and how this impacts on people in a variety of contexts.

Saxton, Debruine, Jones, Little, and Roberts (2009) investigated the particular traits that were regarded as physically attractive to adults; they found that symmetrical and feminine faces were rated as the most beautiful. Evidence suggests that the possession of such physical attributes may be beneficial in several contexts. For instance, the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype has been found to affect the justice system. Castellow, Wuensch, and Moore (1990) investigated this using a fictional sexual harassment case on which participants gave their verdict. It was found that the combination of attractive plaintiff versus an unattractive defendant led to the highest incidence of guilty verdicts. While this provides evidence for the stereotype in a legal context, it is possible that the gender of the plaintiff could have influenced these judgements, since male complainants in sexual harassment cases are often believed less and punished more than females (Madera, Podratz, King, & Hebl, 2007), thus questioning the validity of the study. Similarly, gender

biases may apply to the occupational context since Farley, Chai, and Allred (1998) found that male job applicants were viewed as inherently more qualified than their female counterparts. The present study overcomes such an issue since only females are rated for their personality and employability; any differences in judgements should therefore be the result of the attractiveness manipulation rather than gender. Perceptions of competence and intelligence may also be influenced by physical attractiveness. For example, physically attractive children were rated more positively on measures of expected intelligence, progression and popularity in school when compared with their unattractive peers (Clifford & Walster, 1973). Similar findings have also been reported using adult samples (Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995). In the study by Clifford and Walster, photographs were accompanied by information about the child's academic and social potential; it is therefore possible that teachers' ratings of the children were influenced by this. The present study aims to overcome this methodological flaw by providing identical information about both the unattractive and attractive applicant so that any difference in ratings can be asserted to this manipulation, improving the study's validity.

It was Stone, Stone, and Dipboye (1992) who highlighted the need for similar research into the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype to be conducted in an occupational context to discover if it affected employment outcomes; the present study aims to contribute to the rectification of this. Previous work by Hochschild and Borch (2011) found that physically attractive males in the navy were perceived to be more intelligent and better leaders, and did indeed reach higher ranks and progress more quickly than their unattractive colleagues. Furthermore, Rule and Ambady (2011) found that the appearance of lawyers was significantly and accurately related to ratings of their power and success, even when the photograph that was being rated dated to before their career began. It is therefore possible that facial cues do predict occupational success. These studies focus on ratings of those who have already gained professional status, however first impressions in the job application process may also be extremely important (Springbett, 1958). Thus, it is essential to see how the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype affects this initial stage of employment; this is precisely the focus of the present study. A similar approach was adopted by Andreoli (2009), who found that university students rated videos of attractive job applicants more positively on personality and job-related qualities when compared to their unattractive rivals. Unlike the present study though, Andreoli ignored the potential influence of vocal attractiveness on the students' ratings. In fact, the influence of vocal attractiveness on the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype has been comparatively under-researched when compared to that of physical attractiveness; is what sounds beautiful also perceived as good? Furthermore, how effectively do both physical *and* vocal attractiveness provide cues to implicit personality theory?

Saxton, Debruine, Jones, Little, and Roberts (2009) also identified the vocal characteristics that were perceived as most attractive in adults. These included high pitch in females and low pitch in males. It is possible that such vocal characteristics may be beneficial in a similar way to visual attractiveness. Evidence for the "what sounds beautiful is good" stereotype in a romantic context emerged when men with preferred vocal characteristics

were perceived as more physically desirable to potential partners (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, Zuckerman and Driver (1989) found that vocally attractive people benefited from more positive ratings of traits such as dominance, achievement and likability. Similarly to visual attractiveness, Berry (1992) also found vocally attractive people to be rated positively on measures of personality and competence. It may therefore be inferred that the stereotype also influences impressions of traits relating to employability. The effect of speech styles on interview outcomes was investigated by Parton, Siltanen, Hosman, and Langenderfer (2002). They found that powerful speech styles were positively related to impressions of competence and employability, showing the benefits of certain vocal characteristics in an occupational context. However, the effect of vocal attractiveness on employability is yet to be fully investigated; the present study aims to develop this. Such research is essential since telephone interviewing, in which only vocal information is accessible, is frequently used in the job application process.

The aforementioned research has tended to focus on either the influence of visual or physical attractiveness on the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype, but few have looked into them simultaneously. Lander (2008) conducted one such study to find that ratings of vocal and visual attractiveness were often positively correlated, showing an interaction between the two stimuli. More recently, Zuckerman and Sinicropi (2011) found that when the vocal and physical attractiveness of the same person differs, this can be detrimental to the positivity of impressions that others form of them. The researchers explained these findings in terms of a disappointment with the less attractive stimulus leading to more negative judgements of the target. While these studies have investigated the interaction between the two elements, the present study looks at both visual and vocal attractiveness in isolation in order to investigate and compare their effects on implicit personality theory. A similar study was conducted by Zuckerman and Driver (1989) who found that facial attractiveness was a stronger cue to one’s personality traits than vocal attractiveness. Hence, attractive targets were rated more positively on their face than voice. However, participants were of the opposite sex and may therefore have rated targets as a potential romantic partner. The present study looks into the stereotype in the previously under-researched context of employment; is facial attractiveness also a stronger cue to implicit personality theory when rating a job applicant?

**It is hypothesised that facial attractiveness *will* provide a stronger cue to implicit personality theory than vocal characteristics. Hence, judgements of the attractive applicant’s personality and employability will be more positive when based on their face than voice. Conversely, unattractive applicants will be rated more positively when judgements are based on their voice.**

Furthermore, the majority of the previously mentioned studies that report the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype have tended to focus on participants’ ratings of the opposite sex. Of those that do include ratings of the same-sex, participants are often asked to focus on different characteristics. For example, Hodges-Simeon, Gaulin, and Puts (2010) asked males to rate other males’

vocal characteristics for impressions of dominance whereas women were asked to report impressions of their appearance. It is possible that males and females may make different judgements of their same-sex than they do of the opposite sex. The present study investigates this by asking both genders to rate the personality and employability of female job applicants possessing varying levels of physical and vocal attractiveness. It is questioned whether females will rate attractive applicants more negatively than males due to feelings of competition towards them. Males and females have been found to be equally as susceptible to the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003), so any gender differences in their ratings may be the result of this factor. Evidence for the perceived threat that attractive females pose others was provided by Puts, Barndt, Welling, Dawood, and Burriss (2011) who found that the female vocal characteristics that were preferred by males were related to impressions of flirtatiousness by female raters. Tanke (1982) also found that attractive women were viewed as promiscuous, traits that have been found to deter females from befriending such women (Bleske & Shackelford, 2001). These findings led to the suggestion that females viewed such women negatively since their attractiveness was perceived to be evolutionarily threatening. This was applied to the job interviewing process by Regan (2011) who found that female interviewers who were told to expect an interview with an attractive woman applied more make-up to enhance their own appearance than in any other condition, even when expecting an attractive male. Such studies provide evidence for female intrasexual competition and examples of one tactic that females use in order to manage this. Females often engage in derogation, lessening the perceived worth of attractive others, in order to manage threat (Fisher, 2004); but does this negative side to the attractiveness stereotype also apply to the occupational context?

**Thus, it is hypothesised that female intrasexual competition will be evident since male raters will view the attractive applicant more positively than female raters.**

By comparing the impressions of job applicants on facial and vocal attractiveness, the present study may have implications for the use of certain interviewing techniques where one stimulus may be absent, such as telephone interviewing in which only the vocal characteristics of the applicant are accessible. It may also provide insight into the effects that interviewer gender has on applicant success. This research aims to fill a previously ignored space left by other literature into the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype by comparing the influence of both physical and vocal attractiveness on implicit personality theory. This is uniquely applied to members of the same sex and to the occupational context. Finally, whilst adding to the knowledge of this greatly important topic, the present study aims to overcome some of the methodological flaws of the pre-existing work.

## **Method**

*Participants:*

A total of 60 participants were originally recruited for the present study using an opportunity sample; 3 of these withdrew their participation so that finally 57 fully participated. An equal number of males and females were first recruited due to the study's focus on gender differences. However, the 3 withdrawals were females so that 30 males and 27 females completed the study. All participants were under-graduate university students from one British university and were between the ages of 18 and 23 years old, with a mean age of 19.96 and a standard deviation of 1.22. Any students completing a degree in Psychology or Social Psychology were not recruited for this study due to the possibility that previous knowledge of the topic may lead to demand characteristics.

*Design:*

The experiment used a mixed design. A between-participant design was used since participants were either assigned to the vocal or visual condition, while a within-participant design was also used since participants were exposed to both an attractive and an unattractive applicant. It therefore used a 2 (interviewer gender) x 2 (stimulus) x 2 (attractiveness) x 2 (order) factorial design. The dependent variable was the positivity rating of the applicant's personality and employability.

*Materials:*

The focus of this study was on the influence of vocal and facial attractiveness on ratings of job applicants' personality and employability. To measure this, two conditions were created, the visual condition in which both a facially attractive and a facially unattractive applicant were presented, and the vocal condition in which both a vocally attractive and a vocally unattractive applicant were presented. These conditions were preferred over both the vocal and visual information of the applicant being presented in the same condition due to the aforementioned interaction between the two stimuli potentially questioning the validity of the study (Zuckerman & Sinicropi, 2011). Furthermore, if presented with the applicants' face and voice, the participant may correctly identify them as the same person and alter their ratings of them accordingly. To select the final 2 job applicants, an initial set of 15 potential applicants, all also of university age, were asked to record, on a Dictaphone, an 18 second vignette from a fictional interview, and then a photograph of their face was taken. All were asked to sign a permission form for their vocal and visual characteristics to be rated for attractiveness, personality traits and employability (see Appendix 1). All applicants were female due to the influence of gender on perceived employability (Farley, Chai, & Allred, 1998). The applicants were also required to have the same accent to control for this variable (Seggie, Fulmizi, & Stewart, 1982). The speech included the applicant talking about their hobbies since this is a topic that often appears in interviews. Each applicant read the same speech due to the possibility that feelings of similarity towards the applicant would lead to a more positive impression of them (Orphen, 1984). The voice recordings were presented at the same volume level and through the same headphones which blocked out any external noise.

The photograph of the applicant (see Appendices 2 and 3) showed only their face displaying a direct gaze towards the camera (Ewing, Rhodes, & Pellicano, 2010) and a neutral expression (Reis, Wilson, Monestere, & Bernstein, 1990) due to the potential influence of these characteristics. The background was plain and white in all cases. In addition, the applicants were all white to control for race effects (Intons-Peterson & Samuels, 1978). Finally, the applicants were required to wear a moderate amount of make-up (Nash, Fieldman, Hussey, Lévêque, & Pineau, 2006). The photographs were all in colour and were of equal size. In order to keep the materials of each condition as similar as possible, those in the visual condition were also given a printed version of the script (see Appendix 4) and those in the vocal condition were shown a blacked-out image of the applicant to minimise visual cues (see Appendices 5 and 6). The colour photographs and voice recordings of these fifteen applicants were rated for their attractiveness on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 'extremely unattractive' to 'extremely attractive') by an initial group of five males and five females. The photographs were also rated for the amount of make-up worn (ranging from 'no make-up' to 'an excessive amount of make-up') and participants were asked to identify the applicant's accent; all were reported to have a moderate amount of make-up and a standard southern English accent. The applicant who was rated most frequently as both facially and vocally attractive, and the applicant who was rated most frequently as both facially and vocally unattractive, were chosen as the final applicants to be rated.

#### *Measures:*

In order to investigate the influence of vocal and facial cues on implicit personality theory, particularly focussing on personality and employability traits, participants were asked to complete the researcher-constructed 'Personality and Employability Scale' regarding the applicants (see Appendix 7). This was influenced by the measures used by Seggie, Fulmizi, and Stewart (1982) who investigated the influence of various Australian accents on personality ratings of potential job applicants. Some items from the original scale were removed in order to maximise its relevance to the English applicants. For example, questions regarding their 'degree of suntan' were removed. The participants were told the same job specifications for all applicants. This did not include the specific nature of the role but that the role required an equal amount of time to be spent working on their own, in a team and with the public (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003). It was regarded as important to include personality measures in the scale due to their continued use and worth in the employment process (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996); this therefore appropriately reflected the desired occupational context of the study. The 'Personality and Employability Scale' consisted of 22 personality measures and finally 3 items were added by the researcher to directly measure employability. Sample personality measures included "kind-heartedness", "industriousness" and "generosity". Sample employability measures include "this applicant would be suitable for the job" and "I would employ this applicant". Respondents then measured their impressions of the applicants on a 7-point Likert Scale; a high score reflected a high level of that trait or agreement with the statement. For questions that stated a trait, the scale ranged from 'not at all true of this person' to 'extremely true of this



person'. For questions that asked participants to rate their agreement with a statement, the scale ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Each item on the scale was regarded as a positive trait so that the most favourable opinion of an applicant would result in a score of 175 and the minimum possible score would be 25. The reliability of the scale was measured with Cronbach's alpha while its validity was tested with a principal component analysis; the results of these are discussed later in this report.

*Procedure:*

Participants were first randomly assigned to one of the 2 conditions using random number generation for the 30 males and 30 females so that an equal number of each sex appeared in each condition. Of the 30 that were assigned to the visual condition, they were again assigned to attractive applicant or unattractive applicant first in order to control for order effects. This was repeated for those who were allocated to the vocal condition. Unfortunately, since 3 female participants withdrew their participation, an unequal number of participants completed the questionnaires for the vocal condition in which the unattractive applicant would be presented first. After completing the consent form (see Appendix 8), each participant was asked to attend to the first set of materials they were displayed with, either an attractive or unattractive face or voice, and immediately asked to complete the 'Personality and Employability Scale' regarding this applicant. Those that participated in the vocal condition were reminded that each participant would relay the same information to control for the effects of perceived similarity (Orphen, 1984). Participants had constant access to the participant's face or voice throughout the time it took them to complete the questionnaire. Each participant completed the study individually so that they were not influenced by the answers of others. During this time the room was silent so as not to interfere with the given materials. Once completed, the second set of materials was delivered and the procedure was repeated for the second applicant. The materials were returned to the researcher, face down and immediately filed to ensure anonymity.

*Ethical Considerations:*

According to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (2009), all participants were required to complete a consent form prior to their participation in the study. This outlined details of the study along with the contact details of the researcher should any follow-up contact be necessary. The consent form also informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time in which case any data collected thus far would be discounted and destroyed.

## **Results**

A test of the reliability of the "Personality and Employability Scale" was completed to measure the internal consistency of the items; all items had been completed by all participants so that no missing values occurred. Although all items were the same for each condition, due to the positive effect of attractiveness on judgements of personality and employability, the scales were divided into those that had been completed regarding the attractive applicant

and those that had been completed regarding the unattractive applicant; two tests of reliability were therefore conducted using Cronbach's alpha statistical test. The responses to the "Personality and Employability Scale" for the attractive applicant were found to have high internal consistency, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ . When regarding the unattractive applicant, the scale was also highly reliable, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ .

Secondly, a test of validity was completed to ensure that the scale was measuring the intended variables. Again, this was done for the scales that were completed regarding the attractive applicant and those regarding the unattractive applicant. The principal component analysis and scree plot for the two conditions showed the items to be loaded strongly on different factors; a separate factor was not evident for the employability questions. It was therefore decided to assume the scores on the scale to reflect general positivity towards the applicant so that the difference between ratings of the attractive and unattractive applicants' different stimuli could be directly and effectively compared as necessary to test the hypotheses.

Hypothesis one stated that facial attractiveness would provide a stronger cue for implicit personality theory and hence attractive applicants would be judged more positively on their face than voice. Conversely it was proposed that unattractive applicants would be judged more positively on their voice than face. A four-way mixed analysis of variance was conducted which found no significant order effects. However, a significant interaction between attractiveness and stimulus (face or voice) was found ( $F_{1,49} = 5.40$ ,  $p = .031$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .091$ ). In order to discover the direction of the significance, independent t-tests were conducted for the ratings of the applicants' face and voice. Whilst no difference between the ratings of the unattractive applicant's two stimuli was found (see Table 1), the mean positivity score based on the attractive applicant's voice ( $M = 133.83$ ,  $SD = 9.85$ ) was significantly higher ( $t = -3.11$ ,  $df = 39$ , two-tailed  $p = .003$ ) than when ratings were based on her face ( $M = 121.56$ ,  $SD = 18.26$ ). Thus, hypothesis one was unsupported as no differences between the ratings of the unattractive applicant's two stimuli emerged and the attractive voice was in fact preferred over the attractive face.

**Table 1**  
**Scores given to the attractive and unattractive applicants' face and voice.**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attractive face	121.56	18.26
Attractive voice	133.83	9.85
Unattractive face	106.19	14.13
Unattractive voice	107.43	15.64

Hypothesis two stated that females would rate the attractive applicant more harshly than males. However, the analysis of variance also found no significant interaction between gender and attractiveness, ( $F_{1,49} = .118$ ,  $p =$

.733, partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ ). Therefore, this result does not support the hypothesis since females tended to rate the applicants, regardless of their attractiveness, in a similar way to male raters. Attractiveness, as shown by the analysis of variance, did have a significant effect on participants' ratings of the applicants, ( $F_{1,49} = 73.55, p = .000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .600$ ). A paired t-test was subsequently conducted in order to find the direction of this significance. It was found that both genders scored the attractive applicant ( $M = 128.02, SD = 15.6$ ) significantly more positively ( $t = 8.6, df = 56$ , two-tailed  $p = .00$ ) than the unattractive applicant ( $M = 106.84, SD = 15.64$ ). Such evidence therefore suggests that the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype is still influential in the initial stages of employment, something that was found to be particularly true for the "what sounds beautiful is good" stereotype.

## Discussion

Due to the lack of previous work that has compared the influence of vocal and visual cues on implicit personality theory in the occupational setting, the discussion of these results will be largely exploratory. It is the implications of the conclusions that are drawn which are most important to understanding the effects of the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype in employment.

Influenced by the aforementioned work of Zuckerman and Driver (1989), hypothesis one stated that facial attractiveness would provide a stronger cue to implicit personality and hence attractive applicants would be judged more positively on their face than voice. Conversely it was proposed that unattractive applicants would be judged more positively on their voice than face. On the contrary, no significant difference between ratings based on the unattractive applicant's stimuli was found. Furthermore, the attractive applicant was rated significantly more positively on their vocal than their facial characteristics. These findings suggest that the former provided a stronger cue to implicit personality theory and so contradict Zuckerman and Driver's findings. Perhaps it was the differing contexts in which participants were asked to rate targets that caused these results to differ and the hypothesis to be unsupported. For example, Zuckerman and Driver's participants were asked to judge targets of the opposite sex and may therefore have rated the faces and voices from the perspective of a potential romantic partner. In such a case, an attractive face may have provided a more positive cue to the target's other qualities than vocal attractiveness due to the evolutionary desire to produce physically superior offspring (Buss, 1988). Therefore, in this context, it is plausible to conclude that physical characteristics were of greater importance to participants. Hence, while the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype seems to be more influential to mate selection, the "what sounds beautiful is good" stereotype may be more influential to employee selection.

However, perhaps it was the increased difference between the two applicants' vocal attractiveness that caused the attractive vocal dimension to be rated more positively in the present study. During the initial attractiveness ratings of the fifteen potential applicants, each was rated for their vocal and physical attractiveness on a Likert scale; the most favourable impression of their

attractiveness would result in a score of 7. The mean score for the unattractive applicant's face was 3.5 while the attractive face received a mean score of 6. Comparatively, the unattractive voice was regarded as more unattractive than her face, receiving a mean score of 2 compared to the attractive applicant's mean score of 6. Just as Zuckerman and Sinicropi (2011) found that disappointment with the less attractive stimulus of the same person lead to a more negative judgement of their traits, perhaps the increased positivity towards the vocally attractive applicant was influenced by the comparatively unattractive voice of the other target. The same was not found for the visual condition, perhaps since the ratings of facial attractiveness did not differ as dramatically between the applicants. It is therefore possible that comparisons between the stimuli of several targets exist in the same way as they have been found to between the stimuli of the same person.

Alternatively, perhaps the attractive applicant's hair colour could have resulted in her vocal characteristics being preferred over her facial traits. The visual condition revealed the attractive applicant to have blonde hair. Blonde hair, whilst being a characteristic that has been associated with superior attractiveness (Rich & Cash, 1993), has been found to be associated with a lack of competence (Kyle & Mahler, 1996), a trait that is essential in a potential employee. No such stereotypes are associated with the particular vocal characteristics that were displayed by the attractive applicant's voice. Whilst the "blonde" stereotype was not enough to displace the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype, the influence of the applicant's hair colour may have caused the attractive voice to be preferred as no such vocal characteristics interfered with the perceived personality and employability of the target. Perhaps a more favourable impression of the attractive applicant's face would have been reported if she had brunette hair since this was found to be associated with superior levels of competence by Kyle and Mahler.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that vocal attractiveness provides a stronger cue to implicit personality theory when judging potential job applicants. It is then important to ask: why may vocal attractiveness be so imperative to successful employment? One explanation for this phenomenon is that the increased use of information technology in business in the recent years has made face-to-face communication an outdated concept. Recently, businesses have begun to take their products and services on-line, offering the opportunity to advertise, conduct transactions and answer queries without the need for face-to-face contact and hence facial attractiveness. More often than not, businesses are now able to manage their relationships through mediums such as the internet, audio-conferencing and telephone communication (Leek, Turnbull, & Naudé, 2003). It may therefore be the case that the revolution of technology in businesses has made vocal attractiveness a more important quality of employees than facial attractiveness due to the communicative practices used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century business. Vocally attractive applicants may therefore have been preferred due to their perceived superior ability to positively represent the company as they did themselves during the interviewing process.

Hypothesis two stated that females would rate the attractive applicant more negatively than male judges, perhaps due to feelings of competition towards

her. The results contradict this suggestion since no gender differences emerged in the ratings of the attractive applicant. These findings appear to contradict those of researchers such as Bleske and Shackelford (2001) since no evidence for female intrasexual competition was found. Again, perhaps it was the differing contexts in which participants were asked to rate targets that caused these conflicting results. Whilst female competition and the practice of derogation may be apparent where romantic targets are concerned (Fisher, 2004), since employee selection poses no evolutionary threat, the females may have felt less need to derogate the attractive applicant and rated her in a similar manner to male judges. These findings therefore suggest that each gender is equally susceptible to the stereotype regardless of target sex. Furthermore, it can be concluded that female intrasexual competition is not enough to override the effects of the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype.

Alternatively, the researcher’s presence during the rating process may have caused the hypothesis to be disconfirmed since social desirability bias may have come into play. Perhaps female participants gave more positive evaluations of the attractive applicant when observed by the researcher than they would have if completing the scales in an empty room. This may be the case since females aimed to present themselves in a socially desirable way that reflected the gender norm of a gentle, kind and warm female (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Hence, females may not have wanted to be seen to be derogating the attractive applicant since this implies negativity towards the target and denies the gender stereotype. Regardless, the participants’ reported preference for the attractive applicant implies that the stereotype is just as influential to the initial stages of employment as it is to the aforementioned romantic (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972), legal (Castellow, Wuensch, & Moore, 1990) and classroom contexts (Clifford & Walster, 1973). This also contradicts Hosoda, Stone-Romero, and Coats’ (2003) earlier prediction that the influence of the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype was becoming antiquated.

It is the implications of these findings that are of great importance due to the apparently undeniable effects of the attractiveness stereotype, even in the occupational context. Firstly, unattractive applicants were viewed as inherently less suitable employees than attractive applicants, regardless of the stimulus being judged. Furthermore, although rating the same applicant, ‘employers’ judged the attractive target differently based on her vocal and facial information. This therefore questions the use of certain interviewing techniques, in which particular cues may be absent, since they may evoke different impressions of the targets’ personality and employability. Whilst vocally and physically attractive applicants seem to be at an automatic advantage to unattractive applicants, findings suggest that the former group may benefit even further from telephone interviews. It is therefore important that interviewers become aware of these biases in order to minimise discrimination against less attractive applicants who may be more qualified for the job and to use techniques that enable them to gain a more comprehensive impression of potential employees. However, the findings suggest no gender differences in the ratings of job applicants; a candidate’s success may therefore not be influenced by the gender of the interviewer. Whilst these are

important conclusions to draw, the necessary research into the “what it beautiful is good” stereotypes of facial and vocal attractiveness is nowhere near complete.

The findings of the present study suggest that when being rated as a potential job applicant, vocal attractiveness provides a stronger cue to implicit personality theory and vocally attractive applicants may be the more successful. Since this contradicts the findings of studies that have observed these cues in a romantic context (Zuckerman & Driver, 1989), future research could perhaps apply a similar method as was used in the present study to other contexts, for example friendships and the classroom. Such research would enable researchers to investigate the existence of attractiveness biases in a variety of settings.

Due to the inherent differences in the perceived employability of each gender (Farley, Chai, & Allred, 1998), the present study focussed solely on the influence of facial and vocal attractiveness on ratings of female job applicants. Perhaps future research could apply a similar method to investigate the effects of these traits on ratings of male job applicants. In such a case, participants may assume the applicant to be applying for a typically male role, in which case physical attractiveness may be less influential to ratings of their personality and employability (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1978), but is this also true for vocal attractiveness?

The present study uniquely focused on the effects of vocal and visual attractiveness on the first impressions that interviewers make during the job interview. While these first impressions have been found to be extremely important (Springbett, 1958), employment decisions are not based on 18 second scripts or images of the applicant. Future research could perhaps investigate the enduring effects of the stereotype throughout the employment process by completing a follow up study. Are attractive applicants more memorable and hence more successful?

Furthermore, the present study gave no information about the qualifications of the job applicant. To increase the ecological validity of the study and to see the extent to which attractive applicants are truly favoured, future research could perhaps vary the applicants' attractiveness and relevant qualifications to see whether the less qualified but more attractive applicants are still preferred. In such a case, the influence of the stereotype may decrease (Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995), but does it become extinct?

An increase in research that differentiates between the effects of vocal and physical attractiveness is essential, in order to fully understand and compare the effects of the “what is beautiful is good” and “what sounds beautiful is good” stereotypes in various contexts. Such research will enable psychologists to gain a better understanding of initial and enduring impression formation in humans; in which circumstances is it advantageous to be facially and vocally attractive? Previous research certainly seems to suggest that this is the case in the vast majority of cases. Particularly, as the present study

concludes, when it comes to employee selection, it appears to be extremely advantageous to “sound perfect for the job”.

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