Appearance and Social Treatment Of Women In The Workforce

Appearance and Social Treatment Within Society

The College of Staten Island

City University of New York

Appearance and Social Treatment

Past research found that 10% to 15% of people in the work force agree that they have been subject to prejudice based on their looks. That is about the same of those claiming discrimination based on race, gender, age or religious beliefs. Some 60% of overweight women and 40% of overweight men believe they've been discriminated against because of their weight. And a host of studies show that less attractive people are penalized during the job application process. "Economists have attempted to quantify the 'beauty bump,' or the 'plainness penalty,' in a variety of occupations," Mattarozzi (2017) says. One such study focusing on the legal profession found an appearance-based difference in pay of as much as 14%. Within the realm of healthcare appearance bias could be a life or death matter. Mattarozzi found appearance based bias may impact how healthcare providers caring inclination.

"We all know that looks matter. But I think few of us realize how much." Mattarozzi also states. How one is treated based on how they look could result in negativity of a few elements. One of those elements being loss of work productivity and or money within a workplace. This meaning there is a greater probability that a person will work harder if they feel well liked and appreciated versus someone who is ignored or excluded, which will more likely reflect poorly on a workplace and result to low revenue. It may lead to discriminatory factors or feelings exclusion, encouraging a person to feel bad about themselves and later become depressed or suicidal amongst peers, friends, or family. Those with disabilities certainly cannot control their appearances either, therefore making it harder to control whether or not people will treat them differently based on physical characteristics that are not in their control.

The halo effect is one theory to explain this phenomenon. This theory was originally studied by Richard E. Nisbett and Timothy DeCamp Wilson in 1977 at the University of Michigan. The halo effect is a type of cognitive bias. The textbook definition of a cognitive bias is as follows; a mistake in reasoning, evaluating, remembering, or other cognitive processes. It occurs as a result of holding onto one's preferences and beliefs regardless of contrary information. The halo effect is our overall impression of a person and how it influences how we think and feel about his or her character. Essentially, your overall impression of a person impacts your evaluations of that person's specific traits, disregarding whether or not this is to be true or not. One example of the halo effect is our overall impression of celebrities. Since we perceive them as attractive, successful, and often likable, we also tend to see them as intelligent, kind, and funny. On the contrary, several different studies have found that when people are rated as physical attractive, we also tend to believe that they have positive personality traits and that they are more intelligent. One study even found that jurors were less likely to believe that attractive people

were guilty of criminal behavior. Many other studies have researched how appearance effects how one is treated by society.

Facial Appearance

Facial appearance is often associated with the halo effect phenomenon. Mattarozzi (2017) research has shown that healthcare providers demonstrated implicit biases towards patients based on their facial appearance. In this study expert nurses were asked to rate their tendency to provide care when viewing photos of trustworthy, neutral, and untrustworthy looking faces. To make sure information about the target of patients was valid, a few participants were told that view would view patients faces, while the others did not receive this information about the faces. The results of the study were that the expert nurses had higher caring inclination scores for trustworthy faces versus untrustworthy faces. These results were expected of Mattarozzi. However, expert healthcare providers are less likely to be biased towards these influences and more sensitive to the information about the patient and treatment involved.

Nash (2010) explores the idea when we see a strangers face we are often quick to perceive impressions of this person's personality and how they may behave. Nash believed facial appearance can bias source monitoring. Source monitoring is a type of memory error where the source of a certain memory is incorrectly caused from an another past experience. Nash asked participants to read headlines that were "reported" by both a trustworthy and untrustworthy looking reporter. As expected participants were able to remember which reporter stated each headline. Other though, participants were more likely to remember the trustworthy looking reporters headline than the untrustworthy looking reporter. It was found that judgments of others appearance can bias one to believe in the future that a person that looks similar will have equivalent personality traits and behave the same.

It is well researched that facial appearance affects social perceptions. Zwebne (2017) research investigates the reverse affect. He seeks to answer if social perceptions influence facial appearance. Zwebne believes that names stereotypes can be because of facial appearance. He calls this effect the face-name matching effect. Zwebne and his colleagues conducted 8 studies to show that this effect is real. Participants in his study were asked to look at a picture of an unfamiliar face and select the person's name from a list of names. He replicated this study in two different countries as well. Through his study he concluded that the face-name matching effect is culture dependent, but also that facial appearance and the social expectations of what a society deems a specific name should look influence a person's facial appearance.

Gueguen's 2015 study focuses on an interesting entity of facial appearance, and that is whether or not wearing eyeglasses makes others perceive one to be more intelligent and honest versus people who don't wear eyeglasses. This study was completed in France. Partcipants were asked to view photographs of men wearing, and not wearing eyeglasses. After viewing these photos, they were asked to estimate which socioprofessional group that male was in using a well known French list. Results concluded that the males wearing eyeglasses were more frequently associated with higher class status within the French list. Males who did not wear eyeglasses were more frequently associated with midstatus or low status within the socioprofessional French list. These findings concluded and confirmed that facial appearance is adequate enough to create stereotype of a social group status.

Luo (2011) seeks to discover whether or not children's faces are really more appealing than adult faces. Unlike past research such as Lorenz's baby schema hypothesis study of 1943 is valid not only to infant faces but also faces of children of older ages. Partcipants in this study from 2011 were asked to examine children's faces from infancy to the age of 6 in terms of their attractiveness compared to adult faces. As past research also found infant faces were deemed as more attractive more frequently. However, it was found that after the age of 4 the baby schema no longer impacted the participant's judgment of facial likeability. Furthermore, his research does prove that baby schema does apply to both infants and to children of older ages up to the age of 4.

The next study is similar to what Luo (2011) investigated. Although Zebrowitz (2014) seeked to discover facestrerotypes in older and younger adults faces. In this study both younger adults and older adults were given facial pictures of adults in their 20's and adults in their 70's. Next they were asked to rate faces by health, competence, untrustworthiness, and attractiveness. Both the younger adults and older adult's participants showed the halo effect and baby face stereotype. On the contrary it was found that older adults only associated higher babyfaceness with greater competence. Zebrowistz concluded that it depended on which age group was viewing either the younger adults or older adults that determined what rating the pictures received.