Perceptions of Facial Dominance, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness predict managerial pay awards in experimental tasks

* 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 stringer 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 sues un pay awards can be considered by organisations to reduce biases in remuneration.
* Antonakis & 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.
* 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
* 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 (eg Frieze et al 1991; Judge et al, 2009), but this has not been studied for facial attractiveness
* The implicit assumption that lay individuals hold concerning leadership have been found to reflect eight leadership 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 & 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)
* 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, Kruger & 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 (eg 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 whrn competing for resources (eg ‘parochial altruism’; see Choi & Bowles, 2007; Van Vugt, De Cremer & Janssen, 2007)
* Dominance as a trait that is independent of its manifestation as a facial feature (defined as being directive and determined), is positively associated with judgements of an individual’s effectiveness as a leader (Dinh et akm 2014l House & Howell, 1992)
* Facial cues to dominance correlate with progression into higher ranks in the military and have been described as a signal of dominant behaviour (eg Mueller & Mazur, 1996)
* Trustworthiness as a trait has been described as subsuming trust in the ability and competence of an individual but also their integrity and benevolence (Little, Roberts, Jones & DeBruine, 2012). Trait ratings of proxies for trustworthiness, such as perceived ability, benevolence and integrity, are positively associated with important workplace outcomes such as a team performance, extra-role behaviour (ie going beyind ones’ prescribed job duties), and organizational commitment (see Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007 for a meta-analytic review)
* Men with faces that are perceived as less trustworthy are more likely to exploit others when given the choice between collaboration and exploitation of others’ trust for personal gain in decision-making games (Stirrat & Perrett, 2010). Addotionally, humans are less inclined to trust men with faces that are perceived as untrustworthy in decision-making games (Stirrat & Perrett, 2010) and conversely, will invest more money in trustworthy partners (Rezlescu, Duchaine, Olivola & Chater, 2012)
* Finally, facial attractiveness has been identified as an indicator of health, such as a good immune system (Rantala et al 2012) and is associated with longevity (Henderson & Anglin, 2003). Attractiveness is also linked with a variety of positive personality attributions (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani & Longo, 1991).
* Higher physical attractiveness is associated with perception of leadership competence (Surawski & Ossoff, 2006) and higher income (Judge et al, 2009). Assumption of positive personality traits and the managers’ leadership abilities may lead individuals to evaluate attractive managers as being more valuable to organizations, thus awarding them a higher pay.
* Hypothesis 1. Facial attributes (dominance, trustworthiness and attractiveness) will be positively related to managerial pay.
* The second focus of our study is the extent to which perceived facial dominance, trustworthiness, and attractiveness predict pay differently for upper-level versus lower-level managers. In this study, we focus on the relationship between facial cues and pay for employees in two managerial positions in the retail sector, namely at the shop floor (Retail Managers) and top management level (Heads of Retail Operations)
* As work at different hierarchical levels of organizations can pose different challenges, characteristics derived from facial cues might be of greater or lesser salience for employee pay according to the nature of the position in question.
* Due to the heightened function of power exertion in senior roles, cues to dominance are more likely to be incentivised at the top of organizations. Thus, we predict a stringer link between facial dominance and pay awarded to managers in senior positions than lower-level managerial positions. We also propose that the relationship between facial cues to trustworthiness and pay will be more pronounced in senior management positions
* Hypothesis 2. Dominance and trustworthiness will be more influential on payment decisions for top level positions than shop floor level positions.
* Finally, we predict that facial cues to attractiveness will be less relevant when awarding pay for top management positions than lower-level managerial posts. While recent work suggest that perceived attractiveness is less important in leadership judgements derived from facial cues than perceived dominance derived from facial cues (Re & Perrett, 2014) it is, however, associated with success in sales jobs (Ahearne et al, 1999; DeShields, Kara & Kaynak, 1996)
* Hypothesis 2b. Attractiveness will be more influential on payment decisions for shop floor level positions than top level positions.
* Inter-rater reliability – Cronbach’s alpha
* Discussion. In this study, a face payment task was employed to investigate the impact of facial cues on monetary reward across two levels of management in organizations. While much of the organizational literature has so far mostly focussed on exploring the relationship between physical attractiveness and pay (eg Judge et al, 2009), this study presents novel evidence that perceptions of facial dominance and trustworthiness, in addition to physical attractiveness, predict employee rewards.
* Perceived trustworthiness and dominance are the two key dimensions on which we judge faces (Oosterhof & Todorov, 2008), and, in addition to attractiveness, were predicted to be rewarded in managerial staff given that they are cues to traits that are likely to be valuable in managerial positions (eg Coloquitt et al, 2007; Judge et al 2009). Our findings were consistent with this proposal, as all three judgements derived from facial cues were positively associated with awarded pay in our payment task.
* The relationship between attractiveness and pay was significantly greater at lower- than upper- level management positions, whereas the relationship between trustworthiness and dominance and ay was significantly greater at upper- than lower- level management positions. Thus, our findings demonstrate that the relationship between facial appearance and pay varies systematically according to the nature of the position in question.
* We found that facial cues are sufficient to trigger an evaluation of manager’s deserved pay. This role of facial cues in relation to pay illustrates a tangible impact of the belief that appearance can indicate character (Hassin & Trope, 2000).
* Contrary to the well evidenced gender-pay-gap (eg Blau & Kahn, 2007; Drolet, 2002; Mandel & Semyonov, 2014), women were paid more than men in our task.
* Little et al (2007) propose that reliance on facial features can be used as a cognitive shortcut, similar to heuristics, and is also applied when individuals are overloaded with information.
* See Little & Roberts (2012)