finished. Upon participant input (ii), a video interview was played and the 'next' button appeared once the video elapsed. Next (iii), participants answered a multiple-choice questionnaire with questions pertaining to the factual content of the interview. Lastly (iv), participants provided Likert scale ratings of the candidate's hireability, likeability, and the ease with which they formed those opinions. Multiple choice questions and Likert ratings were presented immediately after each interview to reduce interference across videos and effects of memory decay. The complete sequence (i to iv) was then repeated for each of the four interviews.

Once all video interviews had been viewed and rated participants provided feedback and were debriefed as to the aims of the experiment. Finally, participants were thanked for their time and received compensation.

Data analysis

All analyses were conducted in R Studio version 2022.12.09 (RStudio Team, 2023).

Within-Subjects T-tests

The within-subjects analysis was conducted using paired two-tailed *t*-tests. For each participant and measure, average ratings for high and low AV quality were computed.

Mediation Analyses

The mediation analyses were conducted using the R package "*bmlm"* (Vuorre & Bolger, 2018), due to the model's appropriateness for within-subjects designs and categorical predictor variables. This package utilises Bayesian methods using Monte Carlo procedures from Stan software. The model was fitted with the dummy coded variable AV quality (0 = low, 1 = high) as the independent variable, and ease of opinion formation rating as the continuous mediating variable. Two analyses were conducted, with hireability and likeability ratings as the continuous dependent variables. The default 2000 bootstrap samples and 4

chains were applied, as this resulted in appropriate *Rhat* values (within .05 of 1) and effective posterior sample indicators (*n_eff* > 100).

Exploratory analysis

To compare ratings between high and low AV quality versions of the first video, the exploratory analysis was conducted using independent two-tailed *t*-tests.

Results

Data cleaning

The initial survey output consisted of 258 responses. First, as all participants were asked to report their best guess at to the purpose of the study, responses that detected the manipulation were manually reviewed and removed (n = 10). Next, all responses identified by Qualtrics as spam and incomplete surveys were removed (n = 118). No outliers were removed; due to a within-subjects design and an excess of responses, the resulting data were normally distributed (Figure 2) suggesting any outliers are likely a result of natural variations. The final sample was consisted of 130 participants.

Within-Subjects T-tests

To investigate (H1) whether AV quality influenced (a) hireability, (b) likeability, and (c) opinion formation ratings, the significance of differences within-subjects for each measure was tested using *t*-tests. Differences in average ratings provided by each participant were also counted to provide a more thorough understanding of ratings.

A. Hireability

Candidates in the high AV quality videos were rated as more hireable (M = 6.50, SD = 1.42) than candidates in the low AV quality videos (M = 6.01, SD = 1.29), $t(129) = 3.48$, $p < .001$, d = 0.31, with high AV quality videos being rated 0.49 points higher on average than

low AV quality videos. This confirms the alternative hypothesis H1a that high AV quality results in higher hireability ratings than low AV quality.

This reflects count data, which indicates that on average, 75 participants rated the high AV quality candidates higher than low AV quality candidates. However, this did not apply to all participants, as 40 rated the high AV quality candidates lower and 15 rated high and low condition candidates equally.

B. Likeability

Candidates in the high AV quality videos were rated as more likeable ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 1.47$) than candidates in the low AV quality videos ($M = 6.06$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(129) = 3.78$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.33$, with high AV quality videos being rated 0.53 points higher on average than low AV quality videos. This confirms the alternative hypothesis H1b that high AV quality results in higher likeability ratings than low AV quality.

Count data shows a very similar trend to the hireability condition, where on average 76 participants rated the high AV quality candidates higher than low AV quality candidates. This did not apply to all participants, as 40 rated the high AV quality candidates lower and 14 rated high and low condition candidates equally.

C. Ease of Opinion Formation

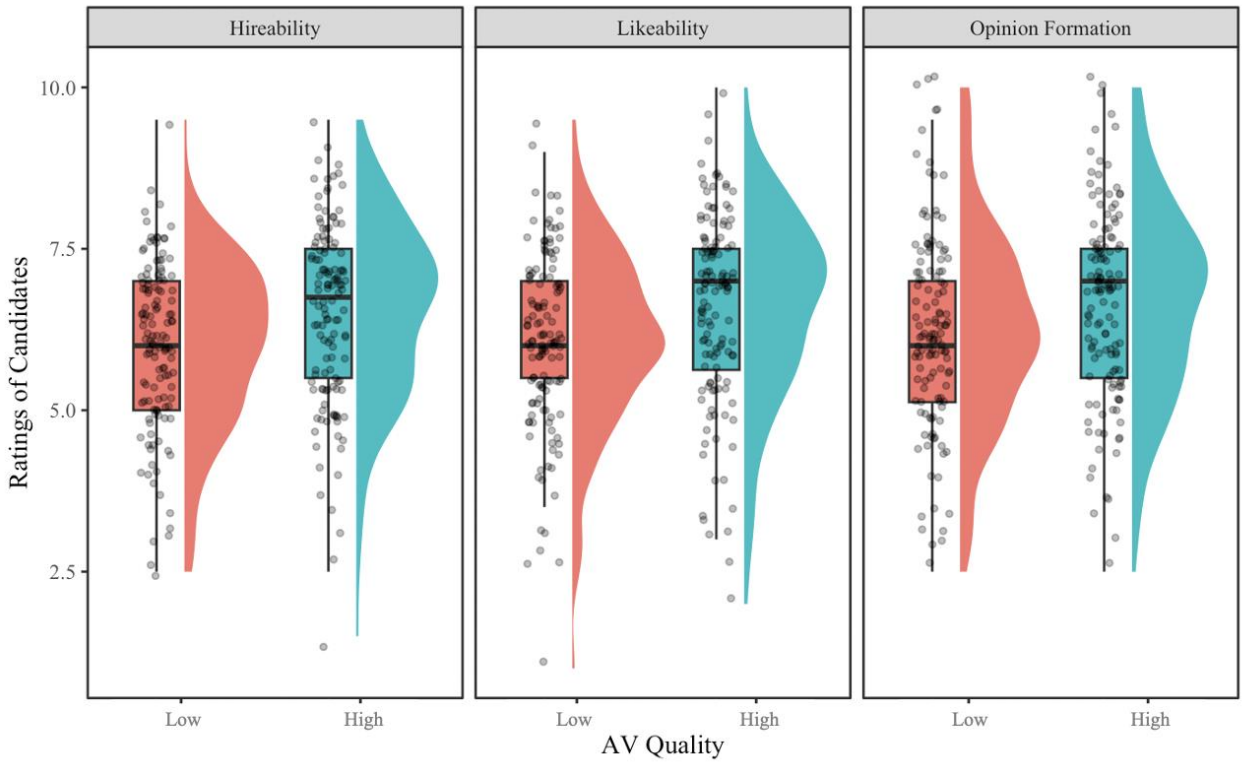
Participants reported more easily forming an opinion on candidates in the high AV quality videos ($M = 6.65$, $SD = 1.52$) than candidates in the low AV quality videos ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 1.53$), $t(129) = 4.32$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.38$, with high AV quality videos rated 0.40 points higher on average than low AV quality videos. This confirms the alternative hypothesis H1c that high AV quality results in higher ease of opinion formation ratings than low AV quality.

Count data reflects this trend, though with less strength than the hireability and likeability conditions. On average, 43 participants rated the high AV quality candidates higher

than low AV quality candidates. 18 participants rated the high AV quality candidates lower, and 69 participants rated high and low condition candidates equally.

Figure 1

Raincloud Plots Showing the Distribution of Hireability, Likeability, and Opinion Formation Ratings.



Mediation Analyses

To investigate (H2) the ease of opinion formation as a mediator for the effect of AV quality on (a) hireability and (b) likeability ratings, a mediation analysis was conducted.

A. Hireability

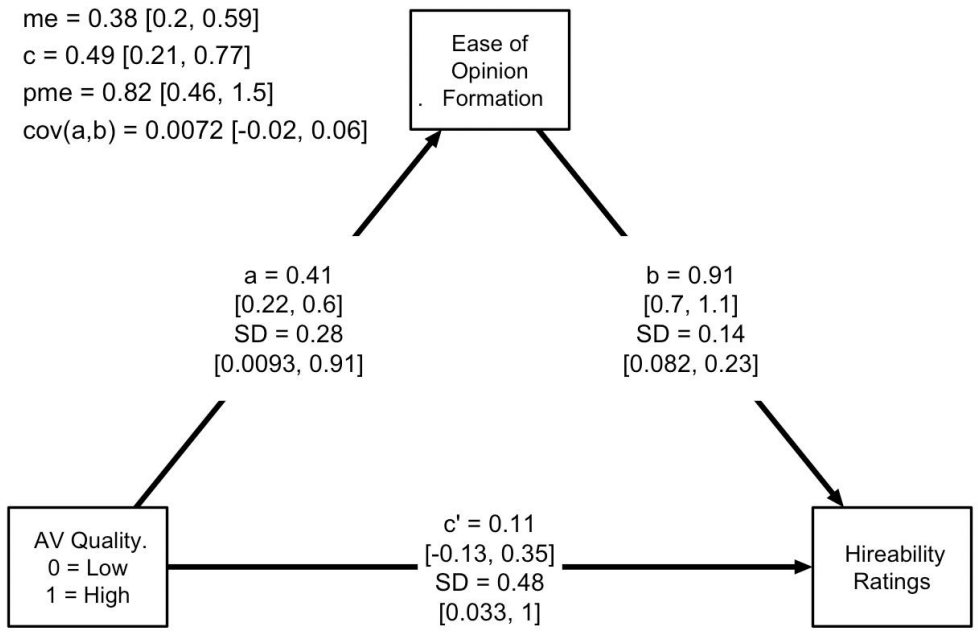
A mediation effect was observed (*me* = 0.38, *SE* = 0.10, 95% CI [0.20, 0.59]); high AV quality produced higher ease of opinion formation ratings, which in turn led to higher hireability ratings. No direct effect of AV quality on hireability was found (c' = 0.11, *SE* =

0.12, 95% CI [-0.13, 0.35]), indicating that the relationship between AV quality and hireability is completely mediated by ease of opinion formation. However, this conjecture is not supported by other data; the mediated effect (*me* = 0.38) is weaker than the total effect (c = 0.49), and the proportion mediated effect (*pme* = 0.82, *SE* = 0.52, 95% CI [0.46, 1.52]) shows that over 80% (rather than near 100%) of the effect of AV quality on hireability is mediated by opinion formation.

These findings support the hypothesis that ease of opinion formation is a mediator for the effects of AV quality on hireability ratings. Specifically, candidates in videos with lower AV quality were rated as less hireable and ease of opinion formation helped to explain this association. Due to contradictory data, we hesitate to draw conclusive inferences about whether the mediation is complete or partial.

Figure 2

Mediation Model for the Effect of AV Quality on Hireability with Ease of Opinion Formation as the Mediator.



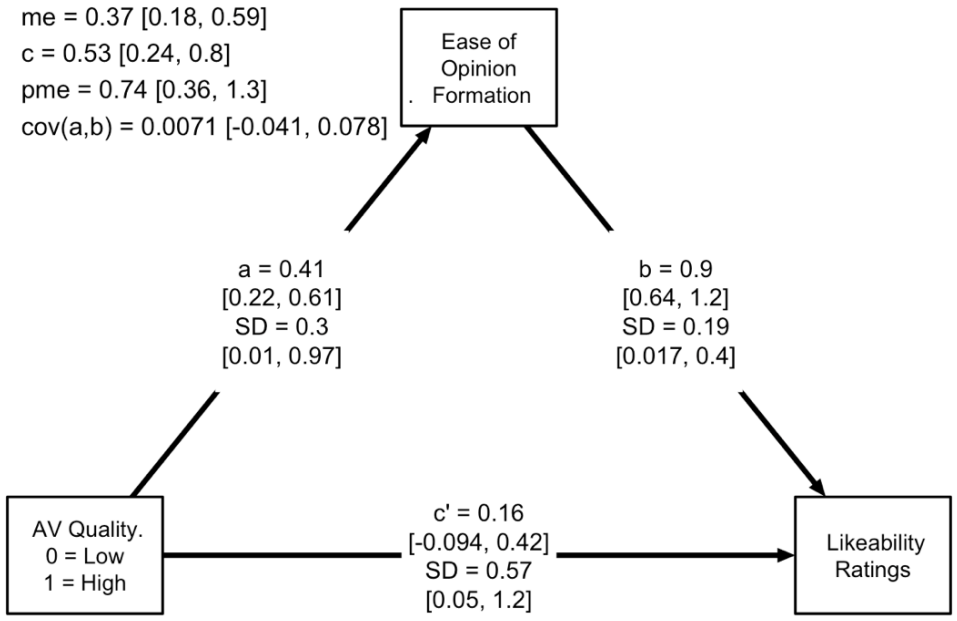
B. Likeability

A mediation effect was observed (*me* = 0.37, *SE* = 0.10, 95% CI [0.18, 0.59]); high AV quality produced higher ease of opinion formation ratings, which in turn led to higher likeability ratings. No direct effect of AV quality on likeability was found (*c′* = 0.16, *SE* = 0.13, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.42]), indicating that the relationship between AV quality and likeability is completely mediated by ease of opinion formation. However, this conjecture is not supported by other data; the mediated effect (*me* = 0.37) is weaker than the total effect (c = 0.53), and the proportion mediated effect (*pme* = 0.74, *SE* = 0.32, 95% CI [0.36, 1.30]) shows that over 70% (rather than near 100%) of the effect of AV quality on likeability is mediated by opinion formation.

These findings support the hypothesis that ease of opinion formation is a mediator for the effects of AV quality on likeability ratings. Specifically, candidates in videos with lower AV quality were rated as less likeable and ease of opinion formation helped to explain this association. As with the first mediation analyses, we hesitate to draw conclusive inferences about whether the mediation is complete or partial.

Figure 3

Mediation Model for the Effect of AV Quality on Likeability with Ease of Opinion Formation as the Mediator.



Exploratory Analysis: Between-Groups T-testing

Within-subjects testing is an important component in processing fluency investigations because fluency is more powerfully experienced when multiple conditions are presented (Forester, 2022). However, fluency can also arise when a stimulus differs from expected fluency (Wänke & Hansen, 2015), which suggests that rating differences may occur from the very first video stimulus. Further, if rating differences occur when participants are exposed to the first stimulus alone, this would indicate that these differences are a genuine experimental product rather than due to participants detecting the manipulation. Given this, rating differences between high and low AV quality versions of the first video were investigated. This resulted in three analyses: one for each measure of interest (hireability, likeability, opinion formation).

Results indicated that the high AV quality video candidate was rated as more hireable ($M = 7.07$, $SD = 1.35$) than the low AV quality video counterpart ($M = 6.53$, $SD = 1.70$), $t(117.65) = 3.48$, $p = .046$, $d = 0.36$, with high AV quality video being rated 0.54 points higher on average than low AV quality video (Figure 4). This confirms the hypothesis that high AV quality results in higher hireability ratings than low AV quality from the very first video.

Results for likeability ($t(121.77) = 0.63$, $p = .53$, $d = 0.11$) and ease of opinion formation ratings ($t(123.98) = 0.29$, $p = .77$, $d = 0.05$) do not follow; there was no statistically significant difference in likeability or ease of opinion formation ratings between the high and low AV quality video. However, the likeability measure does appear to be approaching significance.

Figure 4

Raincloud Plots Showing the Distribution of Hireability Ratings for Video 1.