THE EFFECT OF A FEMALE CANDIDATE'S NAME

AND PERCEIVED ATTRACTIVENESS

ON HER ABILITY TO BE CHOSEN AS A PROJECT PARTNER:

AN EXAMINATION OF PERSONAL BIAS

by

Jennifer L. Richardson

DR. JAMES MIRABELLA, DBA, Faculty Mentor and Chair

DR. RICHARD MURPHY, Ph.D., Committee Member

DR. MARIA PUZZIFERRO, Ph.D., Committee Member

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Abstract

The focal point of this study was to understand the relationship between a potential female project partner's name and her ability to be chosen as a partner as it related to the perceived level of attractiveness of the potential partner. There have been many studies done on the attractiveness stereotype and the impact that physical attractiveness has on the hiring process, but there has been very little research done in the area of perceived attractiveness and personal bias as associated with a particular name only. The forthcoming study revealed several significant findings. Within this study evidence surfaced that the ranking of a potential partner is dependent on the potential partner's name category ($a = .000$). In addition this study found that the ranking of a potential partner is also dependent on the participant's gender ($a = .017$). The findings of this study provide evidence that women whose names bring to mind mental images of attractiveness have an advantage in being selected over those whose names bring to mind mental images of unattractiveness, especially when the participant making the selection is male. In order to more effectively ensure that businesses are able to select the most qualified candidate for a position, it is important for organizations to understand the potential for discrimination based on any characteristic, even something as seemingly inadvertent as a candidate's name.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

There are many challenges facing businesses of today. One of the many concerns facing organizations is attracting and hiring qualified applicants. Within the selection process there are many opportunities for discrimination to occur and personal biases to negatively affect the hiring outcome. Although businesses have made significant progress in developing and implementing non-discriminatory employment processes, there are still many ways that discrimination and personal biases can affect the reliability and validity of employment process.

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity and religious affiliation may not be as prevalent, but there are other types of unprotected personal characteristics that can lead to unfair and discriminatory hiring practices. Many times these types of discrimination can be subconscious on the part of the person doing the hiring, but they do, none-the-less, have an adverse impact on the organization's ability to hire the most qualified person for a job.

The purpose of conducting research in the area of personal biases, individual perceptions and potential discrimination in the hiring process is to make people more cognizant of the opportunity for their own personal biases to affect their ability to select the most qualified candidate for a position. A personal characteristic that seems as nondiscriminatory as a candidate's name, could have the potential to aid or hinder the candidate's ability to progress through the hiring process. The initial portion of the hiring process involves an examination

of applicants' resumes. If an applicant is unable to move forward from this stage they are effectively eliminated from the pool of applicants and thus the hiring process completely.

In today's competitive and fast-paced environment, business cannot afford to exclude any potential candidate who possesses the skills and qualifications necessary to help an organization gain a competitive advantage (Carr-Ruffino, 2003). In order to ensure that businesses are able to hire the most qualified candidate and the applicant who is the best fit for the company, it is important for organizations to understand the potential for discrimination based on unprotected characteristics to occur.

Background of the Study

A critical obstacle in the way of successfully managing today's organization is the existence of discriminatory business practices. Discrimination is still evident in today's work environment and adversely affects an organization's ability to embrace and effectively manage their workforce. Although many organizations believe they engage in fair practices, there are many who are unable to see the barriers that truly do exist to inclusion.

One barrier to inclusion that receives a great deal of attention is appearance, specifically the perceived attractiveness of individuals and the benefits that being attractive bring. It is no secret that our society places a high value on being attractive. Movie stars are worshipped and emulated. The desire to remain beautiful according to society standards has spurred a multibillion dollar, anti-aging cosmetics industry,

including Botex injections, creams, face-lift surgeries and tummy tucks. The need to be paper thin is encouraged as this body type has been deemed attractive by societal standards.

So is there anything to the old adage that beautiful people have it all? Many will agree that being perceived as attractive gives individuals an advantage over those who are perceived to be less attractive. Levels of attraction are considered an interpersonal characteristic which was defined by Segal (1979) as:

> the attitude one person has toward another person. Like other attitudes, attraction may be either positive or negative and may vary in extremity. Also, like other attitudes, attraction has cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. (p. 253)

A substantial amount of research and data has been gathered in an attempt to study the significance of perceived attractiveness on behavior and decision-making of individuals. In the study entitled, "What is Beautiful is Good" Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) did indeed find that there is a physical attractiveness stereotype that leads to attractive people being given advantages that others who are not attractive do not receive. In this study, the focus was centered on the appearance of stimulus persons in an attempt to determine if study participants would make certain assumptions based on the level of perceived attractiveness. In other words, the more attractive an individual is the more opportunities they will have afforded to them, or beautiful people may indeed have it all. The Dion et. al. (1972) study did in fact conclude that individuals perceived to be more attractive would also be perceived as having more desirable personality traits then those individuals perceived to be less attractive.

Building on the findings of Dion et. al. (1972), Heilman and Saruwatari (1979), conducted a study similar to the proposed research design in which they attempted to determine the potential impact of attractiveness on candidates being considered for employment positions through the use of undergraduate college students. The study included 23 male college students and 24 female college students from an administrative science course. The study was designed as a 2 X 2 X 2 factorial with independent variables of: applicant appearance *(attractive or unattractive)*, applicant gender, and job type (*management or non-management*). This study advanced the findings of Dion et. al. (1972) by framing the context of the research in an employment setting rather then just examining personal perceptions (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979).

In a hiring context, studies have concluded that job applicants believed to be attractive have been given more positive pre-employment evaluations, while candidates believed to be less attractive, although equally qualified, are given much less favorable pre-employment evaluations (Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977; Cash & Kilcullen, 1985).

Resume raters have also been more likely to give higher ratings to resumes where they have been led to believe that those resumes belong to a more, as opposed to a less attractive job applicant, regardless of qualifications (Dipboye, Arvey, & Terpstra, 1977). Gender may also play a vital role in the attractiveness stereotype. Literature discussing gender differences explains that physical attractiveness is a more valued characteristic for men when seeking a romantic partner than it is for women (Feingold, 1990). Although this information speaks specifically about romantic intentions, it isn't a stretch to assume that this same phenomena would potentially carry over into hiring decisions in the workplace.

Individuals tend to categorize objects as like one another in a particular category, or different from objects not in the category. The whole point of categorization as a component of social cognitive research is to help explain that placing an item into a particular category is the way individuals create a mental prototype that tends to be visual of that a category member should look like (Krieger, 1995). This theoretical framework provides support for the idea that people could potentially develop categories for individual people based on their name and group them according to the perception that the individual will be attractive or not.

Cognitive research studies have provided evidence that people are very likely to associate positive characteristics together in the subconscious mind (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999).Drawing on this research it is a logical conclusion to believe that the attractiveness stereotype is an automatic or subconscious response to positive stimuli being linked. Therefore, attractive would subconsciously be linked with good, while unattractiveness would subconsciously be mentally tied to bad (Bargh, 1997). As Krieger (1995) explains, "social cognition theory posits that categorization and related cognitive biases can themselves result in and perpetuate stereotypes" (p 1190).

A great deal of the research that has been conducted has examined individuals' reactions to a physical stimulus rather then a mental stimulus, picture vs. individually derived mental images, or perceptions. Managers are given images or photographs to examine and associate with various resumes. However, little has been done to examine how individual perceptions and mental images may lead to inadvertent discrimination based on perceived appearance as well. What happens when there are no pictures?

Perceived attractiveness of an individual can be associated with their given name. Different names bring to mind different mental images. Social-Cognitive research has traced the social action of mental responses that occur through the implicit thoughts of the individual's mind (Bargh, 1997; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). With the already identified possibility for discrimination based on attractiveness, the concern for organizations then becomes determining whether the perceptions of attractiveness that individuals associate with a given name and those personal biases impede decision-making ability regarding employment decisions.

This research built on a study conducted by recent Capella University graduate Amy Kramer. In Kramer's 2007 dissertation, she explored the impact that the physical attractiveness stereotype might have on hiring decisions, through the use of photographs attached to identical resumes. This study used the same idea, investigating the physical attractiveness stereotype without pictures in a safer environment, an educational setting (Kramer, 2007).

Statement of Problem

There are many opportunities in today's business environment for employers to gain or lose a competitive advantage. One of the greatest opportunities for success or failure lies with the employees of the organization. If companies allow their hiring processes to be flawed, or allow discriminatory behavior to compromise the integrity of the decisions being made, they are engaging in not only potentially illegal but also unethical employment practices. Although the legal system has established a framework

of protection against discrimination, many employers still continue to utilize discriminatory practices. In a June, 2005 survey, it was, "concluded 15 percent of all workers have faced discrimination in the workplace" (Penttila, p. 38).

The basic problem with discriminatory hiring practices based on perceived attractiveness and personal biases is that highly skilled and qualified candidates will inevitably be eliminated from consideration based on an unqualified characteristic not related to the job they are applying for. When this potential discrimination occurs at the resume evaluation stage of the process, and is potentially based on perceived attractiveness that an evaluator associates with a name, the organization is risking the loss of critical human capital.

Therefore it is necessary to explore and investigate the possibility for these types of inadvertent discrimination to occur. If managers can be made aware of the potential for such bias and understand that this bias can negatively impact the reliability and validity of the hiring process, then steps can be taken to ensure that the influence that such bias might play is mitigated. Even if this type of discrimination is not legally protected, organizations can ensure that by creating an awareness of the possible influence of bias in the hiring process, the organization's ethical framework will be above reproach.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if an unknown female's name could positively or negatively bias how other men and women view her. There have been many studies done on the attractiveness stereotype and the

impact that physical attractiveness has on the hiring process, but there has been very little research done in the area of perceived attractiveness and personal bias as associated with a particular name only. A significant portion of the research related to names only and discrimination deals with the propensity for a name to indicate ethnic origin or religious affiliation, and discrimination to occur as a result.

While ethnic origin and religion affiliation are protected classes, attractiveness is not. Legislation does not require organizations to hire attractive people as well as unattractive people in equal quantities. Many times attractiveness is also tied to a visual stimulus such as a photograph or in-person appearance, and the idea that managers may generate certain physical images of a candidate based on the name that appears on their resume without a photograph, and that this image may lead to discrimination in the hiring process is not even a consideration.

But given the extremely volatile conditions of the business environment and the pace with which change occurs, human capital is an extremely essential component of organizational success. Any steps that can be taken to create awareness of and subsequently limit the impact of discrimination in the hiring process should be explored and publicized.

The primary focus of this dissertation was to determine if the name of an unknown female can positively or negatively bias how other men and women view and consequently react to her. Other considerations of the study included the effect of the gender of the student on the outcome of the selection as well as the ethnicity of the student (White vs. Other) and athlete vs. non-athlete considerations.

Rationale

Research Questions

The following are the research questions explored through this study:

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between a woman's name and how she is perceived by others who do not know her?

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in how a woman's name is perceived as a function of the rater's demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity (white or other) and the level of attractiveness of female raters)?

Significance of the Study

This study attempted to take the attractiveness stereotype in a different direction. Previous studies have examined attractiveness in relation to a photograph or a physical stimulus, but little has been done to explore what may happen if there is no photograph. The theoretical framework for this study has been built by social cognition theory which explains that, "categorization and related cognitive biases can themselves result in and perpetuate stereotypes" (Krieger, 1995, p 1190). When there is no photograph, an individual's mind will, according to social cognition theory, find a way to categorize stimuli. In this study the stimuli become the names of individuals that could be potential project partners. The concern is the way the mind will choose to categorize the names. This study attempted to demonstrate that one way social cognition theory applies to subconscious discrimination is through the use of the categorization process of stimuli into attractive vs. unattractive categories. This study lays the groundwork for a whole new area of future research based on the physical attractiveness stereotype. The

opportunity to identify relationships that may exist between perceived levels of

attractiveness and the potential for a candidate to be chosen as a project partner could

provide some insight into a new and somewhat unexplored area of discrimination.

Definition of Terms

Beautyism. This is the terminology commonly referred to that explains the

propensity for discrimination to occur against unattractive individuals as opposed to

attractive individuals (Cash, 1990).

Bias/Stereotype. When dealing with perceptions associated with attractiveness,

these two terms are considered synonymous. Personal Bias or stereotypes are generated

when information is categorized into various groups and given labels. While stereotypes

are a normal by-product of categorizing information, problems arise when these

categories become over exaggerated or rigid about a certain category of people (Carr-

Ruffino, 2003).

Discrimination. Discrimination is a result of acting on personal bias or

stereotypes. This occurs when individuals are treated differently and as a result of this

differential treatment are placed at a disadvantage or are eliminated from opportunities.

Paper People. Prior research conducted in the physical attractiveness arena has

often involved the utilization of photographs as the physical determinant of

attractiveness. Participants are asked to evaluate a candidate with a photograph as one of

the variables. This method is called the "paper people" approach (Bull & Rumsey,

1988).

Perception. Beliefs and ideas that an individual develops about a particular topic or subject.

Physical Attractiveness. The level of visual appeal that an individual possesses.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was performed in a classroom setting. Students were told that they were going to be participating in a voluntary research exercise about individual perceptions. Students were given a hypothetical situation in which they would be assigned a project partner from another school for an assignment. The assignment would hypothetically require them to meet for several weeks outside of class. While students did in fact rank names for a potential project partner, the findings of the study are not directly tied to the organizational hiring process although they are indirectly related. It can be difficult to accurately imitate organizational hiring practices in a controlled, laboratory environment, especially when students are the primary participants (Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994 and Umberson & Hughes, 1987).

Students, for example, may not be entirely reflective of how a candidate may be judged or perceived in a workplace setting. They also tend to be overly concerned with personal appearance and image which may not translate into the workplace.

It is important to note however, that the research design was a new area of exploration in the field of attractiveness discrimination. The design allowed for initial exploration of this topic without concern of potential harm to employees within an organization. Further, students actually tended to be less guarded with responses,

believing they had nothing to lose, whereas in the workplace there is the potential for a greater sense of guardedness with responses.

Nature of the Study

This study was a correlational quantitative design that involved students participating in focus groups and students from the department of business. The first part of the study involved focus groups of male college students age 18-22. These students were asked to identify female names that bring to mind images of attractiveness and beauty. They were also asked to identify names that bring to mind images of unattractiveness. In addition, three of the most common names from 1986-1990 were selected to use as components of an average attractiveness category.

The names generated from the first part of the study were utilized in the final stage of the research. Students from the department of business voluntarily agreed to participate in the second portion of the study. They were given a hypothetical situation asking them to rank names of potential partners from most desired to least desired. Participants' gender, ethnicity, athletic participation and other pertinent demographic information was collected confidentially in order to ensure reliability and validity of the data.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The remainder of the study is organized in the following manner. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the relevant literature from the key contributors to the discussion of attractiveness as it relates to discrimination in the hiring process. Chapter 3 provides

detailed information regarding the methodology and design that will be used to complete this study. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the findings once the research design has been approved and research conducted. Chapter 5 details a summary of the findings of the research as well as conclusions that can be drawn as a result of the findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Although discrimination is widely accepted as a negative practice in employment situations and is considered to be both unethical and illegal, there are still many forms of discrimination that occur on a daily basis, many of which are not protected by law. One specific category of discrimination is appearance-based discrimination. Appearance-based discrimination centers around the phenomena that beautiful is better. As Barrier (2004) points out, "We all tend to like people whom we find attractive, which can influence employment decisions—either overtly or discreetly" (p. 64).

While attractiveness is not a protected category for employment decisions, it is important for organizations to understand what is legally protected under the law. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 created law that protects discrimination on the basis of any characteristic that can be deemed a disability including characteristics like facial disfigurements, certain types of skin ailments and in some cases obesity, all of which can be tied back to appearance (Frierson, 1993; McEvoy, 1994). While these protected categories open the door for some legal protection, much of the discrimination that occurs based on appearance or attractiveness is not illegal; by many, however, it is still considered to be immoral and unethical.

Historical Background of Employment Discrimination

Discrimination is not a problem that has just recently evolved in the business world, but rather it's a problem that political leaders recognized decades ago. In order to try to prevent discriminatory practices, the government began taking steps to reduce

discrimination. The Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution abolished slavery and the Fourteenth Amendment provides equal protection under the constitution for all citizens of the United States. This amendment also grants citizens rights of due process. The first Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the amendment of 1871 gave all citizens the ability to utilize contracts and, "enjoy all the benefits, terms, and conditions of the contractual relationship" (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2007, p. 69).

The next major legislative steps taken to aid in the battle against discrimination were during the presidency of John F. Kennedy. During his 1960 campaign he promised to use all his presidential powers, "to eliminate racial and religious discrimination from American society" (Logan & Cohen, 1970, p. 246).

In 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act. "Under the Equal Pay Act of 1963, if men and women in an organization are doing equal work, the employer must pay them equally. The act defines *equal* in terms of skill, effort responsibility, and working conditions" (Noe et. al, 2007, p. 70). President Kennedy also submitted proposals to congress for a new civil rights act. Kennedy's intent with a new civil rights act was to prohibit employers from discriminating on the basis of race. Kennedy's efforts resulted in the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Kelly & Harbison, 1970).

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act,

prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. An employer may not use these characteristics as the basis for not hiring someone, for firing someone, or for discriminating against them in terms of their pay, conditions of employment or privileges of employment. (Noe et. al, 2007, p. 71)

The Act also denies federal funds to any state or federal program that is found to practice job discrimination (Logan & Cohen, 1970).

In addition to Title VII, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 created the EEOC, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, to enforce the rights defined under the Act (Gonzalez, 2006). Today the mission of the EEOC is "to ensure that working men and women have the freedom to compete without the barriers of unlawful discrimination and the indignities of illegal harassment" (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2004, p. 67).

The Americans with Disabilities Act is one of the most crucial pieces of legislation in dealing with appearance related forms of discrimination. While the Americans with Disabilities Act does not necessarily protect individuals against all types of appearance based discrimination, it does provide legal context for discrimination suits based on certain types of appearance "flaws" such as facial disfigurement or obesity on the grounds that the "flaws" are a disability rather then just a cosmetic inferiority (Frierson, 1993; McEvoy, 1994). The specific implication of the Americans with Disabilities Act centers on the willingness of the legislature to acknowledge certain appearance based forms of discrimination and lends to the argument that understanding physical appearance bias and the potential for discrimination is critical both from a legal and an ethical standpoint.

What is Beautiful is Good Phenomena

The "what is beautiful is good" phenomena arose out of a study conducted by Dion et al. in 1972. Interestingly, the Dion et al. study was actually the second study conducted using attractiveness as a variable. In 1970, Miller conducted a study that examined the role of physical attractiveness in impression formation and was able to draw from the data gathered that attractiveness does play a role in the impressions that

people generate of one another. Dion et. al. (1972) merely extended the study conducted by Miller (1970) and based on their results have become known as the initiators of the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype, now commonly referred to in discussion of attractiveness based discrimination.

The seminal study conducted by Dion et. al. (1972) was based on the presumption that people who are perceived to be more attractive would also be perceived to exude positive personality traits and would therefore have an overall more positive life experience, including higher levels of success, then their unattractive counterparts. This research was based on visual stimuli as the researchers used photographs of male and female test subjects. Participating in the study was students from the University of Michigan. These students were asked to rate a series of three photographs using a given set of personality traits. After compiling initial ratings, participants were then directed to make judgments on additional characteristics such as potential for success, most likely to achieve self-actualization, potential for greatest levels of happiness and most likely to have a successful marriage. The final step in the study asked participants to match photos to various identified careers and classify which individuals would achieve the greatest levels of success and fulfillment in which career (Dion et. al., 1972).

The results of the study confirmed the presumption that attractive individuals did tend to be seen in a more favorable light and were thus more accepted by societal standards then unattractive individuals. This initial study was not conducted with specific business implications in mind, but the results indicated a potentially wide-range of ramifications as the results were generalized and applied across disciplines where the potential for attractiveness to come in to play existed.

The Dion et al. study was the catalystic study in a new era of exploration into the attractiveness phenomena. A number of studies have followed, conducted to confirm the initial findings of the "What is Beautiful is Good" study as well as build upon the analysis and conclusions that were drawn from that seminal study, including studies from Berscheid & Walster (1974) and Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback (1975).

Another study, building upon the Dion et al. experiment, conducted by Dipboye, Arvey and Terpstra, attempted to determine whether physical attractiveness, sex and qualifications had an affect on the evaluation of resumes. The results of their study indicated that highly qualified candidates were preferred over less qualified applicants. Male candidates were more often preferred over their female counterparts and attractive candidates were preferred over unattractive candidates. The general findings indicated that discrimination, as demonstrated in the study, could be tied to sex-role perception and physical attractiveness and the stereotypes associated with each (1977).

More critical to the business environment, however, may have been a study conducted by Heilman and Saruwatari in 1979. This study attempted to take the findings of the Dion et. al. (1972) study and put them into an organizational environment, specifically an employment situation. Commonly referred to as the "Beauty is Beastly" study, Heilman and Saruwatari (1979) wanted to examine whether the same results from the Dion et al. study would hold true in an employment context. They wanted to determine if the physical attractiveness of job candidates would indeed have an impact in hiring decision.

While the Dion et. al. study allowed for three levels of attractiveness, (attractive, unattractive and average attractiveness) the Heilman and Saruwatari study used only

attractive and unattractive levels. In this study employment position was also added as a variable in order to examine the physical attractiveness stereotype in an organizational setting (1979).

Participants in the Heilman and Saruwatari study were asked to evaluate job candidates and were informed that the potential employees had already passed screening based on categories such as education and experience. Individuals taking part in the study were then told to rate candidates based on several criteria including attractiveness and unattractiveness. Participants ratings were recorded with the following observation, the gender of the potential employee determined how significant the role of physical attractiveness was in the hiring decision (1979).

The Heilman and Saruwatari research actually reported several interesting observations related to gender, physical attractiveness and hiring. For women who were perceived to be more attractive, their attractiveness was only beneficial if they were applying for a lower level, non-managerial position within the organization. Interestingly for attractive female applicants attempting to be hired for a managerial position, their beauty was a hindrance (1979).

Social Cognition Theory and Stereotypes

Through their research, social psychologists have discovered that various assumptions and beliefs that people form about other individuals do impact their responses and the perceptions that are formed regarding appearance are indeed critical determinants in the initial reaction and exchange with the individual (Miller, 1988; Snyder, 1984). Snyder (1984) believed that people are more likely to seek out positive

and more frequent interactions with individuals they believe to be attractive while avoiding interactions with those they find unattractive.

Cognitive research studies have provided evidence that people are very likely to associate positive characteristics together in the subconscious mind (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Drawing on this research it is a logical conclusion to believe that the attractiveness stereotype is an automatic or subconscious response to positive stimuli being linked. Therefore, attractive would subconsciously be linked with good, while unattractiveness would subconsciously be mentally tied to bad (Bargh, 1997). Social-cognitive research has mapped this process of mental responses that occur through the thoughts of the mind (Bargh, 1997; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Individuals tend to categorize objects as like one another in a particular category, or different from objects not in the category. The whole point of categorization as a component of social cognitive research is to help explain that placing an item into a particular category is the way individuals create a mental prototype that tends to be visual of that a category member should look like (Krieger, 1995).

When certain cues do not help individuals distinguish one another, a more controlled cognitive process takes place in order to simplify the number of factors that the mind must manage (Solso, 1991). This mental process leads to the mind sorting and placing information into categories allowing individuals to distinguish many differences (such as age, gender, perceived physical appearance, etc.) between individuals in order to categorize people into groups (Corner & Jolson, 1991).

This theoretical framework provides support for the idea that people could potentially develop categories for individual people based on their name and group them

according to the perception that the individual will be attractive or not. The attractiveness stereotype is a social-cognitive process that fits into this type of subconscious, instinctive reaction.

This cognitive process, initiated by an individual's perceptions, is not often a conscious process; therefore, reactions to these subconscious cues often cause reactions that involve little to no thought. In addition these thoughtless reactions also mean that the individual responds with little to no awareness of the subconscious cues, increasing the likelihood that their reactions will include personal bias or stereotype (Solso, 1991).

As stated by Krieger (1995):

Research conducted under the cognitive approach indicates that normal cognitive processes can lead to the creation and maintenance of social stereotypes. Seen in this way, stereotypes represent simply one manifestation of generalized cognitive biases resulting from categorization…in a sense, we can say that human cognitive organization predisposes us to stereotyping. (p. 1198)

Social cognition theory then helps to explain how stereotypes can become a fundamental cause of discrimination. Stereotypes help individuals determine how information will be interpreted, encoded, retained and retrieved from memory. Therefore, stereotypes by their very nature, lead to discrimination by biasing how information about other individuals is processed, stored and retrieved (Krieger, 1995).

Obesity as a Form of Appearance-Based Discrimination

A portion of an individual's attractiveness is judged based upon body composition. Society deems overweight individuals to be unattractive. This stereotype has caused some to take drastic measures including major surgical operations including

having portions of their stomach or intestines removed, or liposuction in which the fat is literally sucked out of the body. Others have developed such an inferior self-image that they starve themselves and develop eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia in order to cope with the pressures of society. Much of this behavior can be tied to the value that society places on beauty and the type of appearance discrimination that is faced by the obese.

Employees across the United States feel they are being discriminated against because of their appearance. Esther Rothblom, a psychology professor at the University of Vermont, conducted a study with 367 overweight women and 78 overweight men as participants. According to the results of Rothblom's study, over 60% of women and 40% of men said they were denied jobs because of their weight. "Significantly, the fatter the person, the more likely he or she was to be discriminated against or abused because of the weight" (McEvoy, 1994, p. 24).

A study done in the United Kingdom, with results reported in an October 25, 2005 article in *Personnel Today*, found that,

> obese females are likely to be trapped in low-earning jobs by the time they are 30. It found that 70% of women who were overweight at 16 and 21 had working-class jobs at 30, compared to 40% of other women. (Thomas, 2005, p. 4)

Research has also indicated that women tend to face a greater challenge with obesity then their male counterparts do.

> Numerous studies show that there is pervasive stereotyping about overweight people in society—primarily overweight women, not men. Women, not men, seem to incur the negative brunt of overweight stereotyping. The overwhelming instances of cases involving weight discrimination involve women, not men. Courts have noted that weight-related standards are applied differently to men and women. (Cohan, 2001, p. 9)

As pointed out by Cohan, researchers have discovered that women are more adversely affected by their appearance than men. This is possibly attributed to societal norms of perceived attractiveness. These norms tend to negatively stigmatize obese women in a variety of ways (2001). The following statistics support this observation. Overweight women have completed fewer years of school. As a group they are not as likely to be married or have a serious relationship. Overweight women also have lower household income than women who are not over weight. When examining job performance and evaluation processes, overweight female workers have more subpar evaluations including comments about poor work habits and greater absenteeism than workers considered to have an average or acceptable weight (Cohan, 2001).

Those who experience discrimination based on obesity generally believe this to be solely because of their physical appearance. However a 2006 article by Venturini, Castelli, and Tomelleri, notes that,

> obesity is associated with negative stereotypical traits which do not exclusively involve the physical aspect in a direct way. For instance, obese persons are often blamed for their physical shape because they are considered as weak and without the necessary will power to exert self-control over dietary habits. (p. 390)

Weiner (1995) supports this position as well by explaining that obese people are often seen as solely responsible for their obese condition. Therefore, obese people may face unfair personality stereotypes. "As noted, being fat is stereotypically associated with a series of personality traits, like a low sense of responsibility or being unfocused, and therefore job selectors may consider fat persons less suited for particular kinds of jobs" (Venturini, Castelli, & Tomelleri, 2006, p. 390). In an article by Cohan, he articulates and discusses additional stereotypes that are frequently associated with obese individuals

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including, "emotionally unstable, socially inept, and being disagreeable or not well adjusted emotionally" (2001, p. 9).

These conclusions fit with the findings from the "Beautiful is Good" study which indicated that the stereotype is not only related to physical appearance but to perceived personality traits associated with attractiveness. Personality traits such as laziness, unfocused, undisciplined etc… would be more likely associated with an unattractive individual then with an attractive one. If obese individuals fit into the unattractive view of society, these negative personality traits may be unfairly attributed to them as well, leading to appearance based discrimination.

Lack of Fit Model and Supporting studies

One specific model developed to provide some theoretical context to appearance based discrimination is the lack of fit model proposed by Heilman (1983). This model is ground-breaking in the physical appearance discrimination arena because this model makes allowances for the number of variables that can exist in organizational discrimination as well as attempting to account for organizational processes and their relationship with discrimination.

The original intent of the lack of fit model was to explain sex biases in a working environment. The model presumes that organizational sex biases are merely a result of a perceived lack of fit between various stereotypes that may be applied to an individual and the stereotypes that have already been associated with a particular position within an organization (Heilman, 1983).

In other words, raters will have pre-determined ideas about the specific type of individual that will be successful in a specific job. Based on these stereotypical determinants, raters will identify perceived stereotypical traits in applicants and decide based on these personal biases that an individual is or is not a good fit for the specific job. For example, based on the lack of fit model, "fat persons would not be hired because of a perceived lack of fit between their expected personal characteristics and those necessary to successfully fulfill the job position. Therefore, discrimination would be directly due to stereotyping processes" (Venturini et al., 2006, p. 390).

While the lack of fit model provides a beginning theoretical context for understanding appearance based discrimination, several other studies (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992; and Zuckerman, Miyake, & Elkin, 1995) provide additional critical pieces of information necessary to more fully understand the theoretical context of physical appearance discrimination in an organizational setting. These studies suggest that there is a strong correlation between the specific jobs which attractive and unattractive people are expected to attain various levels of success or failure.

These studies examined in greater context society's perception of attractiveness and provide theoretical context for appearance based discrimination in the hiring process. In looking at the conclusions of the lack of fit model in conjunction with these other studies it would seem there is the potential for organizational hiring decisions based on the attractiveness or unattractiveness of the candidate to vary directly with the specific job they are being hired for.

Carr-Ruffino (2003) provides the following stereotypical characteristics which may lead to discrimination. She explains, "People expect women to be emotional, indecisive and vulnerable. But business leaders are expected to be in control of their emotions, decisive and able to roll with the punches. If women project the typical image, they're not seen as potential leaders. But if they project the "business leader" image they're often seen as too hard and masculine, even abnormal" (2003, pg. 7). This explanation parallels the theoretical framework provided by the lack of fit model, while incorporating the ideology of the research conducted by Eagly et. al. (1991), Feingold (1992), and Zuckerman et. al. (1995).

While the "what is beautiful is good" study was groundbreaking in nature, the research conducted by Eagly et. al. (1991), Feingold (1992), and Zuckerman et. al. (1995) suggests that the results from the "what is beautiful is good" study are not as generalizable or as significant as researchers might first have indicated. While the Dion et al. (1972) study indicates significant differences between attractive and unattractive individuals in terms of some personality traits like social competence, actual perceived societal differences between attractive and unattractive individuals based on other perceived job success characteristics such as integrity and compassion are significantly smaller (Eagly et. al. 1991). The implication suggests that the stereotypical traits associated with appearance and discrimination is more dependent upon what traits are perceived to be necessary for job success.

Eagly et. al. (1991) actually suggests that not everything that is beautiful is necessarily good. There were significant differences among participants in the study conducted by Eagly et. al. and their perceptions of what personality traits actually

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indicate social competence and therefore job success among attractive and unattractive individuals. Participants found large differences in the perception of social competence between attractive and unattractive individuals from categories such as sociable, likeable and popular. However, there was almost no perceived difference between attractive and unattractive individuals for integrity, sensitivity, compassion and generosity. The researchers in the Eagly et. al. (1991) study identified that based on their findings, "…the beauty-is-good effect depends crucially on the type of inference the perceiver is asked to make" (p. 124). The study also indicates the importance of conducting additional research to include perceptions of attractiveness to specific behaviors in an organizational context like hiring decisions.

Feingold (1992) conducted a study extremely similar to the Eagly et. al. (1991) study, achieving similar results indicating large perception differences in the social competence of attractive vs. unattractive individuals but very small or moderate differences in perception of intelligence levels and academic abilities. Feingold provided several conclusions as to why the stereotype of social competence as associated with physical appearance continues to promote in business decisions.

He explains that the media continues to permeate the ideology that attractive individuals have better more adequately developed social skills. In addition individuals may actually observe more attractive individuals exhibiting greater levels of social skills thus enforcing the perceived correlation, between physical attractiveness characteristics and the sociability variable.

In 1995, Zuckerman et al. conducted a meta-analysis followed by an empirical study, both designed to address the potentially limiting factors used in the Eagly et. al.

(1991) research design. Zuckerman et al. used the five personality characteristics laid out in the NEO-Personality Inventory: conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, extroversion, and neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1985). The Zuckerman et al. study found that perceptions of physical appearance are most affected by NEO factors agreeableness and extroversion.

Following the small scale meta-analysis, Zuckerman et. al. used videotaped individuals and asked study participants to rate the individuals using the NEO factors. This empirical study resulted in the conclusion that physically attractive individuals were perceived to have better interpersonal skills (agreeableness and extroversion) then unattractive individuals. The results from both studies conducted by Zuckerman et. al., findings demonstrated consistency with and support of the conclusions drawn in both the Eagly et al. (1991) research and the Feingold (1992) study.

The results from the Dion et. al. study combined with the collective results from Heilman (1983), Eagly et. al. (1991), Feingold (1992) and Zuckerman et. al. (1995), indicate that attractive people are perceived to be more socially competent and adept then their unattractive counterparts. However, the collective knowledge gained from these studies would also indicate that an applicant is only at risk for appearance based discrimination if the job they are applying for requires significant levels of social ability skills. Therefore in theory, if other, non-social skills are the focus of the job, then physical appearance discrimination is not as likely to occur.

Finally, one other study conducted by Marlowe, Schneider and Nelson (1996) that examined the specific role of attractiveness in hiring decisions also supports the above theory. They conducted an experimental study where photographs were attached to

resumes in an effort to determine if various levels of attractiveness played a role in hiring decisions. Their study found that attractiveness did not play as large a role in decisions where high levels of experience were required, but biases were clearly present. In addition, their study indicated that in general terms, less attractive females were routinely at a greater disadvantage regardless of their levels of experience.

The Marlowe et. al. (1996) study supports the previous assertions that if the main job qualification under consideration is something other then social competence, attractiveness does not play as large a role in the decision making and hiring process. However, their study also supports the ideology that in general, attractive candidates are preferred over unattractive candidates.

<center>Cultivation Theory</center>

Cultivation theory suggests that the media is a mechanism that promotes and reinforces the proponents of dominate cultural tendencies of the time. According to Gerbner & Gross (1976) this cultivation theory then explains how the media serves to perpetuate stereotypes within society while minimizing individuality and creativity.

Researchers have subsequently utilized this theory to explain the influence the media has on society's view of beauty and thus attitudes about and toward attractiveness. In a study conducted by Downs and Harrison (1985), there was a clear linkage found between the visual and verbal messages used in the media to the perpetuation of the stereotype that attractiveness is good and unattractiveness is bad.

Beautyism - Beauty has its Benefits

Several studies have demonstrated that physical attractiveness can play a role in every aspect of a job, from hiring to evaluation. Potential applicants who are perceived to be attractive are given better overall ratings by perspective employers then candidates who are not as attractive. In many situations the unattractive candidate may be equally qualified or more qualified then the attractive individual (Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977; Cash & Kilcullen, 1985). Interviewers have been shown to rate resumes of candidates higher when they believe that those resumes belong to attractive applicants (Dipboye, Arvey, & Terpstra, 1977).

Attractive candidates are given higher ratings in a selection interview (Shahani, Dipboye, & Gehrlein, 1993), and are therefore hired more often (Marlowe et. al., 1996 & Morrow, McElroy, Stamper, & Wilson 1990). Even after employees are hired, attractive employees are more sought after by co-workers for project assignments and team endeavors then their unattractive counterparts (Nida & Williams, 1977), and are given significantly higher salaries then their unattractive counterparts (Frieze, Olson, & Russel, 1991; Hamermesh & Biddle, 1993; Jackson, 1983).

Beauty has also been shown to provide many other forms of preferential treatment to those who are believed to be more attractive. People are willing to be more honest with and behave in a more honest fashion, toward an attractive individual then they are to an unattractive person (Sroufe, Chaikin, Cook, & Freeman, 1977). Attractive people have been shown to be given greater and more frequent monetary rewards and

reinforcement for positive behavior then their less attractive counterparts received for similar performance (Mathes & Edwards, 1978).

This great tendency to favor and provide various forms of preferential treatment to individuals who are perceived to be attractive has been referred to as beautyism (Cash, 1990). The term *beautyism* implies that because preferential treatment of attractive individuals occurs, discrimination against their unattractive counterparts is inevitable.

While attractive individuals reap the benefits of their beauty unattractive people receive the hardships of "ugliness." Unattractive individuals have a greater tendency to be perceived as social misfits, more likely to engage is socially unacceptable behavior (Dion, 1972; Jones, Hansson, & Phillips, 1978). In addition to the previously mentioned difficulties faced by the unattractive, in a circumstance of organizational downsizing, employees considered to be physically unattractive are at a significantly greater risk to be laid-off or lose their job than employees who are found to be more physically attractive (Jeffes, 1998).

Sexism and Today's Business Environment

In addition to the obesity battle and the perceptions associated with attractive and unattractive candidates, women still face an uphill battle in today's work environment. "Men may be supported and admired by their colleagues when they need to leave work early to coach their child's soccer team, but women are judged negatively when they need to pick up their children at day care" (Miller, & Katz, 2002, pg. 101). Sexism is very simply the overall belief that gender affects an individual's ability to be successful.

In this instance, sexism means that men are more effective in the business environment than women.

Although sexism today is more subtle, this makes it even more challenging to deal with. Rather than not having any women present in the board room, Quindlin explains that today, there might be 2 women out of the 20 total, present in the board room. The problem is that businesses have decided that 2 out of 20 feels just right, women have representation where they haven't before, "let's not take this equality thing to far" (Quindlin, 2005, August 22).

Sexism, as a form of discrimination, is especially important to address because the successful future of business may depend on an organizations ability to reduce sexism in the workplace. This is in part due to the fact that one of the demographic trends creating an increasingly diverse workforce is a larger population of women in the working environment. "Since the 1960s more and more women work outside the home for most of their adult lives. Some do this because they want careers, even though they may be wives and mothers; some because their family needs their income; and most for both reasons" (Carr-Ruffino, 2003. p. 3). Two out 20 may be considered representation, but it should not be considered adequate representation. Adequate representation can only be achieved when women are holding positions they have rightfully earned.

Additional statistics provided by Carr-Ruffino, 2003, state, "Fortune magazine's recent survey found only 19 women among 4,012 directors and highest-paid executives, 0.5 percent, not much better than in 1978 (0.16 percent)" (p. 153). According to Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006, "50.4% of new entrants to the workforce by 2010 are expected to be women" (p. 107). As Carr-Ruffino explains:

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People expect women to be emotional, indecisive and vulnerable. But business leaders are expected to be in control of their emotions, decisive and able to roll with the punches. If women project the typical image, they're not seen as potential leaders. But if they project the "business leader" image they're often seen as too hard and masculine, even abnormal. (2003, p. 7)

Attractiveness can be a positive for a man and just as equally a negative for a woman. As research presented indicates attractive women may actually have a more difficult time landing a management position. In general, there are also still many discrepancies in perceived ability of men and women, resulting in hiring, pay and promotion discrimination for women.

While men do face problems with discrimination as they relate to attractiveness, women still seem to face a greater up-hill battle, both with attractiveness and with sexism in general. Long gone are the days where women wanted to and were able to financially maintain the full-time job of homemaker. Since the 1960's, women have continued to enter the workforce in greater numbers. This trend has developed for two primary reasons: women have become more independent and many are truly interested in having a career, some out of financial necessity to support their family, and others for both reasons (Carr-Ruffino, 2003).

According to Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006, "50.4% of new entrants to the workforce by 2010 are expected to be women" (pg. 107). With the number of women currently in the workforce, and with that number expected to continue to grow, a large component of effectively managing the hiring process will involve minimizing the potential for any form of discrimination to occur.

One of the resulting factors of the increasing number of women in the workforce is a shift in how women interact in the work environment. In order to be successful,

women in general have become more competitive, more self-oriented and more aggressive (Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

Beauty and the Service Trend of the U.S. Economy

While some companies are making a concerted effort to hire employees based on their knowledge, skills and abilities, many other organizations only look skin deep. Patrick Hicks, an attorney in Las Vegas explains that fact that attractiveness still plays a very critical role in hiring decisions at many organizations. He believes this to be true and especially common in industries where employees are likely to come in continuous contact with customers (Barrier, 2004).

Unfortunately for the less attractive, the trend of the economy in the United States is more service oriented than it has ever been and that trend is likely to continue. The country has fewer and fewer production jobs available and much of the anticipated growth of jobs is in the service sector (Ferrell, Hirt, & Ferrell 2007).

For example, in Marks v. National Communications Association, a telemarketer applied for a promotion to outside sales representative. The 270-pound employee sued her employer after she was denied the promotion. "One of her supervisors told her, 'I've told you, in outside sales, presentation is extremely important. Lose the weight and you will get promoted'" (McDonald, 2006, p. 46).

The 270-pound employee alleged that another telemarketer who fit the image of outside sales was actually granted the promotion. In this instance, the court through out the case claiming that, "discrimination based on weight alone, or on any other physical characteristic for that matter, does not violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

unless issues of race, religion, sex, or national origin are intertwined" (McDonald, 2006, March, p. 46).

Salespeople, who have a high degree of interpersonal contact with the public, are perceived to need to be happy, enthusiastic, punctual and trustworthy (Zemanek, McIntyre & Zemanek, 1998), characteristics not normally attributed to unattractive or overweight individuals. Unattractive individuals are also given more remedial tasks and jobs and less lucrative territories than those who are viewed as average-weight employees (Bellizzi & Hasty, 1998).

Personal Bias in Pre-Interview Stage of the Hiring Process

It is commonly thought that making a good first impression is extremely critical to employment success. A candidate's first opportunity to make this impression usually comes with the submission of an application or resume. An application or resume usually includes pertinent information such as an applicant's name, history of education, prior work experience, honors and recognitions and possibly a list of references. Based on the information provided, potential employers begin building an impression of potential candidates. Sometimes these impressions can be very strong and according to Fox, Hoffman and Oren, (1995), can be very difficult to change.

While these first impression may be flawed, in a positive or negative way, it is very difficult for individuals to not allow personal experiences and bias to affect their decision making process. Personal experiences and individual perceptions are normal variables that people use to process and place information (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2007). It is through the processing of this information, although inevitably including personal

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perception and bias, that employers determine who should move to the interview stage of the employment process (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2007; Goleman, 1995; Solso, 1991).

There is contradicting evidence as to whether positive or negative impressions are most difficult to overcome. Traditionally it has been thought that negative impressions are more impactful and difficult to overcome then positive impressions (Briscoe, Woodyard, & Shaw, 1967). This builds upon the belief of Pastore (1960) that positive characteristics are expected by society and embraced as the norm, therefore negative impressions will have a stronger impact and be more difficult to overcome then positive ones.

Conversely a study by Macan and Dipboye (1990), found that individuals who received a more favorable first impression early in the employment process were likely to be given more attention throughout the remaining portions of the hiring process. This study evaluated interviewers' pre-interview and post-interview impressions and found that early impressions were strongly correlated with post-interview evaluations.

While there may be discrepancy about whether positive or negative first-impressions have the most significant impact on the hiring process, there is agreement that impressions formed in the pre-interview phase of the employment process do play a significant role in the final selection decision. One type of study, commonly referred to as the "paper people" approach (Bull & Rumsey, 1988) has been used to try to determine the impact of attractiveness on the hiring process. The "paper people" approach involves the use of still photographs often in conjunction with resumes, job descriptions, or applications to study the impact of perceived applicant attractiveness on the pre-interview

employment process. The proposed study will attempt to determine the impact of perceived attractiveness generated by a name only rather then a picture.

Name Discrimination

Impressions of individuals often begin with a name. Introductions are made and perceptions formed about individual's behavior and potential for success and may even determine whether future interaction is desired (Erwin & Calev, 1984).

Early research attempted to determine how a name might affect potential judgments about a female candidate. Busse and Seraydarian (1978), found a significant correlation between first name desirability and variables such as school readiness and IQ, as well as popularity (Busse & Seraydarian, 1979). However, there has been no connection made between first names and moral decisions (Busse & Love, 1973), and there has been no relationship identified between first names and level of achievement they attain on a graded essay (Seraydarian & Busse, 1981). This would indicate that first names seem to have a greater influence on characteristics that society has deemed important rather then on demonstrated abilities.

Two significant studies have attempted to explore the relationship of a first name with perceived physical attractiveness. A study conducted by Garwood, Cox, Kaplan, Wasserman and Sulzer (1980), tried to determine the effect of a female's first name on perceived attractiveness. This study used six female photographs displayed at a student union. The females in the photographs were all determined to have "equal" levels of attractiveness and were assigned either a desirable name or an undesirable name. Those walking by the photographs were then asked to help by voting for who they though

should be the next marching band queen. The results of the study showed that the desirable names received 158 votes while the undesirable names received only 39 votes, leading to the conclusion that first names do in fact have an impact on perceived levels of attractiveness. The study reportedly demonstrated that photographs of women associated with a more desirable or attractive name were repeatedly evaluated more positively then those associated with an undesirable or unattractive name.

Somewhat contradictory to these findings were the results of a study conducted by Hensley and Spencer (1985). Their study utilized full-face photographs of 21 attractive women taken from *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Participants were shown slide pictures of the photographs and asked to record judgments of the photos, ranking them on a scale of 1 (*least attractive*) to 10 (*most attractive*). The same process was used to rate names on their appealing qualities. This part of the study generated the names and photographs to be used in the second part of the study.

Much like the first part of the study, participants were shown slide pictures of photographs and asked to make ratings on attractiveness, however in the second part of the study participants were also given a name to associate with the photograph and different names were rotated to different photographs within different test groups. The findings of the study did indicate that an undesirable first name can have a negative impact on selection. However, instead of the strong relationship implied by the Garwood et al. (1980) study, this study indicated that although a relationship was present it was weak. The findings of Hensley and Spencer (1985) are concurrent with the findings of other previous studies (Busse & Seraydarian, 1979; Busse & Seraydarian, 1978).

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There have also been several studies conducted to determine the impact that a potential applicant's name might have on the pre-interview employment process. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2002) conducted an experimental study designed to measure racial discrimination. They responded to help-wanted ads in newspapers from Boston and Chicago, mailing in close-to 5000 resumes containing names that would be associated as traditionally Caucasian or traditionally African American. The results of this study indicated that applicants with Caucasian names received twice as many callbacks as applicants with African American names. Other studies have found similar evidence of racial discrimination based on an applicant's name (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002; McPhail, 2003).

While there is research that has been conducted in the field of name discrimination and perceived attractiveness, past studies have focused on the utilization of pictures or have intended to measure racial or ethnic discrimination through the use of a name. This study is proposing to examine the effect of a female candidate's perceived level of attractiveness as generated by her name only, on her ability to be selected as a partner.

Current Study

While the issue of name discrimination based on race has been explored, there has been little research done to explore the possibility of physical attractiveness bias being tied to an applicant's name only. Prior research conducted on the physical attractiveness bias as tied to a name has always included the use of a picture as a visual stimulus. Research on social cognition theory explains that, "categorization and related cognitive

biases can themselves result in and perpetuate stereotypes" (Krieger, 1995, p 1190).

When there is no photograph, an individual's mind will, according to social cognition theory, find a way to categorize stimuli. In this study the stimuli become the names of individuals that could be potential project partners. The concern is the way the mind will choose to categorize the names. This study attempted to demonstrate that one way social cognition theory applies to subconscious discrimination is through the use of the categorization process of stimuli into attractive vs. unattractive categories.

The findings of this study added to research conducted by recent Capella University graduate Amy Kramer. In Kramer's 2007 dissertation, she explored the impact that the physical attractiveness stereotype might have on hiring decisions, through the use of photographs attached to identical resumes. This study proposed to use the same idea, investigating the physical attractiveness stereotype without pictures in a safer environment, an educational setting (Kramer, 2007).

In a fiercely competitive business environment organizations can not afford to lose even one qualified applicant. While employers are much more cognizant of the potential for overt and intentional discrimination to occur and they have taken steps to ensure fair hiring practices, there is still a danger for inadvertent discrimination to exist.

This study attempted to determine if the physical attractiveness bias could be tied to a potential work partner's name and if discrimination based on perceived attractiveness should be a concern for today's organizations.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if an unknown female's name could positively or negatively bias how other men and women view her.

Research Design

In this study, young men and women in a college class were asked to select a potential female partner for a hypothetical project assignment, given only the names of women along with innocuous information that didn't distinguish one candidate from another. The names of the women provided were chosen from a focus group, with some names designed to invoke images of beauty and/or sexiness, some names designed to invoke images of unattractiveness, and some names designed to invoke no certain image because they were so common.

The methodology of this dissertation was a quantitative study that involved a three part process including two separate focus groups for the first two steps of the process and students from the business department for the remaining portion of the study.

Forty single, White men, aged 18 – 22, from several upper level business courses were asked to volunteer for participation in a focus group. Since the study involved the use of only female White names, the focus group participants were limited to White men. In addition, name popularity and connotation could be generational in nature. Therefore the focus groups were also limited by age so that those who generated the names and the participants in the study were from the same generation.

The first 20-24 respondents were selected to participate and divided equally into the two focus groups. The researcher served as the moderator for each of the focus group sessions to ensure the two focus group sessions were conducted in a similar fashion. Each focus group was asked to generate names of females that brought to mind images of beauty and attractiveness. The groups were also asked to generate names of women that brought to mind images of unattractiveness.

The top three names in each category (attractive and unattractive), with a minimum of half of the total participants listing the name, were used in the final portion of the study. Names of students participating in the study were not eligible for use in the study since the name may have caused students to picture the unknown student as the known classmate. In addition to the attractive and unattractive categories, an average attractiveness category was generated utilizing three of the most common names given at birth in the U.S.A. from 1986 – 1990. Utilizing these years generated the most common names of students currently age 18-22, which mirrored the age group of the participants in the study as well as the students who participated in the focus groups. Names chosen for the study were restricted to White female names.

The classroom data collection involved a one day exercise. Sophomore through senior business students from the researcher's institution were invited to participate in the study. Based on student enrollment, it was expected that at least 60 students would participate in the study. Students were told that they would be participating in a voluntary research exercise about individual perceptions. Students were given a hypothetical situation in which they would be assigned a project partner from another school for an assignment. The assignment would hypothetically require them to meet for

several weeks outside of class. It was then explained that each student would be given three names on a sheet of paper and they were to rank the names they were given in order of preference for a possible partner based on the demographic information provided. Students were given three names, one from each level of attractiveness (attractive, unattractive and average attractiveness) as generated by the focus groups and the most common names from 1986 – 1990. A total of nine names were used in the study, three from each category, for distribution to the study participants.

Each name students received had listed beneath it a favorite color (red, blue and green), a hometown from the regional area, a common major, and an adjective to describe them (adjectives used for the names were similar in nature such as hard-working, dependable and reliable), and they were asked to rank the names in the order of preference for a partner. Since the colors, hometowns and majors were very common and popular, and the adjectives were similar in nature, there is no reason that any of these variables should have influenced the decision of the students; thus the girls' names should have been the primary factor in the ranking assigned.

Proposed Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between a woman's name and how she is perceived by others who do not know her?

2. Is there a difference in how a female name is perceived as a function of the rater's demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity (white or other) athletic participation)?

Proposed Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis HO1: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the potential partner's name category.

Hypothesis HO2: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's gender.

Hypothesis HO3: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's athletic involvement.

Hypothesis HO4: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's ethnic origin.

Independent and Dependent Variables

This study involved the use of four independent variables and one dependent variable.

The first independent variable was the name/category combination given to the students. The three attractive and three unattractive names will be generated by the two focus groups. The three average attractiveness names were generated from the most common names from 1986 – 1990. Utilizing these years generated the most common names for individuals currently age 18-22, which mirrored the current study participants.

The second independent variable was the participants' gender.

The third independent variable was the participants' ethnicity (white or other) as determined from available college demographic information.

The final independent variable was involvement in athletics as determined by the team rosters for each sport at the College.

The dependent variable for the study was the student rankings from the three names they are given to choose from.

Sample Design

The research for this study was conducted utilizing business students from a college campus. The study applies to all undergraduate college students but has broader implications for the business environment in total. Students were given a hypothetical situation in which they were asked to rank a group of three names for a potential project partner based on the demographic information provided. This partner was someone who they would be spending time with and who they would be completing work with. This is similar to hiring someone into an organization that employees would be working and interacting with.

Many employees at all levels of an organization can be involved in the hiring process in today's work environment. The circumstances explained through the study mirror the types of working relationships that employees believe will be created when they are helping choose potential candidates for openings within an organization.

Forty single, White men, aged 18 – 22, from several upper level business courses were asked to volunteer for participation in a focus group. The first 20-24 respondents were divided equally and used for the two focus groups based on their willingness to participate. As Cooper and Schindler (2006) explain, focus groups are a valuable research tool when the researcher is attempting to use free association (asking what words or phrases come to mind when…).

Two separate focus groups were used with different participants taking part in identical exercises. The participants in both focus groups were asked to generate a list of names that brought to mind an image of beauty and attractiveness. They were also asked to generate a list names that bring to mind an unattractive image. Average attractiveness names were generated from the most common names from 1986-1990. The purpose of utilizing two focus groups was be to ensure the names for the study came from a valid and reliable measure (Abnor & Bjerke, 1997). The top three names, listed by a minimum of half of the focus group participants in both focus groups, from each category (attractive, unattractive) were used in the classroom exercise along with three common names from 1986-1990. Names of students participating in the research exercise were not eligible for use in the study.

The final part of the study involved the use of a voluntary sample of students in the Department of Business. All sophomores through seniors were invited to participate, and all willing volunteers were included, so all students invited had an equal chance of participation (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). While voluntary samples have the risk of not being representative, it is expected that more than 75% of the population will participate, and the sample will mirror the diversity of the student body in both gender and ethnicity.

Data Analysis

Data from the class exercise was collected and coded to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Students names were replaced with numbers and they became known as participant 1, 2, 3, and so on, with their demographic information tied to the number

they were given. The identified variables and all hypotheses were tested using the Chi Square test of independence. Data was analyzed utilizing SPSS for Windows.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for this research study were very limited.   Students were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Students were not given any benefit for participating and they were informed that the data being collected was for the purpose of research being conducted on personal bias. Students invited to participate included all business students and their participation was not tied to any course they were enrolled in.

Students were not placed in any physical or emotional danger and their identities were protected at all times. Immediately following the data collection, the researcher discussed the implications of the study with the participants. At the conclusion of the study, all business students were invited to a debriefing on the findings of the study as well as the potential implications for the broader business environment. This was an invaluable learning opportunity for students as well as a significant opportunity to expose a number of other unexplored areas related to personal biases and discrimination in the workplace. Individual rankings were not shared; overall results were utilized in the debriefing for those who chose to attend.

This study received Institutional Research Board approval. Students' participation was voluntary, the study was explained in detail prior to their participation and students were given the opportunity to cease participation at any time.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to determine if an unknown female's name could positively or negatively bias how other men and women view her and consequently react to her. Other considerations of this study included the effect of gender of the participant on the outcome of the selection of a project partner as well as the ethnicity of the participant (White vs. non-White) and athlete vs. non-athlete considerations. The data used in this study was collected from 67 voluntary student participants from a small, 4-year, private, liberal arts Institution in the Mid-West United States. This chapter describes results of the Chi-Square Test of Independence and provides a brief analysis of the findings.

Results

Test of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis HO1 states that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the potential partner's name category. Table 1 summarizes the results of the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The resulting p-value for this test of independence ($a=.000$) was below the significance level of .05 ($p<.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the potential partner's name category was rejected. In fact, the attractive name category was chosen 58.2% of the time while the unattractive name category was chosen only 7.5% of the time. This suggested that the relative attractiveness implied by one's name does factor into how a female is judged by others.

Table 1. Crosstabulation *(Hypothesis 1)*

Attractiveness * Ranking Crosstabulation						
			Ranking			
			1	2	3	Total
Attractiveness	Attractive	Count	39	22	6	67
		% within Attractiveness	58.2%	32.8%	9.0%	100.0%
		% within Ranking	58.2%	32.8%	9.0%	33.3%
	Neutral	Count	23	38	6	67
		% within Attractiveness	34.3%	56.7%	9.0%	100.0%
		% within Ranking	34.3%	56.7%	9.0%	33.3%
	Unattractive	Count	5	7	55	67
		% within Attractiveness	7.5%	10.4%	82.1%	100.0%
		% within Ranking	7.5%	10.4%	82.1%	33.3%
	Total	Count	67	67	67	201
		% within Attractiveness	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Ranking	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2. Chi-Square Test of Independence *(Hypothesis 1)*

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.191E2	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	120.955	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	76.732	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	201		
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.33.			

Test of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis HO2 states that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's gender. The resulting p-value for this test of independence ($a = .017$) was below the significance level of .05 ($p<.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis stating that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's gender was rejected. In fact, the results indicate that of the 41 male participants, 29 or 70.7% of them chose the attractive name category as a project partner while of the 26 female participants, only 10 or 38.5% chose the attractive name category as a project partner. Males clearly were more influenced by the implied attractiveness of unknown females as judged only by their names. Table 2 summarizes the results of the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

Table 3. Crosstabulation *(Hypothesis 2)*

			Top choice of partner			
			Attractive	Neutral	Unattractive	Total
Participant's gender	Male	Count	29	11	1	41
		% within Participant's gender	70.7%	26.8%	2.4%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	74.4%	47.8%	20.0%	61.2%
	Female	Count	10	12	4	26
		% within Participant's gender	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	25.6%	52.2%	80.0%	38.8%
	Total	Count	39	23	5	67
		% within Participant's gender	58.2%	34.3%	7.5%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Participant's gender * Top Choice Of Partner Crosstabulation*

Table 4. Chi-Square Test of Independence (*Hypothesis 2*)

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.150[a]	2	.017
Likelihood Ratio	8.247	2	.016
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.027	1	.005
N of Valid Cases	67		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.94.

Test of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis HO3 states that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's athletic involvement. The resulting p-value for this test of independence (*a* = .252) was above the significance level of .05 (*p*>.05). Therefore the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is insufficient evidence to conclude that the ranking of a potential partner is dependent on a participant's athletic involvement. Table 3 summarizes the results of the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

Table 5. Crosstabulation *(Hypothesis 3)*

Is Participant An Athlete? * Top Choice Of Partner Crosstabulation						
			Top choice of partner			
			Attractive	Neutral	Unattractive	Total
Is participant an athlete?	Athlete	Count	21	14	1	36
		% within Is participant an athlete?	58.3%	38.9%	2.8%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	53.8%	60.9%	20.0%	53.7%
	Non-athlete	Count	18	9	4	31
		% within Is participant an athlete?	58.1%	29.0%	12.9%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	46.2%	39.1%	80.0%	46.3%
Total		Count	39	23	5	67
		% within Is participant an athlete?	58.2%	34.3%	7.5%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6. Chi-Square Test of Independence (*Hypothesis 3*)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.760[a]	2	.252
Likelihood Ratio	2.881	2	.237
Linear-by-Linear Association	.444	1	.505
N of Valid Cases	67		
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.31.			

Test of Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis HO4 states that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's ethnic origin. Table 4 summarizes the results of the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The resulting p-value for this test of independence (a = .342) was above the significance level of .05 (p>.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is insufficient evidence to conclude that the ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's ethnic origin.

Table 7. Crosstabulation *(Hypothesis 4)*

| | | | Top choice of partner | | | |
			Attractive	Neutral	Unattractive	Total
Participant ethnicity	Caucasion	Count	27	17	5	49
		% within Participant's ethnicity	55.1%	34.7%	10.2%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	69.2%	73.9%	100.0%	73.1%
	Non-Caucasion	Count	12	6	0	18
		% within Participant's ethnicity	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	30.8%	26.1%	.0%	26.9%
Total		Count	39	23	5	67
		% within Participant's ethnicity	58.2%	34.3%	7.5%	100.0%
		% within Top choice of partner	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Participant's Ethnicity * Top Choice Of Partner Crosstabulation*

Table 8. Chi-Square Test of Independence (*Hypothesis 4*)

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.146[a]	2	.342
Likelihood Ratio	3.430	2	.180
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.539	1	.215
N of Valid Cases	67		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.34.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter addresses the findings and conclusions of this study on the investigation of whether an unknown female's name will positively or negatively bias how other men and women view her. Evidence surfaced through the investigation that the ranking of a potential partner is dependent on the potential partner's name category ($a = .000$). In addition this study found that the ranking of a potential partner is also dependent on the participant's gender ($a = .017$). The findings of this study provide evidence that women whose names bring to mind mental images of attractiveness have an advantage in being selected over those whose names bring to mind mental images of unattractiveness, especially when the participant making the selection is male.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if an unknown female's name can positively or negatively bias how other men and women view her. This study investigated the following research questions: (1) Is there a relationship between a female's name and how she is perceived by others who do not know her? (2) Is there a difference in how a female name is perceived as a function of the rater's demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity (White or non-White) and athletic participation).

These research questions were operationalized through the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis HO1: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the potential partner's name category.

Hypothesis HO2: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's gender.

Hypothesis HO3: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's athletic involvement.

Hypothesis HO4: The ranking of a potential partner is independent of the participant's ethnic origin.

Summary of the Results

The first hypothesis centered on the ranking of a potential partner and the dependency of potential partner's name and associated category (attractive, unattractive and neutral). The first hypothesis (HO1) was rejected since the p-value ($a = .000$) was below the significance level of .05. The attractive name was in fact, chosen 58.2% of the time while the unattractive name was only chosen 7.5% of the time. Therefore the results actually indicate that the ranking of a potential partner is dependent upon the potential partner's name category.

A substantial amount of research and data has been gathered in an attempt to study the significance of perceived attractiveness on behavior and decision-making of individuals. In the "What is Beautiful is Good" study, Dion et al. (1972) did indeed find that there is a physical attractiveness stereotype that leads to attractive people being given advantages that others who are not attractive do not receive.

In addition, resume raters have also been more likely to give higher ratings to resumes where they have been led to believe that those resumes belong to a more, as opposed to a less, attractive job applicant, regardless of qualifications (Dipboye et. al.,

1977). Synder (1984) believed that people are more likely to seek out positive and more frequent interactions with individuals they believe to be attractive while avoiding interactions with those they find unattractive. The current study supports these previous findings and assertions.

The second hypothesis investigated the potential relationship between the ranking of a potential partner and the participant's gender. The second hypothesis (HO2) was rejected since the *p*-value ($a = .017$) was below the significance level of .05. In fact 70.7% of the time men chose the attractively named candidate while only choosing the unattractively named candidate 2.4% of the time. Women, on the other hand, chose the neutrally named candidate 46.2% of the time while selecting the attractively named candidate 38.5% of the time and the unattractively named candidate 15.4% of the time. Therefore the results indicate that the ranking of a potential partner is actually dependent upon the participant's gender.

Literature and research discussing gender differences explains that physical attractiveness is a more valued characteristics for men when seeking a romantic partner then it is for women (Feingold, 1990). Although this information speaks specifically about romantic intentions, it isn't a stretch to assume that this same phenomena would potentially carry over into other decisions such as the selection of a project partner as supported by the current study.

In addition the Dion et. al. (1972) study as well as the Heilman and Stopeck (1985) study anticipated the possibility for women to actually practice bias against other women; in both studies the potential for jealousy to be a possibility was noted but there was no statistically significant evidence to support the assertions. The current study

paralleled these previous findings as the attractively named candidates were chosen 38.5% of the time and the neutrally named candidates were chosen 46.2% of the time. If the jealousy theory previously mentioned were to manifest itself in these findings, it would be anticipated that the attractive candidates would be selected in lower percentages then are present in the current study.

The third hypothesis (HO3) was not rejected since the *p*-value (a = .252) was above the significance level of .05. There was insufficient evidence to conclude that the ranking of a potential partner is dependent on the participant's athletic involvement. In this study athletes and non-athletes demonstrated similar decision-making in ranking potential partners.

The fourth hypothesis (HO4) was not rejected since the p-value (a = .342) was above the significance level of .05. There was insufficient evidence to conclude that the ranking of a potential partner is dependent on the participant's ethnic origin (White vs. non-White). In this study White and non-White participants demonstrated similar decision-making in ranking potential partners, despite the fact that the candidate names were all common to Whites.

Theoretical Analysis and Summary

Individuals tend to categorize objects as like one another in a particular category, or different from objects not in that category. The significance of categorization as a component of social cognitive research is to help explain that placing an item into a particular category is the way individuals create a mental prototype that tends to be visual of what a category member should look like (Krieger, 1995). This theoretical framework provides support for the idea that people could potentially develop categories for

individual people based on their name and group them according to the perception that the individual will be attractive or not.

Cognitive research studies have provided evidence that people are very likely to associate positive characteristics together in the subconscious mind (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Drawing on this research it is a logical conclusion to believe that the attractiveness stereotype is an automatic or subconscious response to positive stimuli being linked. Therefore attractiveness would subconsciously be linked with good, while unattractiveness would be subconsciously to tied to bad (Bargh, 1997). The "What is Beautiful is Good" Dion et. al. (1972) study found that there is a physical attractiveness stereotype that leads to attractive people being given advantages that others who are not attractive do not receive.

Perceived attractiveness of an individual can be associated with their given name. Different names bring to mind different mental images. Social-Cognitive research has traced the social action of mental responses that occur through the implicit thoughts of the individual's mind (Bargh, 1997; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Therefore perceptions of attractiveness can lead to the possibility for personal biases to impede decision-making regarding potential partner and/or potential employment decisions. Within the present study this was observed with statistical significance. The choice of potential project partners was found to be dependent upon the potential partner's name category. Attractive candidates' names were chosen over 70% of the time as a first choice for a project partner.

In a hiring context, studies have concluded that job applicants believed to be attractive have been given more positive pre-employment evaluations, while candidates

believed to be less attractive, although equally qualified, are given much less favorable pre-employment evaluations (Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977; Cash & Kilcullen, 1985).

Gender may also play a significant role in the application of the attractiveness stereotype. Literature and research discussing and exploring gender differences explains that physical attractiveness is a more valued characteristic for men when seeking a romantic partner than it is for women (Feingold, 1990). Although this information speaks specifically about romantic intentions, it isn't a stretch to assume that this phenomenon would potentially carry over into other decisions. This assumption is supported in the current study. The current study found that gender plays a statistically significant role in the choice of a project partner with men choosing the name associated with the attractive category 70.7% of the time. Conversely women only chose the name associated with the attractive category 38.5% of the time. Therefore this study seems to demonstrate that men placed a more significant level of importance on perceived attractiveness then women do.

Limitations

The primary limitation associated with this study is that the study was conducted in a classroom or laboratory setting. Students were told that the researcher was gathering data for a study on potential biases in the hiring process. While there is no reason to believe that this disclosure did in no way taint the responses, there is no guarantee of this. In addition, the findings of the study cannot be directly tied to the organizational hiring process although they are obviously indirectly related. It is difficult to accurately imitate organizational hiring practices in a controlled, laboratory environment, especially when

students are the primary participants (Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994 and Umberson & Hughes, 1987).

Students may not be entirely reflective of how a candidate may be judged or perceived in a workplace setting. They also tend to be overly concerned with an image which may not translate into the workplace in as strong a way. However, it is important to note that this research is a new area of exploration in the field of attractiveness discrimination. This study allowed for the initial exploration of this topic without concern for potential harm to employees within an organization. In addition, the hope was that students would actually be less guarded with responses, believing they have nothing to gain or loose from giving their instinctive responses, whereas in the workplace there is the potential for a greater sense of guardedness with responses.

Practical Implications

The present field study investigated the influence of a potential project partner's name and the level of attractiveness associated with that name with the potential for that name to be eventually selected as the partner choice. Students in a voluntary setting were given three names (one attractive, one unattractive and one neutral) and asked to rank the names in order of preference for a partner for an assignment. The practical implication of the findings of this study is that the results provide foundation for a new area of study in the realm of appearance discrimination and the potential for personal bias to affect hiring decisions.

Although the results can not be generalized to organizations and the hiring process, the study paves the way for future research to take a more specific look at personal bias related to perceived attractiveness in the hiring process as well as how an

organization might prevent such biases in affecting the evaluation of potential employees. Any research conducted in the hopes of providing answers to organizations seeking to limit the potential for inadvertent discrimination should be encouraged and the body of knowledge should be developed to its full potential in order to enhance the decision-making process within organizations.

Conclusions

This study has added a new dimension to the literature on the potential for personal bias related to the physical attractiveness stereotype and the potential impact to the organizational hiring process. By investigating this yet unexplored and untapped area of research the body of knowledge in the area of physical attractiveness and discrimination has taken another small step forward and will hopefully encourage additional research in this area. Two of the four hypotheses present were rejected and statistically significant findings indicate the potential for personal bias related to names to potentially affect the decision-making process. Future studies in this area may be able to determine the implication of these phenomena in an organizational setting.

What is clear is that in today's competitive and faced-paced environment, organizations cannot afford to exclude any potential candidate who possesses the skills and qualifications necessary to help an organization gain a competitive advantage (Carr-Ruffino, 2003). In order to more effectively ensure that businesses are able to select the most qualified candidate for a position, it is important for organizations to understand the potential for discrimination based on any characteristic, even something as seemingly inadvertent as a candidate's name.

Although there are many questions that still remain unanswered, this study provides support for previous assertions explaining that physical attractiveness has the potential to create significant problems and concerns in today's employment environment (Cowan, Neighbors, DeLaMoureaux & Behnke, 1998).

Suggestions for Future Research

There are many facets of appearance discrimination and personal bias that have yet to be explored. A more comprehensive field study placed in an organizational setting with a larger sample population would be a helpful next step to be able to make generalizations more directly applicable to the workplace and hiring situations. It would be interesting to explore additional variables within the attractiveness stereotype including a study designed to explore how the level of attractiveness of the study participant may or may not influence the decision-making process, as well as the impact married vs. single participants might possibly play.

This study acknowledges the limitations that exist with student participants. Decisions made within an organizational hiring process have potentially different outcomes then decisions made by individual students with nothing at stake. With individuals who become a part of a group and together make decisions (Janis, 1972; Janis, 1983; Janis 1992), the most accurate measure of conduct is determined by the way the group responds to the norms and values exhibited within the organizational culture (Paulhus, 1993; Schneider, 1987). A study involving managers who make hiring decisions on a regular basis would provide a potentially more accurate representation of the possible biases related to the physical attractiveness stereotype.

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