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Not Just in the Eye of the Beholder:
Beauty as a Status Characteristic in Mixed-Sex Dyads

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An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
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Abstract

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The physical attractiveness bias, the tendency to attribute positive characteristics to attractive people, is ubiquitous in the social world and appropriates widespread advantages to attractive individuals. Past research has shown that physical attractiveness operates as a status characteristic that influences group behavior. Incorporating concepts from the physical attractiveness bias and expectation states theory, this study examines the communication behaviors of pairs working on a decision making task in order to draw conclusions about the unconscious influence of physical attractiveness and gender on social status hierarchy. 68 undergraduate students were separated into pairs that varied by gender and attractiveness rating and were videotaped while performing a task. Researchers measured the dominant (interruptions, gestures, total talk time, speech initiation) and submissive (affirmations, head nods, smiling) communication behaviors exhibited by participants and used this information to infer the status hierarchy of the pair. When participants evaluated their partners after the task, participants who were described as attractive were also described as possessing other positive traits, such as intelligence or thoughtfulness. A 2 (Attractiveness) by 2 (Gender) Factorial ANOVA was significant for speech initiation and head nods. These interactions and other trends suggest that gender and physical attractiveness operate as status characteristics, and that physical attractiveness affords individuals an elevated social status in face-to-face interaction.

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The physical attractiveness bias, the tendency to attribute positive characteristics to attractive people, is ubiquitous in the social world, appropriating widespread advantages to attractive individuals. Not only are more attractive people often perceived as possessing other unrelated positive traits (Webster & Driskell, 1983), but they are also known to receive social (Benson, Karabenick, & Lerner, 1976), academic (Ritts, Patterson, & Tubbs, 1992), legal (Castellow & Wuensch, 1990), political (Lewis & Bierly, 1990), occupational (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003), and economic (Loh, 1993) advantage over less attractive people. The accrual of extra benefits resulting from the attractiveness stereotype is representative of all types of status and power in social life. While there are several working theories of status and power processes in social psychology, such as social-role theory (Eagly, 1987) and communication accommodation theory (Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973), expectation states theory has been described as the "leading explanation of social influence" and as "the most systematic and empirically well-documented theory of status processes in groups currently available" (Kalkhoff & Thye, 2006; Ridgeway, 2006). Joseph Berger and colleagues developed the theory to better understand how status emerges and operates in small, task-oriented groups (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972). While these kinds of situations emerge naturally in school and in social life, small groups are of particular importance in the workplace when teamwork is required to achieve a specific occupational objective. Because of the well-documented application of the physical attractiveness stereotype in the workplace (Vo, 2001), expectation states theory is ideal to help recognize and explain how physical attractiveness impacts group communication. To incorporate expectation states theory into the physical attractiveness bias,

attractiveness should be considered a diffuse status characteristic that implies task competence in small groups (Webster & Driskell, 1983). In this study, the communication behaviors of dyads working on a decision making task are examined in order to draw conclusions about the influence of gender and physical attractiveness on the pair's social status hierarchy. This is achieved here by examining physical attractiveness as an index of status determined by the verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors of task-oriented pairs.

The Physical Attractiveness Bias

Research from the past several decades identifies a physical attractiveness bias that persists in many facets of social life in both perceptual and behavioral capacities. Beauty influences various social perceptions because it is generalized to other positive traits, such as intellect or innocence. Dion and colleagues (1972) showed that participants judge attractive individuals as possessing more socially desirable traits than less attractive individuals. Attractive targets also were expected to lead happy and successful lives compared to the unattractive targets, empirically demonstrating that inner worth is evaluated based on outer appearance, or "what is beautiful is good" (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972). Three meta-analyses reviewed investigations of the physical attractiveness bias in the last few decades and considered its range and intensity in various domains of life. The actual extent of this halo effect has been cause for debate in these reviews, as some researchers suggest the bias is limited to social advantages. In a meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies of physical attractiveness, Feingold (1992) found that "physically attractive people of both sexes were perceived as more sociable, dominant, sexually warm, mentally healthy, and socially skilled" but

attractiveness was “only trivially related to cognitive ability measures”. Eagly and colleagues also contend that the physical attractiveness phenomenon is not homogenous; their meta-analysis demonstrates that attractiveness has a strong impact on perceptions of social competency and extraversion, moderate impact on perceptions of intelligence and authority, and little impact on perceptions of integrity and concern for others (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991). However, Jackson and colleagues found “moderately strong effects on diverse measures of competence, and stronger effects than in previous reviews”, suggesting the bias is more pervasive than previously believed (Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995). Though opinion differs slightly on the strength and scope of this phenomenon, this research clearly elucidates a comprehensive physical attractiveness stereotype that moderates people’s perceptions of each other’s character traits based on outward appearance.

In addition to the impact one’s physical attractiveness has on others’ perceptions, physical attractiveness can also impact our decisions and behaviors. Behavioral studies confirm that individuals’ actions vary in a manner consistent with this perceptual bias. Not only do people attribute more socially desirable qualities to attractive individuals, but they also behave differently towards them, providing attractive people with social, academic, legal, political, occupational, and economic advantage over less attractive people. The comprehensive nature of this stereotype is understood through a large and diverse body of literature consistently recognizing a behavioral pattern that favors physically attractive individuals.

The following findings emerge from a variety of fields not limited to social psychology, demonstrating the broad effect this bias has on social life. Benson,

Karabenick, and Lerner (1976) found that people were more willing to help mail a graduate admissions application for attractive individuals, and West and Brown (1975) found that attractive individuals received more donations in emergency conditions. These studies show that helping behavior increases with the attractiveness of the potential recipient. Research also shows more room is given to attractive people on sidewalks (Dabbs & Stokes, 1975). Teachers judge physically attractive students as more intelligent (Ritts, Patterson, & Tubbs, 1992), as having higher academic ability, and as better adjusted than unattractive students (Lerner & Lerner, 1977). Evaluations of vocal performance, peer essays, and college admission interviews are positively associated with attractiveness (Landy & Sigall, 1974; Shahani, Dipboye, & Gherlein, 1993; Wapnick, Darrow, Kovacs, & Dalrymple, 1997). Preference and perceptions of competence of political candidates have been correlated with candidate physical attractiveness (Adams, 1977; Lewis & Bierly, 1990). Attractive people are less likely to be asked for identification when purchasing alcohol (McCall & Nattrass, 2001). Research on evaluations of legal proceedings using undergraduate and graduate student participants reveals a strong attractiveness stereotype in the courtroom. In mock rape trials, unattractive victims were considered to be more responsible for the attack than attractive victims (Thornton & Ryckman, 1983), defendants are less likely to be judged guilty if they are attractive or if the victim is unattractive, and attractive defendants are given more lenient sentencing (Jacobson, 1981). Similarly, research on sexual harassment suggests a jury is least likely to vote a defendant guilty when the defendant is attractive and the plaintiff is unattractive (Castellow & Wuensch, 1990).

The physical attractiveness stereotype is also evident in the workplace. There is a bias for attractive people on several job-related outcomes such as ranking, hiring decisions, promotions, predicted success, employment potential, and performance evaluations (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003). Less attractive female job applicants are less likely to be hired regardless of qualifications, and attractiveness of workers influences wage levels and wage growth (Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996; Loh, 1993). Gilmore and colleagues report, "attractive applicants were perceived as having a more appropriate personality for the job, were expected to perform better than their less attractive counterparts, and were likely to be hired" (Gilmore, Beehr, & Love, 1986).

While most research in this area confirms this bias and argues only over its breadth, a minority of studies reveals exceptions to this rule. Eagly et al. (1991) refer to situations in which attractive individuals may be disadvantaged, either cognitively or behaviorally, as the "dark side" to the attractiveness stereotype. Some findings conclude attractive people can be perceived as vainer than less attractive people, more egotistical, more materialistic, and more likely to have a failed marriage as a result of an extramarital affair (Dermer & Thiel, 1975). Review of this pattern suggests this "dark side" is largely limited to perceptions of vanity (Eagly et al., 1991). Exceptions have also been discussed in the realm of behaviors that result from this cognitive bias. Sigall and Ostrove (1975) found that in a mock trial with undergraduate jurors, attractive defendants received harsher sentences on crimes related to attractiveness, such as swindling. Additionally, attractive women were not hired for stereotypically masculine jobs, such as managerial positions (Cash & Jonda, 1984). While these findings may seem to persuasively reveal an

equally disadvantageous side of the attractiveness bias, the general consensus of the literature acknowledges physical attractiveness as an advantage in social life (Eagly et al., 1991). Webster and Driskell (1983) note these findings still indicate a belief that attractive people are better at certain things, such as engaging in affairs or successfully swindling others. They would most likely also argue that while attractive women were not selected for masculine jobs in Cash and Jonda's investigation, it is because these attractive women were *better* at being feminine.

The pervasive pattern of bias shown in this extensive body of research suggests beauty is an indicator of social status, but very few researchers have addressed physical attractiveness as a status characteristic (Jackson et al. 1995; Webster & Driskell 1983). It is clear that beauty affords the same advantages in everyday interaction and across the lifespan as do race, gender, education, and age. Attractive, higher status people are perceived to possess numerous socially desirable traits on the basis of their appearance. They are judged to be more intelligent by teachers, more competent by voters, more qualified by employers, and less guilty by jurors. These biases translate into actions that perpetuate their higher status in society. In order to better understand the evolution and ramifications of this bias, we must first acknowledge the existence of this status disparity and understand how the stereotype emerges.

Expectation States Theory

The cognitive and behavioral advantages afforded to more attractive individuals parallel the advantages granted to those with other culturally significant traits, such as gender and race. In this sense, physical attractiveness seems to operate as a status characteristic as outlined by expectation states theory (Webster & Driskell, 1983). While

previous reviews have examined this bias from alternate theoretical frameworks, including implicit personality theory (Eagly et al., 1991), expectancy theory (Feingold, 1992), and accommodation theory (Haas & Gregory, 2005), this research uses an expectation states perspective to explore physical attractiveness as an index of social status. We propose that the physical attractiveness bias can best be explained through the status processes of groups, as expectation states theory "accounts for a broader range of attractiveness effects" than other theories in the social psychology field (Jackson et al., 1995).

Expectation states theory (EST) emerged from a research program developed by Joseph Berger and colleagues that examines status differences in social interaction. According to EST, task groups form performance expectations about each other unconsciously when there are no cues about who will be most competent at the task. These performance expectations, or expectation states, form and maintain a power and prestige hierarchy within the group (Berger et al., 1972). Status Characteristics Theory is a branch of EST in which performance expectations are based on culturally determined status characteristics (known as diffuse status characteristics) that provide cues about how successful each group member will be at the task. Diffuse status characteristics are those in which one status group or "state" is valued more than other states, and it is assumed those with the more valued state are generally more competent on a variety of tasks (Berger et al., 1972; Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). Gender and race are the most robust examples of diffuse status characteristics (Webster & Hysom, 1998). For example, gender is a diffuse status characteristic because men are often thought to be of a higher status than women, and are stereotypically believed to be more competent at a variety of

tasks. This assumption occurs because their status and perceived competence is diffused over a range of tasks, even if those tasks are unrelated to gender. Therefore when there is no obvious indication of who will be most successful at a task in an unstructured group, expectation states will be higher for men because they hold the more culturally valued state of the status characteristic.

SCT is defined by five assumptions that depict the conversion from status beliefs to behaviors. The 'salience' assumption explains that a significant status characteristic must differentiate group members, or must be relevant to the task. Next, the 'burden of proof' rests on the disadvantaged group member, who must prove a salient status characteristic should not be considered when expectations are formed (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003; Kalkhoff & Thye, 2006). In other words, a female in a group of mostly males will have to prove her low status gender, and therefore low performance expectation, is not relevant to the specific task. This information is not lost as the actors change and new situations develop. The 'aggregation' assumption explains that all salient status characteristics combine to form an aggregate expectation of each group member. Therefore, if both race and gender are salient in the situation, an African American woman will have a lower expectation state than an African American man. Lastly, these aggregated performance expectations create a social structure that informs group interaction, maintaining and perpetuating the social order. Group members with high performance expectations are given more opportunities to participate in the task, participate more often, are evaluated positively by the group, and influence the group (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003; Kalkhoff & Thye, 2006). The social hierarchy outlined by EST only applies if all members of the group are collectively oriented and task oriented,

as outlined by the scope conditions of the theory. A group is task oriented if they are motivated to successfully complete the task, and is collectively oriented if they believe it is necessary to take one another's opinions into account when performing the task (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). EST has been "subject to rigorous empirical evaluation, which has generated considerable evidence in support of the theory", typically using graphical representations to map out the relative performance expectations and status expectations of participants (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003).

The previously discussed pattern of bias suggests physical attractiveness is consistent with a status characteristic, like gender, race, age, or social class, which influences perceptions and behavior in work groups. There has been only one other attempt in the literature to evaluate physical attractiveness as a status characteristic. Webster and Driskell (1983) manipulated the attractiveness of student photographs and had participants gauge their comparative expectations of the pictured individuals. Participants completed a questionnaire describing their expectations for an attractive student compared to an unattractive student of the same sex. Webster and Driskell found "people who possess the high state of attractiveness are also expected to possess the high state of other specific characteristics" as well as "the high state of general, unlimited characteristics" (1983). This qualifies physical attractiveness as a status characteristic according to EST.

The current study deviates from this past research methodology in several ways. Importantly, while Webster and Driskell compared same sex targets in order to demonstrate that physical attractiveness operates as a diffuse status characteristic, the current study will expand this knowledge by evaluating mixed sex dyads. The

'aggregation' assumption says all status characteristics are taken into account to form performance expectations. Therefore, if the characteristics of gender and attractiveness are salient during the task, attractive males should possess the highest expectation advantage and unattractive females should possess the lowest expectation advantage.

Like most EST experiments, the previous research used an experimental setting in which research participants formed expectations of a partner without ever interacting with them face to face. In typical experiments, researchers do this to eliminate the influence of status cues other than the one they choose to manipulate (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). However, physical attractiveness can only be judged if the participants are visually exposed to each other. Webster and Driskell have already demonstrated that people have higher expectations for attractive individuals. The current study is interested in how these expectation states manifest themselves in face-to-face interaction.

Expectation states theory examines the process by which work group members judge each other's task competence and the interactions that follow from those expectations. It explains that status hierarchies materialize within unstructured groups that reflect the social status characteristics of each member. Status characteristics determine the distribution of participation, persuasive power, and prestige among group members. According to expectation states theory, characteristics such as gender and race operate as status characteristics that imply task competence if there are no other competence indicators present, such as previous experience. The research on the physical attractiveness bias suggests it may also operate as a status characteristic that influences perceptions and behavior in work groups. This study elaborates on previous research

methodology to consider how expectations transform into actions during mixed sex interaction.

Status Differences in Communication Behaviors

Several studies have used EST to examine verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors that signify status differences within task groups. Findings from studies that directly observe behavior suggest that communication cues help maintain performance expectations that are based on status characteristics (Ridgeway, Berger & Smith, 1985). Dovidio, Heltman, Brown, and Ellyson (1988) found that men displayed more power in gender-neutral tasks compared to women because men are conventionally considered to hold a higher status than women. Additional research on communication behaviors reveals that individuals in subordinate roles exhibit more hesitant and supporting behaviors, such as questions, affirmations, looking while listening, head nods and smiling. Correspondingly, individuals in a high status role exhibit dominant behaviors such as interruptions, directives, talking more, talking first, looking while speaking, hand gestures, and chin thrusts (Athenstaedt, Haas, & Schwab, 2004; Dovidio et al., 1988; Helweg-Larson, Cunningham, Carrico, & Pergram, 2004; Karakowsky, McBey, & Miller, 2004; Ridgeway et al., 1985). Measuring overt communication behavior allows us to evaluate the way differential expectation states between partners impact the interaction.

It is important to note that these behaviors are also often closely linked to gender-specific behaviors that exist because of perceived power differences between the sexes. Some exceptions seem to be a result of gender socialization as opposed to social status, though these concepts are interrelated as masculinity conventionally signals high status

(Aethenstadt et al., 2004). For example, many scholars suggest that smiling is a gender-related behavior signaling warmth and positivity, not an indicator of low status or submissiveness (Athenstaedt et al., 2004; Dovidio et al., 1988; Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Helweg-Larson, 2004). It is also argued that "status and power differences, instead of actual sex-role processes, determine much of the nonverbal behavior between men and women in task situations" (Ridgeway et al., 1985). Manipulating both physical attractiveness and gender will contribute to knowledge about the derivations of these status and sex differences in interaction.

The current study observed and measured several verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors known to be indicative of status. High status behaviors measured were length of talk time, speech initiation (first person to initiate speech), interruptions, and nonverbal gestures. The low status verbal behavior was affirmations, and the nonverbal behaviors were smiling and head nodding. These behaviors were selected for their variety, their ease of observation with video footage, and their presence in the literature. Research suggests that mixed sex pairs will demonstrate these behaviors in an effort to gain expectation advantage, maintain the status hierarchy formed by varying expectation states, and validate the status he or she possesses (Ridgeway et al., 1985). This investigation will also take into account whether the male, female, or both participants choose to take notes on behalf of the pair during the task.

Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses

Although "commonsense and professional explanations of attractiveness effects often rest on strictly individual processes such as romantic or sexual appeal, envy, or desire for equity…attractiveness effects derive usually from the structure of society"

(Webster & Driskell, 1983). Past research has shown that physical attractiveness operates as a status characteristic that influences the behaviors of mixed sex dyads. Incorporating concepts from the physical attractiveness bias, expectation states theory, and communication behaviors, this study proposes that communication behaviors between mixed sex and attractiveness dyads will reflect the status hierarchy unconsciously constructed by the pair. In accordance with the theoretical assumptions that a cognitive bias for physical attractiveness exists, that physical attractiveness operates as a status characteristic, and that group members combine all salient status characteristics in forming expectation states (gender and attractiveness), we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: In post-test questionnaires, participants' attractiveness will be generalized to other positive traits.

Hypothesis 2: Attractiveness differences will be present for each communication behavior.

Hypothesis 2a: Attractive participants will speak first, interrupt more, gesture more, and speak more overall compared to unattractive participants.

Hypothesis 2b: Unattractive participants will affirm, head nod, smile, and write more compared to attractive participants.

Hypothesis 3: Gender differences will be present for each communication behavior.

Hypothesis 3a: Male participants will speak first, interrupt more, gesture more, and speak more overall compared to female participants.

Hypothesis 3b: Female participants will affirm, head nod, smile, and write more compared to male participants.

Hypothesis 4: Attractiveness differences for communication behaviors will vary by gender.

Hypothesis 4a: Attractive males will use the most dominant communication behaviors.

Hypothesis 4b: Unattractive females will use the most submissive communication behaviors.

These hypotheses signify that individuals possessing the higher, valued state of both measured status characteristics (male and attractive) will communicate in a manner that represents their elevated status. Contrarily, individuals possessing the lower, less valued state of each status characteristic (female and unattractive) will behave in a way that depicts their low status. When attractiveness is held constant, gender will be the only salient status characteristic. Drawing upon relevant social psychological research, this investigation will help understand how the physical attractiveness bias operates theoretically, how expectation states inform interaction, and how verbal and nonverbal communication signifies status.

Methods

Participants and Study Staff

Eighty volunteer participants were recruited through flyers and an online classifieds forum from the student population of a moderate sized southeastern liberal arts institution. Technical malfunctions and attrition lowered the total to 68 participants, who were arranged into 34 mixed sex dyads. The age range of participants was from 18 to 24 years, the mean age was 20.1 (SD = 1.3), and the modal age was 21. Thirty-three participants described themselves as Caucasian, 24 as Asian or Indian, six as African

American, and five as Hispanic. Twelve participants majored in Psychology, 17 participants majored in Business, Economics, or Math, 15 participants majored in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, or Neuroscience, 6 majored in Political Science, 8 were Undecided, and 8 had other majors such as Linguistics or Spanish. No participants reported previous knowledge of their partner beyond recognition from a class in the college.

Fifteen undergraduate students (11 females and 4 males) served on the study staff as attractiveness raters. The majority of these individuals were advanced students in the psychology honors program of the college. No raters were assigned participants they knew personally, and all raters signed a confidentiality agreement protecting the identity of participants.

Procedure

This study implements a between groups research design to compare the verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors of college aged men and women working together on a task. In order to establish and maintain experimental reality, volunteers are led to believe they are participating in two sessions of research examining the relationship between personal values and ethical decision-making. Sessions were conducted in a laboratory at Emory University.

In the initial research session, participants completed the Rokeach Values Survey (see Appendix 1). This questionnaire requires the respondent to rank order two different sets of 18 values according to personal importance. Examples of values included in the survey are “a comfortable life,” “true friendship,” “honesty,” and “wisdom”. Photographs of participants were taken in a standardized fashion and cropped below the

shoulders. The researcher informed participants that the photograph would help maintain organization of the study files. Raters reported their subjective judgments of the physical attractiveness of participant photographs on a likert scale of 1-6, with 1 representing the lowest rating and 6 representing the highest rating. Each participant was rated by at least four raters, of which at least one was male. The 33 participants with an average rating of 1-3.49 were designated a low attractiveness status and the remaining 35 with an average rating of 3.5 – 6 were designated a high attractiveness status. Because research shows that status is more salient in mixed sex settings, participants were placed into mixed sex pairs (Athenstaedt et al., 2004). Each pair was assigned to one of four groups:

Group 1: Attractive Male; Attractive Female (8 pairs)

Group 2: Unattractive Male; Unattractive Female (9 pairs)

Group 3: Attractive Male; Unattractive Female (9 pairs)

Group 4: Unattractive Female; Attractive Male (8 pairs)

Participants returned for a second research session at the same time as their assigned partner. They were instructed to sit next to each other and complete an ethical decision making exercise for 12 minutes (see Appendix 2). This videotaped task included descriptions of five ethical dilemmas adapted from Victor Grassian's book, *Moral Reasoning: Ethical Theory and Some Contemporary Moral Problems*. An example of one of the dilemmas is below:

A Poisonous Cup of Coffee

Tom, hating his wife and wanting her dead, puts poison in her coffee, thereby killing her. Joe also hates his wife and would like her dead. One day, Joe's wife accidentally puts poison in her coffee, thinking its cream.

Joe has the antidote, but he does not give it to her. Knowing that he is the only one who can save her, he lets her die. Is Joe's failure to act as bad as Tom's action? Why?

Participants were provided with only one copy of task instructions and dilemmas. They were able to move on to the next dilemma after arriving at an agreement or compromise about the previous one. The scope conditions of EST are task orientation, motivation to complete the task successfully, and collective orientation, the understanding that the opinion of others is important for the task. The ethical dilemma exercise used in this research satisfies both of these scope conditions, as both partners believe the task is an important element of the research and know that they must collaborate in order to proceed through the task.

Immediately following the discussion, participants completed a concluding questionnaire about their personal performance on the task, the performance of their partner, and their perceptions of their partner (see Appendix 3). Responses were reported on a 1 – 5 scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Examples of these statements include, "I found this task to be difficult", "My partner performed well on this task", "My partner was open to new ideas", and "My partner was attractive". During debrief, participants were not informed of the existence or results of their attractiveness rating. Instead, they were told that this research focuses on the communication behaviors both partners exhibited as well as the influence of reported perceptions on their interaction. As an attractiveness check, participants' perceptions of their partners' physical attractiveness correlated significantly with the attractiveness rating assigned previously, Pearson's $r(68) = .31$, $p < .05$.

Four undergraduate research assistants coded the middle eight minutes of video footage for each pair. The middle section was taken to avoid using footage prior to task orientation when participants were introducing themselves or after task orientation in the case a pair completes the task early. Athenstaedt et al. (2004) also used a middle section of footage for analyses of gender differences. Assistants were provided with definitions of each behavior and participated in a training session on correct coding procedures. The verbal behaviors coded were speech initiation, total talk time in seconds, frequency of interruptions (dominant behaviors), and affirmations (submissive behavior). Nonverbal behaviors coded were gestures (dominant behavior), head nods, and smiling (submissive behaviors). Research assistants also recorded which participant of the pair elected to write the pair's answers on the assignment sheet. The primary researcher coded speech initiation (the first person to initiate speech). All research assistants coded the same footage of two pairs of participants in order to establish inter-rater reliability. Intraclass correlation coefficients were calculated for affirmations (ICC = .421, p < .05), gestures (ICC = .961, p < .05), head nods (ICC = .543, p < .05), smiles (ICC = .969, p < .05), and talk time (ICC = .971, p < .05). Reliability for categorical interruptions was fc = .68

Results

The first hypothesis, that the attractiveness of participants would be generalized to other positive traits, was confirmed. Participants who described their partners as attractive also described them as intelligent (r(68) = .375, p < .05), open to new ideas (r(68) = .253, p <. 05), capable (r(68) = .271, p < .05), thoughtful (r(68) = .357, p < .05), articulate (r(68) = .459, p < .05), warm (r(68) = .316, p < .05), engaging (r(68) =

.218, $p < .05$) and funny ($r(68) = .32$; $p < .05$), but not as helpful or ethical. This demonstrates a cognitive bias associated with physical attractiveness

The second, third, and fourth hypotheses, that physical attractiveness would impact communication behaviors and that this effect would vary by gender, were partially supported. The researchers chose to use a confidence interval of 0.10 due to the decrease in sample size to sixty-eight participants over all four groups. Square root log transformations for interruptions, affirmations, gestures, and head nods were performed to correct positive skew. A 2 (attractive/unattractive) x 2 (male/female) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for each communication behavior in question in order to understand the degree to which physical attractiveness and gender modified communication between partners. Gender main effects were first examined as a comparison to previous literature on gender as a status characteristic that influences communication behaviors (Athenstaedt et al., 2004; Dovidio 1988). Smiles $F(1, 68) = 3.457$, $p < .10$, $\eta p^2 = .051$, talk time $F(1, 68) = 3.163$, $p < .10$, $\eta p^2 = .047$, and writer $F(1, 68) = 22.74$, $p < .10$, $\eta p^2 = .263$ had significant main effects for the gender of the participant. Females smiled more and talked less compared to males (see Table 1). They also served the role of 'secretary' more often than men, writing down the pair's answers to the task. Only speech initiation yielded a main effect for attractiveness $F(1, 68) = 16.34$, $p < .10$, $\eta p^2 = .203$. Attractive participants were usually the first to initiate conversation with their partner.

Next, the interactions of the factorial ANOVAs were examined in order to establish that the effect of physical attractiveness on communication varies by gender. Speech initiation $F(1, 68) = 3.72$, $p < .10$, $\eta p^2 = .055$ and head nods $F(1, 68) = 5.17$,

$p < .10$, $\eta p^2 = .075$ displayed significant attractiveness by gender interactions. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for illustrations of these interactions.

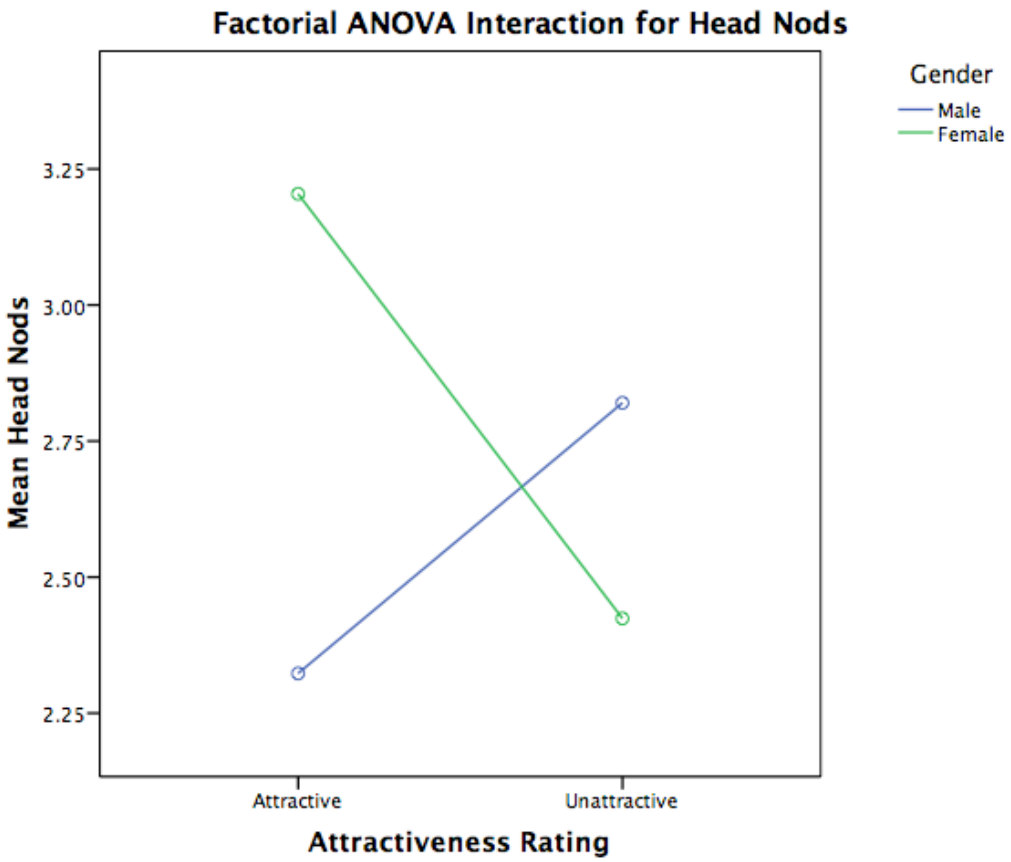

Figure 1. Attractiveness by Gender Factorial ANOVA Interaction for Head Nods

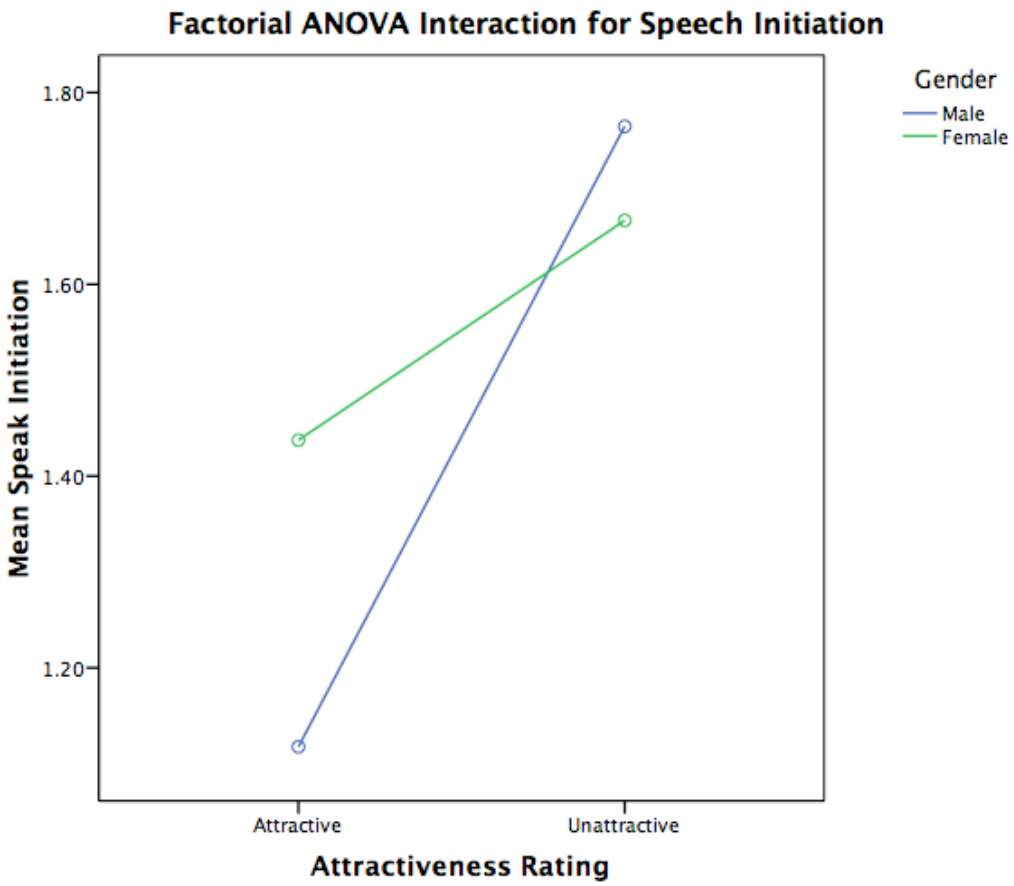

Figure 2. Attractiveness by Gender Factorial ANOVA Interaction for Speech Initiation

Means and standard deviations for all numeric communication behaviors are listed on Table 1. Notably, unattractive men ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 5.8$) head nodded more than attractive men ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 3.9$). Attractive females ($M = 6.3$, $SD = 5.5$) gestured more than unattractive females ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 4.4$). Attractive females ($M = 119.1$, $SD = 51.1$) spoke more than unattractive females ($M = 103.2$, $SD = 49.8$)

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Communication Behaviors

			Verbal			Nonverbal		
			Dominant		Submissive	Dominant	Submissive	
			Talk Time	Interruptions	Affirmations	Gestures	Head Nods	Smiles
Male	Attractive	Mean	129.8	2.2	9.5	5.9	2.8	5.3
		SD	53.1	2.1	6.7	4.0	3.9	4.5
	Unattractive	Mean	136.1	2.6	10.6	8	4.8	5.7
		SD	47.6	1.9	7.8	6.1	5.8	4.0
	Total	Mean	133	2.4	10	6.9	3.8	5.5
		SD	49.8	2.0	7.2	5.1	5.0	4.2
Female	Attractive	Mean	119.1	3.5	9.7	6.3	5	7.6
		SD	51.1	3.3	5.5	5.5	54.3	5.8
	Unattractive	Mean	103.2	2.6	11.3	4.3	3.4	7.7
		SD	49.8	2.4	7.3	4.4	4.5	4.8
	Total	Mean	110.7	3	10.6	5.2	4.6	7.7
		SD	50.3	2.9	6.5	5.0	5.0	5.2
Total	Attractive	Mean	124.6	2.8	9.6	6.1	4.4	6.4
		SD	51.6	2.8	6	4.7	4.8	5.3
	Unattractive	Mean	119.2	2.6	11	6.0	4.1	6.7
		SD	50.9	2.2	7.4	5.5	5.1	4.5
Total	Total	Mean	121.8	2.7	10.3	6.0	4.2	6.6
		SD	50.9	2.5	6.8	5.0	5.0	4.8

Chi –Square tests were performed as a factorial test for the categorical variables of writer (χ^2 (1) = 14.435, $p < .05$) and speech initiation (χ^2 (1) = 3.29, $p < .05$). M-H estimates were 8.57 for the writer and 6.06 for speech initiation.

Next, group means were examined in order to consider patterns of communication across attractiveness and gender. Tables 2-4 show group means for behaviors that display trends consistent with the hypothesis. As shown in Table 2, attractive females head nod less when paired with unattractive males (M_{Female} = 5, SD = 4) than with attractive males (M_{Female} = 7 SD = 6.4). While the factorial ANOVA for smiling revealed only a main effect for sex, unattractive males smile almost twice as much when paired with attractive females (M_{Male} = 7.6, SD = 4.3) than with unattractive females (M_{Male} = 4 , SD = 2.9). In Table 4, attractive males gesture approximately the same amount as attractive females (M_{Male} = 5.4, SD = 3.6, M_{Female} = 6, SD = 4.4) but attractive males gesture more than unattractive females (M_{Male} = 6.3, SD =4.4, M_{Female} = 4.2, SD = 4.5).

Table 2
Group Means and Standard Deviations by Gender for Head Nods

Group	Gender	Mean	SD
Attractive Male - Attractive Female	Male	3.3	5.4
	Female	7	6.4
Unattractive Male - Unattractive Female	Male	5	5.9
	Female	4.9	6.1
Attractive Male - Unattractive Female	Male	2.4	2.3
	Female	1.9	1.3
Unattractive Male - Attractive Female	Male	4.5	6.0
	Female	5.0	4.0

Table 3
Group Means and Standard Deviations by Gender for Smiles

Group	Gender	Mean	SD
Attractive Male - Attractive Female	Male	4.1	2.0
	Female	7.6	7.4
Unattractive Male - Unattractive Female	Male	4.0	2.9
	Female	8.0	4.0
Attractive Male - Unattractive Female	Male	6.3	5.9
	Female	7.4	5.7
Unattractive Male - Attractive Female	Male	7.6	4.3
	Female	7.6	4.3

Table 4
Group Means and Standard Deviations by Gender for Gestures

Group	Gender	Mean	SD
Attractive Male - Attractive Female	Male	5.4	3.6
	Female	6.0	4.4
Unattractive Male - Unattractive Female	Male	9.1	7.1
	Female	4.3	4.6
Attractive Male - Unattractive Female	Male	6.3	4.4
	Female	4.2	4.5
Unattractive Male - Attractive Female	Male	6.9	5.1
	Female	6.5	6.7

Discussion

The primary objectives of this investigation were to replicate previous findings that attractiveness, like gender, operates as a status characteristic in small groups, and to determine if attractiveness influences face to face communication. Secondarily, participants' perceptions of their partners provide more insight on the cognitive bias for physical attractiveness. If communication between partners is an expression of relative status, the broad physical attractiveness bias can be best understood through the expectation states perspective.

Hypothesis 1

Results of the first hypothesis, that physically attractive participants were evaluated in a positive manner, establish the presence of the physical attractiveness bias among pairs. This finding is supported by research suggesting that physically attractive

individuals are perceived favorably in both social (open, thoughtful, articulate, warm, engaging, funny) and intellectual (intelligent, capable) domains (Eagly et al., 1991; Jackson et al., 1995). The finding that attractive individuals were not assumed also to be helpful and ethical aligns with Eagly's findings that the attractiveness bias has little to do with integrity or concern for others (Eagly et al., 1991). This pattern of attractiveness bias has a clear and consistent effect throughout the literature. According to expectation states theory, group members and partners evaluate individuals with the more valued characteristic positively. In this case, participants with a high attractiveness status received approving feedback about their social and cognitive abilities based on their task performance, suggesting that physical attractiveness possesses the evaluative quality of a status characteristic.

Hypotheses 2-4

The hypothesis that attractiveness affects communication behaviors was supported by several observed behaviors, suggesting that physical attractiveness is a status characteristic that manifests during casual conversation and task performance. Because an interaction between attractiveness and gender was only found for two behaviors, the relationship between these characteristics and the relative strength of each remains unclear.

This investigation successfully replicated previous research that identified gender as an overt status characteristic during communication. Males talked more than females, verbally expressing their power by speaking more overall during the task (Dovidio et al., 1988). Females smiled more than males, which is consistent with suggestions that smiling is a gender-specific behavior and not necessarily a behavior exhibited by other low status

traits as an indication of power (Athenstaedt et al., 2004; Dovidio et al., 1988; Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Helweg-Larson, 2004). Females also tended to take on note taking duties during the task. While this could be a submissive act, it may also be stereotypically assumed that college aged females have more legible handwriting than males.

The behaviors of speech initiation and head nods had significant interactions for physical attractiveness and gender of participants. Speech initiation was measured as the order in which partners spoke, recording which participant initiated speech. Attractive males spoke first more often than unattractive males, and attractive females spoke first more often than unattractive females. Overall, males spoke first more often than females. The idea that individuals who initiate speech have higher power and are likely to participate frequently, which is an indication of high status, is established in the literature (Dovidio et al., 1988, Ridgeway et al., 1985). Accordingly, attractive males were afforded the highest status among all sixty-eight participants in regards to speech initiation.

The submissive behavior of head nodding also yielded a significant attractiveness by gender interaction. Unattractive males head nodded more than attractive males, signifying the differential status attractiveness affords within the male gender. Attractive females head nodded more towards attractive males than towards unattractive males, suggesting that the status difference between men and women was modified by attractiveness. Because the social psychology literature has established that head nods are a form of submission, the head nodding behavior of attractive females suggests they are less willing to express submission to unattractive males than to attractive males (Helweg-Larson et al., 2004). Therefore, attractive females are closer in status to unattractive

males than to attractive males. The interactions of speech initiation and head nods establish the relationship between attractiveness and gender in dominant verbal and submissive nonverbal capacities.

Supporting evidence for this hypothesis is found in the smiling, gesturing, and talking of participants. Unattractive males smiled almost twice as much when paired with an attractive girl compared to an unattractive girl. While this might be interpreted as a submissive gesture towards a high status attractive female, it is likely a sign of attraction towards an appealing member of the opposite sex. While gestures did not reveal a significant interaction, attractive females did gesture more than unattractive females, suggesting that when gender was held constant, attractive females rose in status. Attractive females also talked more than unattractive females. This parallels the increase in unattractive male head nodding previously discussed, as attractive males rose in status compared to unattractive males. Additionally, attractive males gestured more at unattractive females than attractive females, demonstrating the expansive status difference between attractive males with the highest aggregate status, and unattractive females with the lowest aggregate status.

With the exception of significant results for speech initiation, most visible trends for attractiveness were found in nonverbal communication behaviors. Potentially, nonverbal communication is more indicative of status structure in unstructured groups than verbal communication. If individuals are less cognizant of their nonverbal behavior, these expressions could provide greater insight into the biases under which we operate. No significant effects were found for verbal affirmations or interruptions, which is inconsistent with literature depicting these behaviors as indicators of dominance and

power in verbal communication (Athenstaedt et al., 2004, Karakowsky, 2004). It is possible the experimental context prevented either of these behaviors from generating significant results. Partners were introduced for the first time immediately before the ethical decision making task began, so they likely wanted to interact in a socially desirable and supportive manner in order to make a good impression. This would include encouraging their partner through affirmations and abstaining from interruptions. Additionally, the experimental reality primed participants with notions of morals and ethics, which may have influenced them to act accordingly. The research design required that partners were collectively oriented in accordance with the scope conditions of expectation states theory. In this case, they were required to come to an agreement about their answer for each ethical situation's question in order to proceed with the task. This personal investment in the other participant's ideas probably facilitated a supportive climate with multiple affirmations and infrequent interruptions, regardless of status characteristics. In fact, participants of the current study used as many affirmations in eight minutes as the participants in Athenstaedt et al.'s (2004) study used in twelve minutes. This suggests the agreement requirement directed reinforcing behavior. Athenstaedt et al. (2004) found sex differences for interruptions with mixed-sex couples who entered into the research together, and Karakowsky et al. (2004) found interruption differences for discussion groups with competence indicators present. These comparisons suggest that familiarity with a group and clear competence indicators influence status differences in verbal communication.

Taking these issues into consideration, we argue there is now enough evidence to consider physical attractiveness a status characteristic between mixed-sex pairs. Because

attractiveness functions as a status characteristic, each participant's perceptual and behavioral reaction to his or her partner was based on expectation states theory. Results indicate EST provides the most complete theoretical understanding of physical attractiveness, and that status processes play a critical role in forming and perpetuating this cognitive bias.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Several limitations of this investigation should be considered. First, the sample size could have limited statistical power. In the future, group sizes should exceed ten pairs each. A larger sample size may have yielded significant results for all observed trends. A large initial participant pool would also allow researchers to primarily consider individuals on either end of the attractiveness spectrum. Researchers could either eliminate individuals with average attractiveness ratings from participation or include them to examine the effects of an 'average' status state. This study dichotomized all ratings, even those in the average range. This could have lowered the possibility of significant results.

Another limitation of this study was the inter-rater reliability of behavioral coding by research assistants. Intraclass correlation coefficients for affirmations and head nods were not sufficient. While it is possible that more extensive reliability tests (requiring all assistants to code more than the footage of two pairs for reliability purposes) could have revealed satisfactory reliability, the coding of affirmations and head nods were inconsistent. In this case, future research should consider using less people to code and/or implement more extensive training for behavioral coding procedures.

Participant behavior may have been biased due to the Hawthorne effect, in which individuals tend to act differently because they know they are being watched, or in this case because of the presence of a video camera. Not only could participant behavior be generally unnatural because of the presence of the camera, but feelings of nervousness could directly impact the communication behaviors in question. For example, a timid participant may smile and/or talk more or less in front of a camera. In addition, although participants completed their post-test questionnaires in separate rooms, they were still present in the same workspace and often exited simultaneously. Close proximity to partners could have influenced participants to evaluate their partner positively.

Future research on the cognitive bias of physical attractiveness should continue to use an expectation states perspective to explain attractiveness as a function of status in society. Future research on attractiveness as a status characteristic in group interaction should examine same sex pairs in addition to mixed sex pairs. Holding gender constant might reveal important patterns about attractiveness as a status characteristic within the sexes. These results could be compared with the behaviors of mixed sex pairs. It is also important to examine the interaction between attractiveness and other status characteristics besides gender, such as race or age. In addition to the communication behaviors observed here, other advantages of status characteristics outlined by expectation states theory should be measured, such as persuasive ability, participation rate, and opportunity to participate.

A recent movement from the expectation states perspective suggests that the scope conditions of the theory are expandable, meaning diffuse status characteristics operate even in settings that are not both collectively oriented and task oriented (Correll

& Ridgeway, 2003; Foschi, Lai, & Sigerson, 1994). While further research in this area is needed, this evolution of EST is paramount for inquiry into the specific settings in which physical attractiveness operates as a status characteristic. Without collective orientation, interruption and affirmation behaviors could increase. Continuing research on physical attractiveness as a status characteristic should consider expanding the theoretical scope conditions beyond the small work group, such as to individually evaluative tasks (e.g. standardized testing), or to natural observation.

Conclusion

This investigation contributes to research on the physical attractiveness bias, confirming a cognitive halo effect for physical attractiveness to other culturally positive traits. We also successfully replicated trends in the literature suggesting gender and attractiveness are status characteristics which construct and maintain the social status hierarchy of small group interaction. The expectation states perspective had only been used once in the literature to explain the influence of physical attractiveness using same-sex dyads. This research replicated this finding for mixed-sex dyads and examined the manifestation of these hierarchies in verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors. Because findings were limited to a few significant behaviors, the exact affiliation between attractiveness and gender is unknown. The precise extent to which the characteristic of attractiveness prejudices our interactions, and specifically our task oriented conduct, remains unclear. It is clear, however, that the physical attractiveness of the individuals around us influences the way we behave and treat each other.

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Appendix 1

Values Questionnaire

On this page are 18 values listed in alphabetical order. Your task is to arrange them in order of their importance to YOU, as guiding principles in YOUR life. Study the list carefully and pick out the value which is most important for you. Put this value on line 1.Then pick out the value which is second most important for you. Put this value on line 2. Then do the same for each of the remaining values. The value that is least important should be placed on line 18. Work slowly and think carefully. If you change your mind, feel free to change your answers. The end result should truly show how you really feel.

1_____ A COMFORTABLE LIFE

2_____ AN EXCITING LIFE

3_____ A SENSE OFACCOMPLISHMENT

4_____ A WORLD AT PEACE

5_____ A WORLD OF BEAUTY

6_____ EQUALITY

7_____ FAMILY SECURITY

8_____ FREEDOM

9_____ HAPPINESS

10_____ INNER HARMONY

11_____ MATURE LOVE

12_____ NATIONAL SECURITY

13_____ PLEASURE

14_____ SALVATION

15_____ SELF-RESPECT

16_____ SOCIAL RECOGNITION

17_____ TRUE FRIENDSHIP

18_____ WISDOM

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED, GO TO THE NEXT PAGE

Below is another list of 18 values. Arrange them in order of importance, the same as before.

1_____	AMBITIOUS
2_____	BROADMINDED
3_____	CAPABLE
4_____	CHEERFUL
5_____	CLEAN
6_____	COURAGEOUS
7_____	FORGIVING
8_____	HELPFUL
9_____	HONEST
10_____	IMAGINATIVE
11_____	INDEPENDENT
12_____	INTELLECTUAL
13_____	LOGICAL
14_____	LOVING
15_____	OBEDIENT
16_____	POLITE
17_____	RESPONSIBLE
18_____	SELF-CONTROLLED

Appendix 2

TASK DIRECTIONS:

Below is a description of 5 ethical dilemmas adopted from Victor Grassian's book, *Moral Reasoning: Ethical Theory and Some Contemporary Moral Problems*. Please read each dilemma carefully with your partner. Discuss the questions that the dilemmas pose and any relevant moral issues that apply.

You and your partner must come to an agreement about each dilemma. Once you have agreed, please explain your answer in the box provided below each dilemma. You may not proceed to the next dilemma until you and your partner agree on an answer to put down.

You have 15 minutes for this task. Please take your time. You are not required to address all 5 dilemmas.

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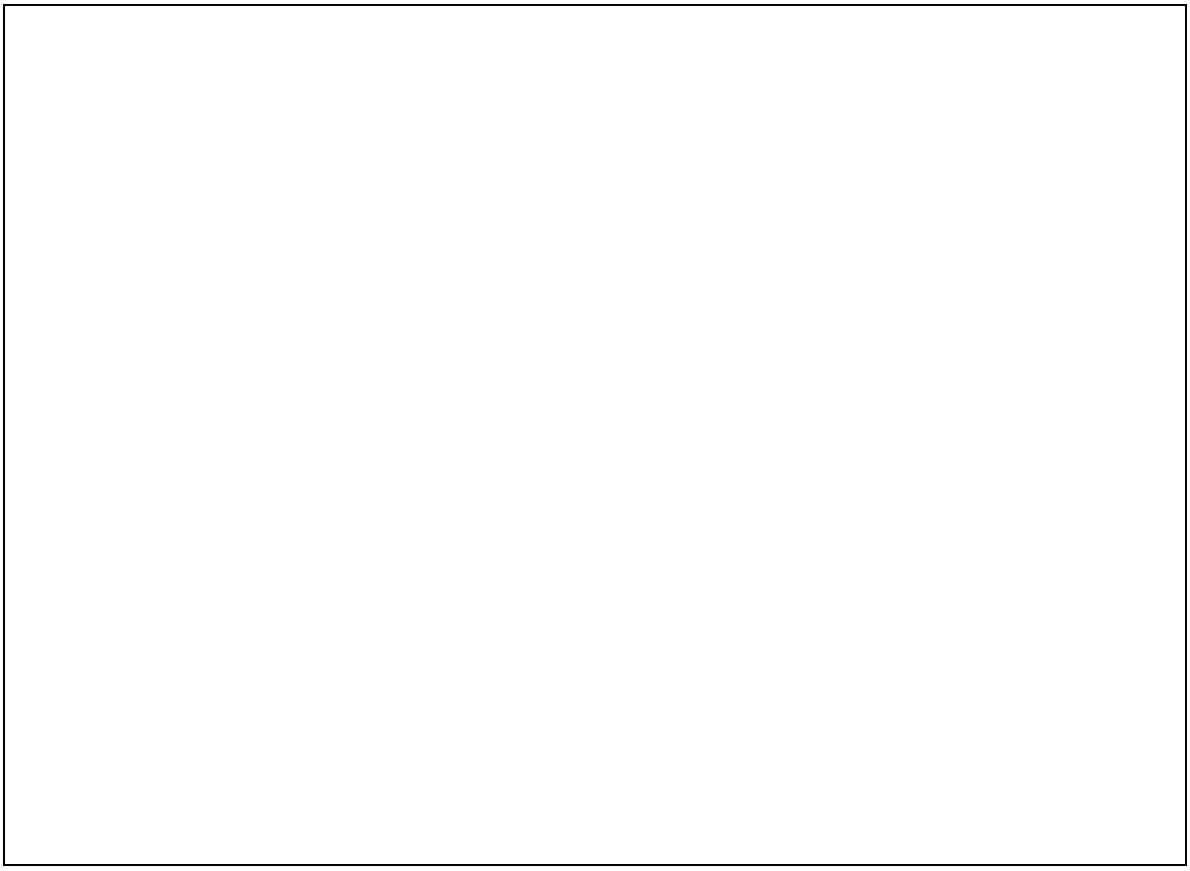
1. A Poisonous Cup of Coffee

Tom, hating his wife and wanting her dead, puts poison in her coffee, thereby killing her. Joe also hates his wife and would like her dead. One day, Joe's wife accidentally puts poison in her coffee, thinking its cream. Joe has the antidote, but he does not give it to her. Knowing that he is the only one who can save her, he lets her die.

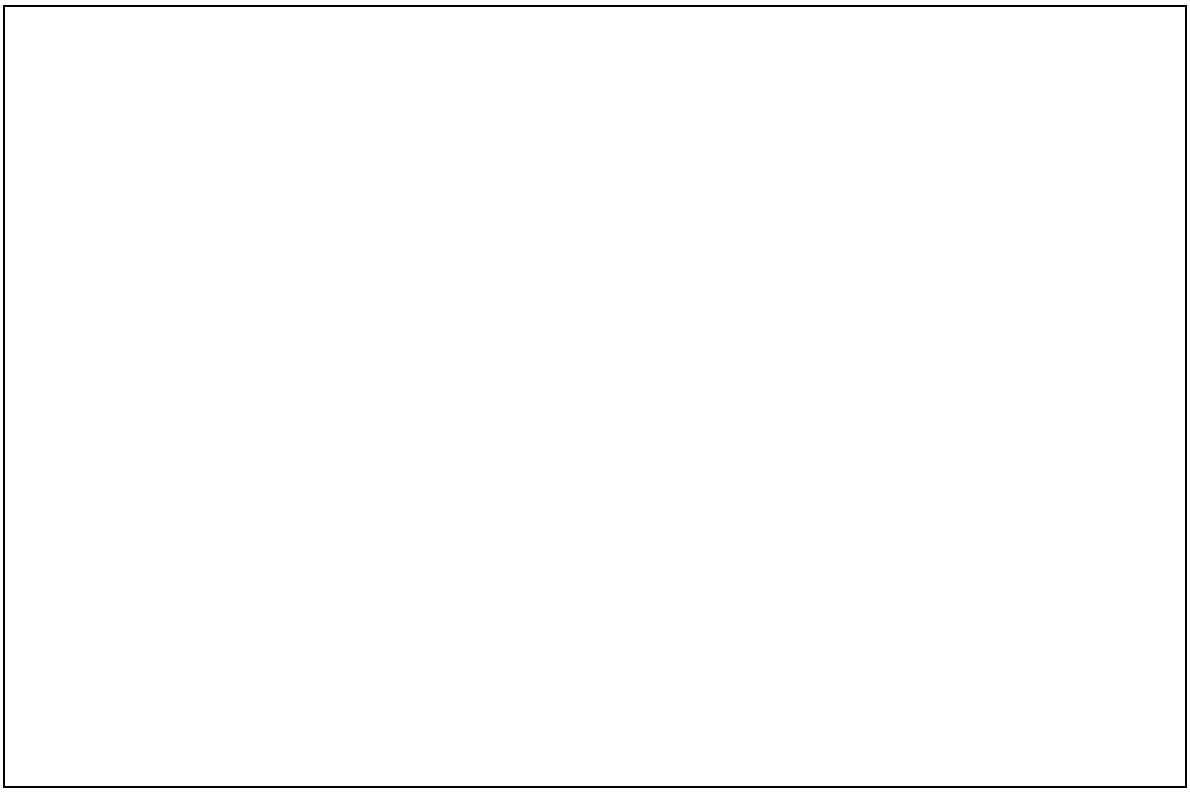
Is Joe's failure to act as bad as Tom's action? Why?



2. The Partiality of Friendship

Jim has the responsibility of filling a position in his firm. His friend Paul has applied and is qualified, but someone else seems even more qualified. Jim wants to give the job to Paul, but he feels guilty, believing that he ought to be impartial. That's the essence of morality, he initially tells himself. This belief is, however, rejected, as Jim resolves that friendship has a moral importance that permits, and perhaps even requires, partiality in some circumstances. So he gives the job to Paul.

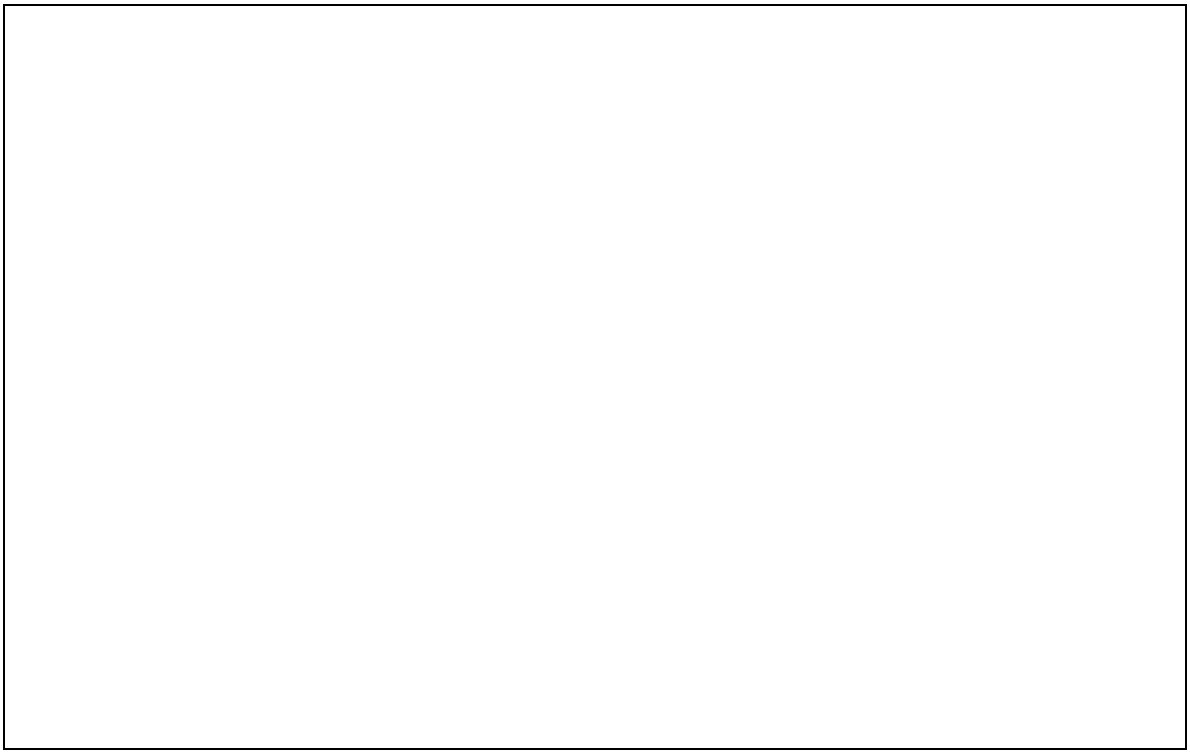
Was he right?



3. The Overcrowded Lifeboat

In 1842, a ship struck an iceberg and more than 30 survivors were crowded into a lifeboat intended to hold 7. As a storm threatened, it became obvious that the lifeboat would have to be lightened if anyone were to survive. The captain reasoned that the right thing to do in this situation was to force some individuals to go over the side and drown. Such an action, he reasoned, was not unjust to those thrown overboard, for they would have drowned anyway. If he did nothing, however, he would be responsible for the deaths of those whom he could have saved. Some people opposed the captain's decision. They claimed that if nothing were done and everyone died as a result, no one would be responsible for these deaths. On the other hand, if the captain attempted to save some, he could do so only by killing others and their deaths would be his responsibility; this would be worse than doing nothing and letting all die. The captain rejected this reasoning. Since the only possibility for rescue required great efforts of rowing, the captain decided that the weakest would have to be sacrificed. In this situation it would be absurd, he thought, to decide by drawing lots who should be thrown overboard.

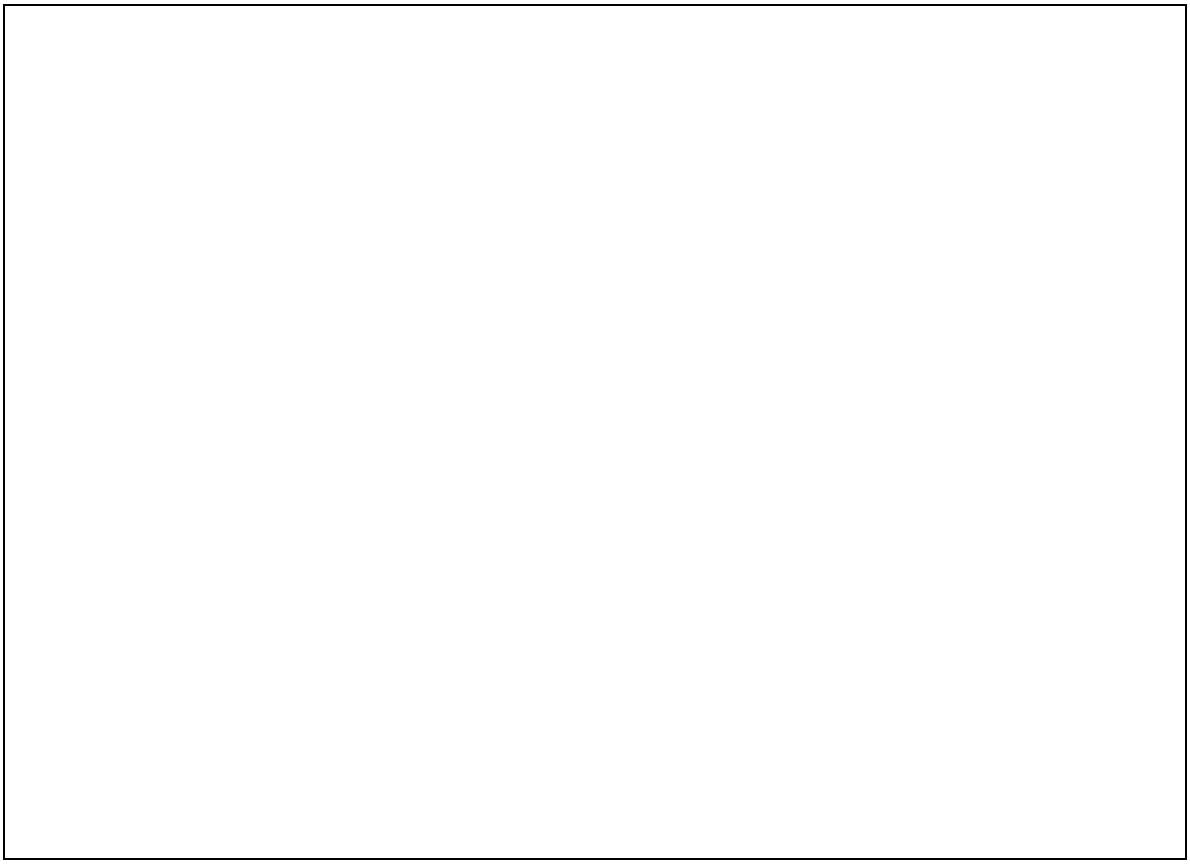
As it turned out, after days of hard rowing, the survivors were rescued and the captain was tried for his action. If you had been on the jury, how would you have decided? Why?



4. A Callous Passerby

Roger Smith, a quite competent swimmer, is out for a leisurely stroll. During the course of his walk he passes by a deserted pier from which a teenage boy who apparently cannot swim has fallen into the water. The boy is screaming for help. Smith recognizes that there is absolutely no danger to himself if he jumps in to save the boy; he could easily succeed if he tried. Nevertheless, he chooses to ignore the boy's cries. The water is cold and he is afraid of catching a cold – he doesn't want to get his good clothes wet either. "Why should I inconvenience myself for this kid," Smith says to himself, and passes on.

Does Smith have a moral obligation to save the boy? If so, should he have a legal obligation as well? Why?



5. The Torture of the Mad Bomber

A madman who has threatened to explode several bombs in crowded areas has been apprehended. Unfortunately, he has already planted the bombs and they are scheduled to go off in a short time. It is possible that hundreds of people may die. The authorities cannot make him divulge the location of the bombs by conventional methods. He refuses to say anything and requests a lawyer to protect his fifth amendment right against self-incrimination. In exasperation, some high-level official suggests torture. This would be illegal, of course, but the official thinks that it is nevertheless the right thing to do in this desperate situation.

Do you agree? If you do, would it also be morally justifiable to torture the mad bomber's innocent wife if that is the only way to make him talk? Why?

Appendix 3

Please read each item carefully and circle the one answer that works best. Because this process involved both you and your partner, your perceptions of your partner are important. Describe your experience with the ethical discussion honestly, and state your opinions as accurately as possible. Please make sure your answer is marked in the correctly numbered space.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I found this task to be difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I think my partner found this task to be difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I performed well on this task.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My partner performed well on this task.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My partner and I agreed on most issues we discussed.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My partner was intelligent.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Based on this task, I believe my partner and I have similar values.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My partner was open to new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My partner was capable.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My partner was thoughtful.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	My partner was articulate.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My partner was attractive.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	My partner was warm.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My partner was ethical.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	My partner was engaging.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My partner was funny.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	My partner was helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	My partner and I got along.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	My partner appreciated my input.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I appreciated my partner’s input.	1	2	3	4	5

21. Did you know your partner before participating in this task? If so, how well?

22. Task partners often disagree. If this happened in your discussion, how did you and your partner try to come to an agreement?