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### **Abstract**

People generally hold positive stereotypes of physically attractive people and because of those stereotypes often treat them more favorably. However, we propose that some beliefs about attractive people, specifically, the perception that attractive individuals have a greater sense of entitlement than less attractive individuals, can result in negative treatment of attractive people. We examine this in the context of job selection and propose that for relatively less desirable jobs, attractive candidates will be discriminated *against*. We argue that the ascribed sense of entitlement to good outcomes leads to perceptions that attractive individuals are more likely to be dissatisfied working in relatively less desirable jobs. When selecting candidates for relatively less desirable jobs, decision makers try to ascertain whether a candidate would be satisfied in those jobs, and the stereotype of attractive individuals feeling entitled to good outcomes makes decision makers judge attractive candidates as more likely to be dissatisfied in relatively less (but not more) desirable jobs. Consequently, attractive candidates are discriminated against in the selection for relatively less desirable jobs. Four experiments found support for this theory. Our results suggest that different discriminatory processes operate when decision makers select among candidates for relatively less desirable jobs, and that attractive people might be systematically discriminated against in a segment of the workforce.

*Keywords:* attractiveness; discrimination; selection decisions; bias.

**Perceived Entitlement Causes Discrimination against Attractive Job Candidates  
in the Domain of Relatively Less Desirable Jobs**

Following the seminal “What is Beautiful is Good” paper (K. K. Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972), a large body of research has investigated how physical attractiveness influences social perception and treatment. This research generally finds that people hold positive stereotypes of physically attractive people and because of those stereotypes often treat them more favorably (see Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Langlois et al., 2000, for reviews). The consequences of such treatment are not trivial, affecting a range of social and economic outcomes, such as the number of votes received in elections (Benjamin & Shapiro, 2009; Leigh & Susilo, 2009; Hamermesh, 2006); the average teaching evaluations for professors (Hamermesh & Parker, 2005; Süßmuth, 2006); the amount of money earned (Biddle & Hamermesh, 1998; Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994; Frieze, Olson, & Russell, 1991; Hamermesh, Meng, & Zhang, 2002; Harper, 2000); and workplace outcomes like selection, performance evaluations, and promotions (see Hosoda, Romero, & Coats, 2003 for meta-analytic review).

The idea that physical attractiveness is advantageous has become commonly accepted wisdom (Alcock & Sadava, 2014), and some go as far as to conclude that “physical attractiveness is always an asset” (Hosoda et al., 2003, p. 447). However, a handful of recent studies suggest that such a conclusion overlooks complexity in the social perception of attractiveness and subsequent treatment based on those perceptions, with important consequences. For example, physically attractive females are sometimes discriminated against in selection for jobs that are stereotypically masculine (Johnson, Podratz, Dipboye, & Gibbons, 2010), and physically attractive men are discriminated against by decision-makers

who fear being outperformed by good-looking coworkers (S. Lee, Pitesa, Pillutla, & Thau, 2015).

In this research, we provide an additional, theoretically novel and practically important, qualification to the conclusion that attractiveness is always an asset. In line with a large body of prior work on attractiveness, we examine this idea in the context of selection decisions due to their importance for people's careers and wellbeing. Building on the idea that attractive people might be stereotyped as having a greater sense of entitlement, we propose that attractive candidates are discriminated against in selection for jobs that are relatively less desirable in the set of all possible jobs but that are still wanted by certain job candidates. In the set of all possible jobs, some jobs are considered to be more desirable, or seen to satisfy more of people's intrinsic (e.g., job interestingness and social impact) and extrinsic (e.g., financial incentives and occupational prestige) needs, or less desirable, seen to satisfy less of these needs (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). We propose that decision makers predict that attractive candidates would be less satisfied working in jobs that are relatively less desirable, leading to discrimination *against* them.

By examining how people ascribe greater entitlement to attractive individuals, we question the universality of the "beauty is good" stereotype. In addition, by showing that a feature of the stereotype (i.e., the sense of entitlement) is evoked in service of salient decision makers' goals (i.e., when they are concerned about potential dissatisfaction with jobs), we provide a more nuanced understanding of how attractiveness stereotypes are applied in different situations. Finally, by showing that the ascribed sense of entitlement might lead to discrimination against attractive individuals in certain situations, we show that attractiveness might not be advantageous in a large segment of jobs that went largely overlooked by past research. Past work on attractiveness discrimination primarily examined selection for jobs that are relatively more desirable, such as managerial positions (e.g., Cash & Kilcullen, 1985;

Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback, 1975; Morrow, McElroy, Stamper, & Wilson, 1990), high-prestige administrative positions (Abramowitz & O'Grady, 1991; Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977; Gilmore, Beehr, & Love, 1986), and professions such as journalists, law firm partners, psychologists, and politicians (Drogosz & Levy, 1996; Kushnir, 1982; Miller & Routh, 1985; Sigelman, Sigelman, Thomas, & Ribich, 1986; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996). Our theoretical extension uncovers that the fact that entirely different processes of stereotyping and discrimination operate in the domain of relatively less desirable jobs, which in reality might constitute the majority of all jobs, and the domain of jobs in which discrimination might have most pernicious social consequences.

### **Pro-Attractiveness Bias in Job Selection**

Candidates' physical attractiveness is often a salient cue when decision makers form impressions of job candidates and make selection decisions (Dipboye et al., 1975; Morrow et al., 1990). For example, one of the most widely used methods during the selection process is the face-to-face interview (Cook, 2009; Dipboye, 2005; Macan, 2009; Wilk & Cappelli, 2003) where interviewers obtain direct information about the candidates' attractiveness. In some countries (e.g., Germany, France, China, India), it is also customary that candidates would include a picture with their job application (Jobsite, 1999). Other sources of information about candidate attractiveness may be pictures in candidates' online profiles, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, which are often scrutinized by employers (Capterra, 2014).

A large body of research in social psychology has investigated the role of physical attractiveness in impression formation and selection decisions. The general conclusion of this research is that physically attractive individuals are viewed and treated more favorably than unattractive individuals, including in hiring decisions, promotions, and performance evaluations (K. K. Dion et al., 1972; Griffin & Langlois, 2006; Hosoda et al., 2003). There are several proposed reasons for this pro-attractiveness bias. First, explanations based on

evolutionary theory suggest that attraction to specific physical features in other people (those considered physically attractive today) constituted a non-zero correlate of reproductive fitness among those who were attracted to these features, selecting for the corresponding innate preferences (for reviews see, Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005; Langlois et al., 2000; Rhodes, 2006). Observers who were more physically (and sexually) attracted to people possessing qualities nowadays considered as attractive were more likely to pass down their genes than were those who were attracted to people possessing qualities that were less positively correlated with reproductive fitness (and would thus nowadays be considered less attractive). Second, socio-cultural explanations (Eagly et al., 1991) highlight how cultural forces may shape attractiveness norms and create associations between positive attributes and people possessing certain physical features. For example, people considered as attractive may be represented more often in the popular culture as possessing favorable outcomes such as wealth and power. A meta-analysis by Langlois et al. (2000) suggests that these two forces (evolved preference for specific physical attributes, as well as cultural conditioning) may work together to shape positive attitudes and expectations in relation to attractive people.

The third proposed psychological process that leads to positive attributions and expectations of good outcomes for attractive people is the motivation to believe in a just world, or the need to view the distribution of outcomes in the world as fair and predictable (Lerner, 1980). Just world theory suggests that people make sense of perceived unequal distribution of outcomes, in part, by attending to and even imputing reasons for the unequal distribution of outcomes (for reviews, see Ellard, Harvey, & Callan, 2016; Feather, 1999; Jost & Kay, 2010). K. L. Dion and Dion (1987) argued that people's motivation to see the world as a just place also makes them more likely to view people's physical attractiveness as

something that is “deserved” by imputing underlying personal qualities.<sup>1</sup> People who scored higher on a scale measuring the need to believe in a just world were more likely to impute positive characteristics to more physically attractive people (K. L. Dion & Dion, 1987).

Furthermore, people believe physically attractive individuals deserve better outcomes, such that when attractive individuals got worse outcomes, people viewed it as more unfair than when unattractive individuals got worse outcomes, and when an individual got a bad outcome, people recalled the individual to be less physically attractive (Callan, Powell, & Ellard, 2007). In all, just world theory leads people to explain why physically attractive individuals are indeed attractive by ascribing positive traits to them and also to believe that they deserve other good outcomes.

### **Specific Goals May Override Pro-Attractiveness Bias**

While these theoretical perspectives suggest more favorable perception and treatment of attractive people *in general*, attractiveness has been shown to lead to more *unfavorable* perception and responses in certain situations. As we noted in the introduction, there are a few studies that found that attractive people are perceived and treated more negatively than unattractive people (Johnson et al., 2010; S. Lee et al., 2015; see also Agthe, Spörrle, & Maner, 2010; Agthe, Spörrle, & Maner, 2011; Luxen & Van De Vijver, 2006). What these studies have in common is that decision makers were guided by a more specific goal (e.g., selecting the candidate with the highest expected performance in a certain position), and the more specific goals overrode the general tendency to benefit attractive people. For example, several studies found that when selecting for jobs that are seen as requiring masculine characteristics (e.g., mechanical engineer or director of security) people discriminate in favor of less attractive women because less attractive women are seen as possessing more masculine qualities and traits (Johnson et al., 2010). Thus, the goal of selecting the highest

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<sup>1</sup> The deservingness here refers to observer judgment about attractive individuals’ deservingness of outcomes and should be contrasted with a sense of entitlement which refers to observers’ meta-perceptions of what attractive individuals think they deserve.

performing person for the job overrode the general tendency to allocate more favorable outcomes to more attractive people. Similarly, S. Lee et al. (2015) found that positive perceptions associated with attractive males lead to favorable selection outcomes, but only when the decision maker expected to cooperate with the candidate on work tasks. When the decision maker was anticipating competition, the more favorable perception of attractive males made attractive candidates more formidable potential competitors, leading to discrimination against attractive candidates. Thus, in this situation, the goal of protecting self-interest overrode the general tendency to treat attractive people more favorably.

In a similar vein, we argue that when a decision maker is selecting candidates for relatively less desirable jobs, the salient goal in the situation is ensuring that the selected candidate is sufficiently satisfied with (and thus motivated in) the job for which the selection decision is being made. This goal might override the general tendency to afford better outcomes to more attractive people.

People have a range of common needs that different jobs satisfy to different extents as a function of their intrinsic and extrinsic features. Given constraints people face (e.g., lack of opportunities due to low educational attainment), any job can conceivably be individually desired by any person, but given the set of all possible jobs, they can be classified in terms of how desirable they are relative to each other, with those jobs that best satisfy people's needs through their intrinsic and extrinsic features being relatively more desirable in the set of all possible jobs (hereafter we simply refer to jobs as "less desirable" and "more desirable" to refer to the relative desirability in the set of all possible jobs).

### **Relative Job Desirability and Selection Decision Goals**

Consistent with the studies that demonstrate that specific goals can override the general tendency to favor more attractive people (e.g., Johnson et al., 2010; S. Lee et al., 2015), we propose that when selecting for relatively less desirable jobs, decision makers



might be more concerned about prospective satisfaction with (and thus motivation in) these jobs, ultimately leading to discrimination against more attractive candidates. The overarching goal of selection decisions is to recruit individuals who are likely to perform well, and work performance is most likely to be determined by competence and motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2013; Maier, 1965). Competence refers to the ability to execute required tasks, while motivation refers to intensity and persistence in striving toward work goals (Kanfer, 1990). There is a fundamental connection between relative job desirability and anticipated average level of motivation such that people are more motivated when a job satisfies both their intrinsic and extrinsic needs (Cerasoli et al., 2014; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000), and the extent to which the job satisfies people's intrinsic and extrinsic needs makes the job relatively more desirable in the set of all possible jobs (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005).

Lacking better alternatives, workers certainly may be motivated to keep a job that is relatively less desirable. However, such a job, by definition, will be characterized by features that make it less satisfying and less motivating for the employee compared to a relatively more desirable job. When people are attracted to a particular job primarily by factors extrinsic to the work itself, such as the need to earn income and a lack of alternatives, their job satisfaction and motivation will be lower than when they also have an intrinsic interest in the job (Cerasoli et al., 2014; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). Empirical research on job satisfaction and turnover is consistent with this argument, showing that when people work in jobs that they are not satisfied with, the risk of turnover is high, as they are motivated to change the job for one that they would enjoy more (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

Decision makers are likely to know the risk of dissatisfaction with and the lack of motivation associated with relatively less desirable jobs and will seek to minimize this risk. Thus, a salient motive for decision makers selecting among candidates for relatively less

desirable jobs will be to minimize expected dissatisfaction of future employees. Research on motivated attention suggests that people pay special attention to cues that might be relevant for a particular issue (e.g., possible employee dissatisfaction) they are concerned about (see Bar-Haim, Lamy, Pergamin, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & van Ijzendoorn, 2007, for a review). Because of the high risk of dissatisfaction associated with relatively less desirable jobs, decision makers are likely to be attentive to candidate features that signal whether the given candidate might be more or less dissatisfied working in the job.

A qualitative study by Bills (1992) investigating how hiring managers viewed overeducated job candidates provides suggestive evidence for this argument. This research found that managers thought that overqualified candidates would not feel sufficiently challenged and satisfied in their jobs. While Bills (1992) documented hiring managers' concerns about potential dissatisfaction on account of over qualification, we focus on concerns about dissatisfaction that might arise as a function of candidate physical attractiveness. We posit that in relatively less desirable jobs, where employee dissatisfaction is a salient concern, decision makers would be particularly motivated to ascertain candidates' satisfaction with the job, and that candidate attractiveness will be used as a cue based on which decision makers predict the extent to which a given candidate would be satisfied with the job.

### **Hypotheses: Attractiveness, Perceived Entitlement, and Selection Decisions**

The general expectation that attractive people receive good outcomes in life (K. K. Dion et al., 1972; Griffin & Langlois, 2006) may make people infer that attractive individuals themselves feel entitled to good outcomes. By feeling entitled, we refer to a sense that one has some level of right of access to a desired good (Feinberg, 2000). A feeling of entitlement has been defined and empirically documented as a pronounced or above-average intolerance of negative outcomes for the self (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004).

If attractive people are perceived as generally obtaining good outcomes, people may infer that attractive people also come to expect these kinds of outcomes. That is, people are likely to hold a naïve theory that because attractive individuals receive better outcomes in life, such individuals are less likely to settle for less-than-good outcomes. Consistent with this idea, Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004) note that a range of social groups that enjoy good outcomes, such as CEOs, the wealthy, and celebrities, are also perceived as feeling entitled to good outcomes. Similarly, we predict that people who see that attractive people generally receive good outcomes, will perceive attractive candidates as feeling more entitled to good outcomes. Research on specific stereotypical beliefs people hold as a function of targets' attractiveness provides some indirect support for this notion. Dermer and Thiel (1975) found that while many attributions people make of attractive people are positive, the stereotype tends to be mixed in the sense that attractive people are also seen as higher on "vanity," "egotism," and the "likelihood of being bourgeois (materialistic/snobbish)" (p. 1168). Thus, we predict:

*Hypothesis 1. Decision makers perceive that attractive candidates feel more entitled to good outcomes than do less attractive individuals.*

We further argue that the perception that attractive people feel entitled to good outcomes can come at a cost to attractive candidates applying for relatively less desirable jobs. When decision makers select among candidates for a relatively less desirable job, they are likely to predict that attractive candidates, who they perceive as feeling entitled to good outcomes, would be more likely to be dissatisfied working on relatively less desirable jobs. A large and diverse literature on standards and expectancies (e.g., Higgins' self-discrepancy theory, Duval & Wicklund's self-awareness theory) point to the negative affect that people experience when their current situation or behavior falls short of their high standards or ideals. The negative affect prompts, or motivates, individuals to move towards the

achievement of their standards (e.g., Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp, 2002; Silvia & Duval, 2001). Extrapolating from this literature, one would expect that working in jobs that fail to meet one's expectations could lead to dissatisfaction. Indeed, there is some evidence of the link between dissatisfaction and violation of expectations in the organizational literature (e.g., Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Wiese, & Carraher, 1998; T. W. Lee, Ashford, Walsh, & Mowday, 1992). While most of past work looks at how one's own standards shape responses to received outcomes (see also Higgins, 1987; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), we expect that people make similar inferences about others' standards, given the abundant evidence that people reason about other people, in part, by drawing on their personal experiences (Cronbach, 1955; Ross, Greene, & House, 1977).

Specifically, because attractive people are likely to be seen as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than unattractive people, relatively less desirable jobs are likely to be perceived by decision makers as deviating more from attractive candidates' expectations than from unattractive candidates' expectations. As we argued above, dissatisfaction is less of a concern for relatively more desirable jobs, and therefore decision makers should be less motivated to ascertain differences in potential dissatisfaction based on attractiveness when evaluating candidates for relatively more desirable jobs. In addition, relatively more desirable jobs entail more favorable outcomes so are less likely to fall short (or be seen as likely to fall short) of expectations of candidates irrespective of their attractiveness. Taken together, these arguments suggest that the perception that attractive candidates have a higher sense of entitlement to good outcomes than do unattractive candidates should lead decision makers to predict that attractive candidates would be less satisfied than attractive candidates, but primarily when selecting for relatively less desirable jobs.

*Hypothesis 2. Decision makers predict that attractive candidates would be less satisfied than unattractive candidates, but primarily in relatively less rather than*

*relatively more desirable jobs, and this is due to the perception that attractive candidates feel more entitled to good outcomes.*

Finally, we argue that the different levels of predicted satisfaction for attractive versus unattractive individuals on relatively less desirable jobs should affect selection decisions. As noted above, the salient goal when making selection decisions is to estimate future performance and optimize staffing decisions along this dimension, particularly based on predicted competence and motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2013). With respect to perceived future competence of a candidate, there might be some benefit of attractiveness, but the association between attractiveness and competence does not arise consistently, seems to vary as a function of sex, and is weaker when there is information on competence, such as track record (Dipboye et al., 1975; Feingold, 1992). Selection decisions typically include objective information on candidates' competence, such as resumes, work samples, or demonstration of work competence in work simulations. For that reason, perceived competence does not seem to be a likely main explanation for pro-attractiveness bias in past studies (Hosoda et al., 2003). Rather, other mechanisms reviewed earlier might drive allocation of better outcomes to attractive people, including mere aesthetic pleasure of working with better-looking individuals and justice motives.

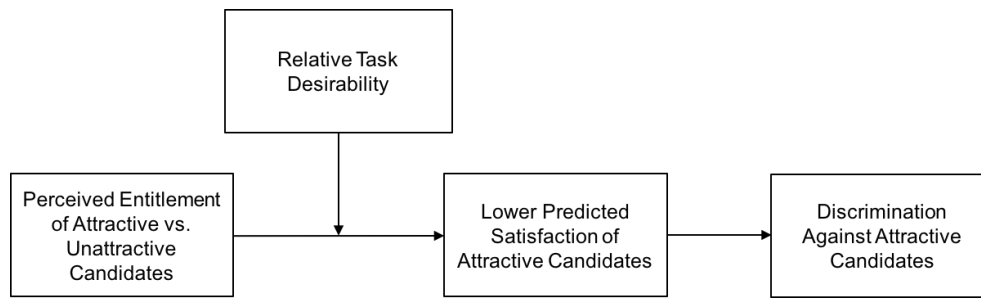
As we argued earlier, this general pro-attractiveness bias may be overridden by more specific goals. When selecting for relatively less desirable jobs, decision makers will be particularly motivated to minimize the risk of employee dissatisfaction, which is anticipated to be higher in such jobs. Given our prediction of lower anticipated satisfaction of attractive individuals compared to unattractive individuals, when decision makers are selecting for relatively less desirable jobs, the general pro-attractiveness bias documented in prior work may be overshadowed by concerns regarding dissatisfaction on the part of attractive candidates. In the domain of relatively less desirable jobs, the specific goal of minimizing

anticipated employee dissatisfaction will be a salient concern, introducing a disadvantage to physically attractive candidates that might attenuate or even reverse pro-attractiveness bias.

*Hypothesis 3. Decision makers prefer attractive to unattractive candidates when selecting for relatively more desirable jobs, but this tendency is attenuated or reversed when selecting for relatively less desirable jobs due to a lower predicted satisfaction of attractive compared to unattractive candidates.*

We note that our predictions, where attractive individuals end up with more desirable jobs and unattractive individuals with less desirable jobs, at first glance seem in line with just world theory. Just world theory reasoning would be that decision makers believe that attractive individuals deserve good jobs and unattractive individuals deserve bad jobs (Callan et al., 2007; K. L. Dion & Dion, 1987). They would thus bias their decisions accordingly. However, our predictions diverge from existing theory in two ways. First, our theorized mechanism is not about the decision maker's beliefs about deservingness, but rather about a meta-perception of what the decision maker believes that *the candidate* believes about what he or she deserves. Furthermore, in the context of selection, a decision maker is giving one job either to a more attractive candidate or a less attractive candidate, and it can be argued that getting the job (albeit an undesirable one) is a good outcome. Decision makers are not assessing the desirability of a set of jobs and sorting candidates into better or worse ones. Rather, given the one hiring decision, decision makers should consider getting the relatively less desirable job to be a more favorable outcome than no job.

In sum, our theoretical model leads to the moderated mediation model depicted in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Theoretical model. Paralleling actual selection decisions, candidate attractiveness is a within-subject factor in our studies, hence, it is not represented as a separate factor in the model.

### Overview of Research

We conducted four experiments to test our hypotheses. In Study 1, we aimed to establish that individuals perceive attractive candidates as feeling more entitled to good outcomes compared to unattractive candidates (Hypothesis 1) and that this difference affects the level of predicted candidates' satisfaction, but primarily in relatively less desirable jobs (Hypothesis 2). The experimental paradigm in the remaining three studies is closely aligned with past work on the attractiveness bias in selection decisions where participants are given candidate profiles with basic competence information through resumes and physical attractiveness information through photographs (Marlowe et al., 1996; Dipboye et al., 1975; Abramowitz & O'Grady, 1991). Study 2 used a hiring simulation to examine whether the relationship between the perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of attractive and unattractive candidates and predicted satisfaction on relatively more versus relatively less desirable jobs explains selection preferences (Hypothesis 3). In Study 3, we tested our hypotheses in the context of an ostensibly real selection decision made by participants in the lab. In Study 3 we also measured participants' own attractiveness and sense of entitlement to good outcomes and examined whether the stereotype that attractive people feel more entitled to good outcomes is correct. Finally, in Study 4, we sought to examine our hypothesized phenomenon in a more ecologically valid way by asking HR managers about jobs for which they make hiring decisions. Materials, data, and analyses syntaxes for all studies conducted to

test our theory are available online at

[https://osf.io/ygipr/?view\\_only=7b0fced1d58d4e23a00d2ffc36be9f34](https://osf.io/ygipr/?view_only=7b0fced1d58d4e23a00d2ffc36be9f34).

Across studies, the sample sizes to be collected were determined ahead of data collection and based on sample sizes in similar studies on attractiveness discrimination in selection decisions (S. Lee et al., 2015), taking into account constraints in resources or subject availability. Data were analyzed once collected, and no data were added or excluded in any of the studies. We report all measures and manipulations.

### **Study 1**

Study 1 examined whether people perceive attractive individuals to feel more entitled to good outcomes than unattractive individuals and in turn are less likely to be satisfied with relatively more versus relatively less desirable tasks. We devised a workplace situation in which one of the two employees differing in physical attractiveness expressed dissatisfaction with the job. Participants were then asked which of the two workers they thought was more likely to have expressed dissatisfaction. If people perceive attractive people to feel more entitled to good outcomes, they should infer that it is the attractive employee who is more likely to have expressed dissatisfaction with the job, but primarily when the job is less desirable. Using this design, Study 1 tested Hypotheses 1 and 2.

### **Participants and Design**

We recruited 148 people (mean age = 21.95,  $SD = 2.42$ ; 55.4 percent male; 99.3 percent with prior job experience) from the participant pool of a university research lab to take part in the study in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (candidates' sex: male vs. female; between-participants)  $\times$  2 (candidate's attractiveness: attractive and unattractive; within-participants)  $\times$  2 (job desirability: more desirable vs. less desirable; within-participants) design. In all studies, we systematically varied candidate sex to control for sex differences and to examine whether the



effects we found were limited to candidates of one sex or not. No study found any significant main or interaction effects of participant or candidate sex, so we do not discuss them further.

The syntaxes for these analyses are available online.

### **Procedure and Materials**

Participants were told that they would engage in a study on candidate evaluations and recruitment. They were given headshots of potential job candidates and asked questions about the candidates.

***Candidate attractiveness manipulation.*** In counterbalanced order, participants saw headshots of two candidates, one attractive and one unattractive. Participants were not given any additional information about the candidates besides their pictures. The pictures that were used for the candidates were developed by Braun, Grüendl, Marberger, and Scherber (2001) and used extensively in prior research (Meier, D'Agostino, Elliot, Maier, & Wilkowski, 2012; S. Lee et al., 2015; van der Weiden, Veling, & Aarts, 2010; van Leeuwen, Veling, van Baaren, & Dijksterhuis, 2009). The pictures are standardized, computer-generated, racially White faces with all features of the photo (e.g., hair, dress, background, etc.) kept constant to isolate the effect of attractiveness. The decision to manipulate candidate attractiveness using candidate headshots was informed by prior research, which has shown that facial physiognomy is considered to be an important factor in evaluations of physical beauty (Hamermesh, 2011).

***Measure of perceived candidates' sense of entitlement to good outcomes.*** For each candidate, participants responded to nine items measuring their perception of the candidate's sense of entitlement to good outcomes (adapted from Campbell et al., 2004). The original scale was developed to measure an individual's own sense of entitlement to good outcomes. We adapted the items to assess people's perception of how entitled a specific other person feels—that is, the perception of another person's relatively stable tendency to expect good

outcomes for the self and expect outcomes that are more favorable than outcomes that the general population is supposed to expect (by definition, the general population has to accept the entire range of outcomes in terms of favorability). Items included statements such as “this individual feels great things should come to him/her”; “this individual expects things to go in his/her favor”; and “this individual does not expect special treatment in any way” (reverse-coded). Participants responded using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The items were internally consistent ( $\alpha = .84$  for the attractive candidate;  $\alpha = .85$  for the unattractive candidate).

***Job desirability manipulation and predicted candidate satisfaction measure.*** Next, participants were given two short scenarios that contained our job desirability manipulation. The scenarios were based on manipulations used in Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, and Wilson (1997) and Pezzo, Litman, and Pezzo (2006), and they described an unspecified job as either interesting or uninteresting. Because saying that something is interesting connotes it is engaging and absorbing (Merriam-Webster, 2015a), in this manner we sought to manipulate whether the job would be perceived as likely to elicit satisfaction among employees as directly as possible.

The first scenario was the *relatively less desirable job* scenario:

“New recruits are assigned to a task that is generally seen as very tedious, laborious, and uninteresting. One of the two candidates expressed dissatisfaction with working on the task.”

Participants were then asked, “Which candidate do you think is more likely to have expressed dissatisfaction?” Participants were asked to select one of the two candidates (differing in attractiveness). We referred to jobs as “tasks” since a job usually refers to one or more tasks a person is hired to perform on a more or less permanent basis (Voskuijl, 2005), and the situation we examined in our studies focused on a single work segment. Thus, in the

context of our studies, tasks and jobs were synonyms. The two are also synonyms in colloquial language (Merriam-Webster, 2015b).

After indicating who they thought expressed dissatisfaction with the relatively less desirable job, participants received the second scenario, which was the *relatively more desirable job* with the following description: “After a while, as the candidates gain more experience, they are assigned to a different task that is generally seen as very interesting and exciting.” We again said that “one of the candidates expressed dissatisfaction with working on the task” and asked participants which of the two candidates (differing in attractiveness) they thought was more likely to have expressed dissatisfaction. Finally, participants were asked demographic questions and debriefed.

## Results and Discussion

Study 1 responses by condition are displayed in Figure 2.

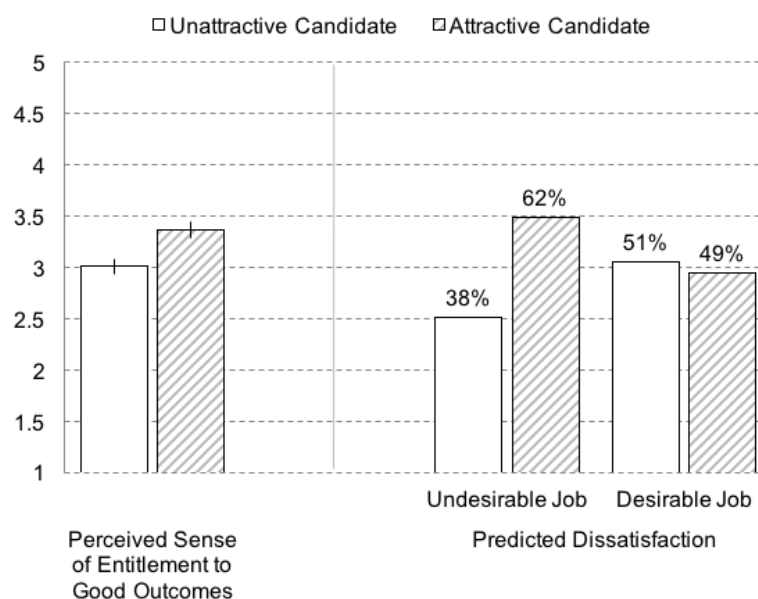


Figure 2. Study 1 responses by condition. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

**Hypothesis 1 test.** The attractive candidate ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) was perceived as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than the unattractive candidate ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ),  $t_{147} = 8.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.71$ . This result supports Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 2 test.** Predicted dissatisfaction of unattractive versus attractive individuals differed depending on whether the task was relatively more or less desirable,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.26, p = .029, d = 0.39$  (McNemar's test). Specifically, when asked about who they thought expressed dissatisfaction with the relatively less desirable job, a higher percentage of participants (62.16 percent) thought that the attractive candidate was more likely to have expressed dissatisfaction than the percentage of participants who thought that the unattractive candidate was likely to have expressed dissatisfaction (37.84 percent),  $\chi^2(1) = 8.76, p = .003, d = 0.50$ . However, when asked about who they thought expressed dissatisfaction with the relatively more desirable job, about the same percentage of participants thought that the attractive candidate was likely to have expressed dissatisfaction (48.65 percent) as the percentage of participants who thought the unattractive candidate was likely to have expressed dissatisfaction (51.35 percent),  $\chi^2(1) = 0.11, p = .742, d = 0.05$ .

We ran a multilevel logistic regression analysis to examine whether the greater level of imputed dissatisfaction of the attractive candidate on relatively more versus relatively less desirable jobs is due to the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate. Candidate selection responses for each job (i.e., which candidate was indicated as likely to have expressed dissatisfaction) were nested within participants to account for the within-subject nature of the response. We regressed participants' predicted candidate dissatisfaction (0 = unattractive, 1 = attractive) on the extent to which participants saw the attractive candidate as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than the unattractive candidate (computed as a difference score of the attractive candidate's minus the unattractive candidate's perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes; see C.M. Judd, Kenny, & McClelland, 2001 for procedure details), job desirability (0 = relatively less desirable, 1 = relatively more desirable), and their interactions.

This analysis revealed a significant interaction between the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate and job type,  $b = 1.50$ ,  $z = 2.87$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $d = 0.49$ , such that the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate made participants more likely to assume that the attractive candidate expressed dissatisfaction when the job was relatively less desirable,  $b = 0.30$ ,  $z = 4.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.70$ , but it had no effect on predicted dissatisfaction when the job was relatively more desirable,  $b = -0.02$ ,  $z = -0.28$ ,  $p = .781$ ,  $d = -0.05$ . Thus, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate made participants predict that attractive candidates would be more dissatisfied with the relatively less (but not relatively more) desirable job. These results support Hypothesis 2.

### Study 2

Study 2 sought to constructively replicate the findings of Study 1 by measuring the predicted satisfaction of attractive versus unattractive candidates on relatively more versus relatively less desirable jobs directly (using self-report measures) rather than by measuring inferences about which candidate might have expressed dissatisfaction with the job. Study 2 also included a selection decision so it allowed us to test all three hypotheses.

#### Participants and Design

We recruited 194 people (mean age = 22.82,  $SD = 2.83$ ; 33.5% male; 90.7 percent with prior work experience) from a participant pool maintained by a behavioral lab of a business school. Participants received 10€ for their participation. They were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (candidates' sex: male vs. female; between-participants)  $\times$  2 (candidates' attractiveness: attractive and unattractive; within-participants)  $\times$  2 (job desirability: relatively more vs. less desirable; between-participants) design.

Thus, one notable difference in the design compared to Study 1 was that the job desirability was manipulated between rather than within participants. Having a between-

subjects design for job desirability ensured that in each condition, the most favorable outcome was to give the candidate the job, and the only alternative was that the candidate is left with no job. This design pits past explanations proposing a pro-attractive bias (which predict discrimination in favor of the attractive candidate in both conditions) against our theory (which predicts discrimination against the attractive candidate when decision makers are selecting for the relatively less desirable job).

### **Procedure**

Participants were asked to take the role of a hiring manager in a company. They were told that their job was two-fold: first, they would be given brief profiles of potential job candidates and asked a few questions based on their first impressions; and second, they would take part in a hiring simulation where they would be provided with a job description and asked who they would hire from the two candidates.

*Attractiveness manipulation.* In a counterbalanced order, participants viewed two profiles of candidates (one attractive and one unattractive). The same headshots from Study 1 were used in this study. Along with the headshots, short resumes were presented. The resumes included information on education, prior experience, and skills. The two resumes were equivalent with minor differences (e.g., University of California, Santa Cruz vs. University of California, Davis). Information on the resumes was counterbalanced across candidate attractiveness so that any differences in the treatment of the candidates could only be due to the difference in candidates' attractiveness.

*Measure of perceived candidates' sense of entitlement to good outcomes.* As in Study 1, participants were asked to rate each candidate on nine statements to measure the perception of the candidate's sense of entitlement to good outcomes ( $\alpha = .79$  for the unattractive candidate;  $\alpha = .83$  for the attractive candidate).

***Hiring simulation task and job desirability manipulation.*** Next, participants moved on to the hiring simulation and were given a job position description. The job described was titled “Team Member in the Business Operations Department.” The position description was to “perform support duties,” and for qualifications and skills desired we listed “being a college graduate” and “having proficient computer skills.” Both candidates fit these qualifications. The job desirability manipulation was included in the bottom portion of the description and varied between subjects. The manipulation was in a section entitled “Internal Notes for HR Manager.” As in Study 1, we manipulated job desirability by directly describing how satisfying the job would be to workers. The notes in the relatively more [less] desirable job condition read:

“This position is very popular [unpopular] with past employees. We had tremendous success [problems] maintaining morale and motivation. Employee surveys show extremely high [low] levels of employee satisfaction and engagement, and currently we have no expected changes in [no solutions for] this situation.”

The effectiveness of the job desirability manipulation by asking participants to rate the extent to which they agreed that the job described was desirable, attractive, and popular on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree),  $\alpha = .88$ .

***Predicted candidates' satisfaction and competence.*** Participants were then asked to rate how satisfied, delighted, and content they thought each of the candidates would be working in the position as a measure of predicted satisfaction ( $\alpha = .86$  for the attractive candidate;  $\alpha = .92$  for the unattractive candidate). Participants also rated how competent, capable, and effective they thought each of the candidates would be as a measure of predicted competence ( $\alpha = .90$  for the attractive candidate;  $\alpha = .83$  for the unattractive candidate). Both predicted satisfaction and predicted competence measures were based on prior work

(Heilman & Okimoto, 2007) and used a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

We measured both predicted satisfaction as well as competence given the importance of both competence and perceived satisfaction in selection decisions (Robbins & Judge, 2013), and given that prior work has suggested a positive stereotype of attractive individuals. However, as we noted earlier, the association between perceived attractiveness and perceived competence specifically does not arise consistently and is weaker when there is information on competence such as track record (Dipboye et al., 1975), which was the case in our study. We thus included the measure of perceived competence to explore the psychological process in a richer manner, but we made no predictions as to its role in the selection decisions.

***Selection decisions.*** Finally, participants were asked which of the two candidates they would hire for the job. The two profiles were presented side-by-side for the participant to see. We described the situation in such a way that participants had reason to believe that both candidates were interested in being selected. That is, there was no reason to believe that discriminating in favor of the unattractive candidate on the relatively less desirable job would somehow mean that the attractive candidate would get selected for a relatively more desirable job: Job desirability was manipulated between-participants in this study so again participants selecting for relatively less desirable jobs were not aware of any alternative jobs. This is important, as preference for unattractive candidates on a relatively less desirable job can only be interpreted as discrimination against attractive candidates rather than a way for decision makers to select attractive candidates into better positions (instead, they are selecting them out of the only positions they applied for).

***Attractiveness manipulation check.*** The pictures used in Studies 1 and 2 were validated extensively by past research. Nevertheless, at the end of Study 2 we asked participants to judge how attractive on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all attractive*) to 5 (*very*



*attractive*) they found the candidates to be to provide additional evidence of the effectiveness of the manipulation.

## Results and Discussion

Study 2 responses by condition are displayed in Figure 3.

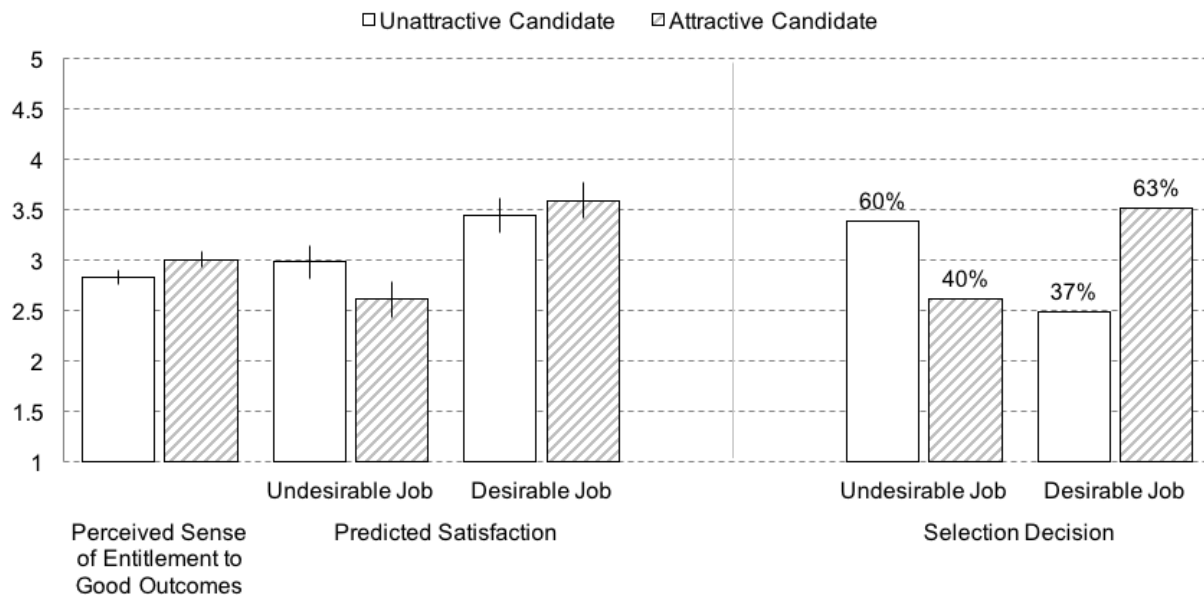


Figure 3. Study 2 responses by condition. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

**Manipulation checks.** Both manipulations were effective. The relatively more desirable job ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) was rated as more desirable than the relatively less desirable job ( $M = 1.78$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ),  $t_{192} = 12.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.84$ . In addition, the attractive candidate ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) was rated as more attractive than the unattractive candidate ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ),  $t_{193} = 13.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.36$ .

**Hypothesis 1 test.** The attractive candidate ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ) was perceived as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than was the unattractive candidate ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ),  $t_{193} = -5.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.31$ . This result supports Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 2 test.** We ran a mixed ANOVA to test whether participants predicted different levels of satisfaction with relatively more versus relatively less desirable jobs (between-subjects) among attractive versus unattractive candidates (within-subjects).

Participants predicted greater satisfaction with the relatively more desirable job compared to the relatively less desirable job for all candidates,  $F_{1,192} = 47.74, p < .001, d = 1.00$ . More importantly, there was a significant interaction between candidate attractiveness and job desirability,  $F_{1,192} = 14.49, p < .001, d = 0.55$ . Simple effects analysis showed that participants predicted that attractive individuals would be less satisfied with the relatively less desirable job ( $M = 2.61, SD = .96$ ) than were unattractive candidates ( $M = 2.97, SD = .91$ ),  $F_{1,192} = 14.82, p < .001, d = 0.56$ . However, with the relatively more desirable job, predicted satisfaction of attractive individuals ( $M = 3.59, SD = 1.02$ ) and unattractive individuals ( $M = 3.44, SD = .88$ ) did not significantly differ,  $F_{1,192} = 2.35, p = .127, d = 0.22$ .

We next ran a regression analysis to examine whether the greater level of anticipated dissatisfaction of the attractive candidate on relatively less desirable jobs is due to the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate. The regression analyses results for Study 2 are displayed in Table 1. The extent to which participants saw the attractive candidate as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than the unattractive candidate (computed as a difference score of the attractive candidate's minus the unattractive candidate's perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes), job desirability (0 = relatively less desirable, 1 = relatively more desirable), and their interaction were entered as predictors of the lower predicted satisfaction of the attractive candidate (computed as a difference score of the attractive candidate's minus the unattractive candidate's predicted satisfaction with the job).

This analysis revealed a significant interaction between the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate and job desirability,  $b = 0.82, t = 3.04, p = .003, d = 0.45$ . When the job was relatively less desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate made participants predict lower levels of satisfaction of the attractive candidate relative to the unattractive candidate,  $b$

= -1.08,  $t = -5.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -0.88$ . However, when the job was relatively more desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate did not lead decision makers to predict that the attractive candidate would be less satisfied than the unattractive candidate,  $b = -0.27$ ,  $t = -1.42$ ,  $p = .156$ ,  $d = -0.21$ . The results support Hypothesis 2.

***Predicted competence.*** We also analyzed candidates' predicted competence scores using the same ANOVA as the one used to analyze predicted satisfaction. The main effect of candidate attractiveness was not significant,  $F_{1,192} = 0.76$ ,  $p = .384$ ,  $d = 0.13$ , nor was the interaction with job desirability,  $F_{1,192} = 0.39$ ,  $p = .534$ ,  $d = 0.09$ . These results suggest that any differences in selection decisions based on candidates' attractiveness would not be due to differences in perceived competence between attractive and unattractive candidates.

The findings concerning competence are consistent with studies that found that the effect of candidate attractiveness (conceivably mediated through perceived competence) weakens when more information on candidates objective qualifications is included (Dipboye et al., 1975). Therefore, the additional information we provided in the resumes, which clearly showed similar objective qualifications, may have attenuated the perception. As there were no differences in perceived candidate competence, we do not discuss this variable further.

***Hypothesis 3 test.*** Selection preference for unattractive relative to attractive individuals was stronger when selecting for the relatively less compared to relatively more desirable job,  $\chi^2(1) = 9.99$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = 0.47$ . Specifically, when selecting for the desirable job, 62.89 percent of participants selected the attractive individual (37.11 percent of participants selected the unattractive individual). This selection pattern was in line with the attractiveness bias such that the proportion of decision makers selecting the more attractive candidates was higher than 50% (what would be expected if there were no bias),  $z = 2.54$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $d = 0.37$ . However, when selecting for the relatively less desirable job, 59.79 percent of

participants selected unattractive candidate (41.21 percent of participants selected the attractive candidate),  $z = 1.93$ ,  $p = 0.054$ ,  $d = 0.28$ . Therefore, when participants were selecting for the relatively more desirable job, they exhibited pro-attractiveness bias consistent with past work; however, when selecting for the relatively less desirable job, the discrimination pattern reversed in line with our theory, such that participants discriminated against the attractive candidate.

We tested the full moderated mediation model depicted in Figure 1 using generalized structural equation modeling with OLS regression testing direct paths toward continuous variables and logistic regression testing the direct path toward the binary selection decisions. The bootstrap procedure was used to compute confidence intervals of the product of the coefficients and, in that way, to test the significance of the indirect effect. We tested the significance of the indirect effect of the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate on selection decisions by constructing bias-corrected confidence intervals of the products of direct paths using the bootstrap method with 1,000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Difference scores for perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes and predicted satisfaction were computed as described above. Selection decisions were coded 1 if the attractive candidate was selected and 0 if the unattractive candidate was selected.

We found that when the job was relatively less desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate reduced the likelihood of selecting the attractive candidate,  $b = -0.34$ , 95% CI  $[-0.85, -0.01]$ , because participants predicted the attractive candidate would be less satisfied with the job. However, when the job was desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate had no effect on selection decisions because it did not prompt decision makers to

predict that the attractive candidate would be less satisfied with the desirable job,  $b = -0.08$ , 95% CI  $[-0.42, 0.06]$ . The results support Hypothesis 3.

### Study 3

Study 3 sought to replicate previous tests of our theory constructively by testing the hypotheses in the context of actual decisions. Another goal of Study 3 was to emphasize more strongly that discriminating against attractive candidates applying for relatively less desirable jobs meant poorer outcomes for these candidates. We explicitly highlighted the lack of better alternatives for selection decisions involving relatively less desirable jobs. In this study, we also used pictures of real people drawn from pools of preselected and pretested pictures of attractive versus unattractive people. We introduced this methodological change to provide evidence that the effects we have identified hold for real images in addition to the standardized images generally used in attractiveness research.

In addition to these improvements, in Study 3 we collected photographs of the participants, and obtained independent ratings of the attractiveness of the participants. We measured participants' own sense of entitlement to good outcomes. Doing so allowed us to test whether the stereotype that is driving the discriminatory behavior we document (i.e., the view that attractive people feel more entitled to good outcomes) is actually correct (in which case the discriminatory behavior might be unfair but is objectively rational) or whether it is incorrect (in which case the discriminatory behavior is both unfair and objectively irrational). While there might conceivably be other reasons why more compared to less attractive people might be more dissatisfied with relatively less desirable jobs, given the mediating role of perceived entitlement documented in Study 2, a test of whether that inference specifically is accurate or not provides a test of whether the specific process underlying discrimination documented in our studies is objectively rational or irrational.

Another question we could examine with the ratings of participants' attractiveness was whether the decision makers' own attractiveness affected their judgments of candidates. The decision makers' own levels of attractiveness may inform their perception of the sense of entitlement to good outcomes of more versus less attractive people and potentially affect selection decisions. If in fact the bias that attractive people feel more entitled is incorrect, it might be the case that decision makers who are more attractive do not make this mistake. Alternatively, if the bias is based on a real relationship between attractiveness and sense of entitlement to good outcomes, perhaps more attractive individuals are more discriminating in their selection decisions for relatively less desirable jobs.

### **Participants and Design**

We recruited 149 participants (mean age = 26.88, *SD* = 6.49; 31.33 percent male; 96.0 percent with prior job experience) from a participant pool maintained by a behavioral lab of a business school in the U.K. for an experiment and a survey administered one week before the experiment. Participants were paid £12. The survey was conducted online and was introduced as preparation for the experiment, which was conducted in the lab. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (candidates' sex: male vs. female; between-participants) × 2 (candidates' attractiveness: attractive vs. unattractive; within-participants) × 2 (job desirability: relatively more vs. less desirable; between-participants) design.

### **Procedure for Survey**

Participants received an invitation to participate in the study through an e-mail from the behavioral lab. They first completed a "sign-up survey" for a study on teamwork. The survey explained that the researchers needed to collect some information about participants prior to the in-lab session to prepare profiles of each participant that would be used in the study. Participants were asked for their sex, age, education level, work experience, and experience working in teams. They were given the entitlement scale (Campbell et al., 2004)

to measure their own sense of entitlement to good outcomes. Participants were also asked to upload their picture and told that they would be used to create their profiles. This approach increased the believability of reviewing photos that we would be presenting in the lab.

### **Procedure for Experiment**

Upon arrival at the lab, participants were immediately seated in single-occupancy cubicles to prevent them from seeing other participants. The research assistant informed them that they would wait for everyone in the session to arrive before starting and left the participant in the cubicle alone. Once all the participants had arrived and were seated in their own cubicle rooms, the research assistant informed each participant that they could begin the task on the computer.

*Attractiveness manipulation.* On the screen, participants were told that they would view profiles we had created from the online sign-up survey for other participants who were currently present in the lab. Their first task was to select one participant between the two potential candidates they would see. This person would be the one they would work with on the subsequent teamwork task. Participants were informed that they would first be asked a few questions about their impressions of the candidates.

Participants were then shown short profiles with information we asked for in the sign-up survey, including a headshot, which contained the candidate attractiveness manipulation. The photos in this study were borrowed from S. Lee et al. (2015). They were taken from a yearbook of a graduating class at a business school and pretested and classified in a highly standardized fashion based on attractiveness (for details, see S. Lee et al., 2015). All together 12 photos were used, three each for attractive female, unattractive female, attractive male, and unattractive male. Each participant only saw two pictures, one attractive and one unattractive individual, of the same sex. The pictures were randomly drawn from the relevant category. This approach to manipulating candidate attractiveness allowed us to test

generalizability of the effect of candidate attractiveness by sampling attractiveness using a broader and more realistic set of stimuli, while preserving a high level of experimental control (see Charles M. Judd, Westfall, & Kenny, 2012, for a detailed review of the benefits of this experimental manipulation type).

***Measure of perceived candidates' sense of entitlement to good outcomes.*** For each profile, participants rated the candidate using the measure of entitlement to good outcomes used in previous studies.

Participants then received a description of the task they would be working on in the next part of the study prior to making their selection decision. The description that all participants saw was as follows:

“You will now select between the two participants to work with you on a group task.

The task consists of combining matrices.

If you and the team member you select perform well, you will each be given a bonus payment. Thus, it is in your best interest to select the participant who you think will do better work. The participant not selected will work on an individual task and will not earn a bonus.”

We mentioned that the individual who did not get selected would work on a job alone without the opportunity to earn a bonus to highlight that not selecting a candidate meant that the candidate who is not selected would have objectively worse outcomes.

***Job desirability manipulation.*** The manipulation of the desirability of the job came in the next paragraph. Specifically, participants in the relatively more [less] desirable job condition read:

“This task is rather interesting [boring]. It has been quite popular [unpopular] with past participants (participant feedback shows very high [low] levels of satisfaction



and engagement). For that reason, we had tremendous success [problems] maintaining participant motivation on this task.”

Participants were given the same job desirability manipulation check as in Study 2. Specifically, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that the job described was desirable, attractive, and popular on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree),  $\alpha = .93$ .

***Predicted candidates' satisfaction and competence.*** We next administered the same measures of predicted candidate satisfaction and competence as in Study 2. Specifically, participants rated how satisfied, delighted, and content ( $\alpha = .95$  for the attractive candidate;  $\alpha = .92$  for the unattractive candidate) and how competent, capable, and effective ( $\alpha = .81$  for the attractive candidate;  $\alpha = .82$  for the unattractive candidate) they thought each of the candidates would be working on the job.

***Selection decision.*** Finally, participants were asked which of the two candidates they would hire for the position, followed by a manipulation check of the attractiveness of the two candidates that was the same as in Study 2. Specifically, participants rated how attractive they found each candidate to be (1 = not at all attractive and 5 = very attractive).

## **Results and Discussion**

Study 3 responses by condition are displayed in Figure 4.

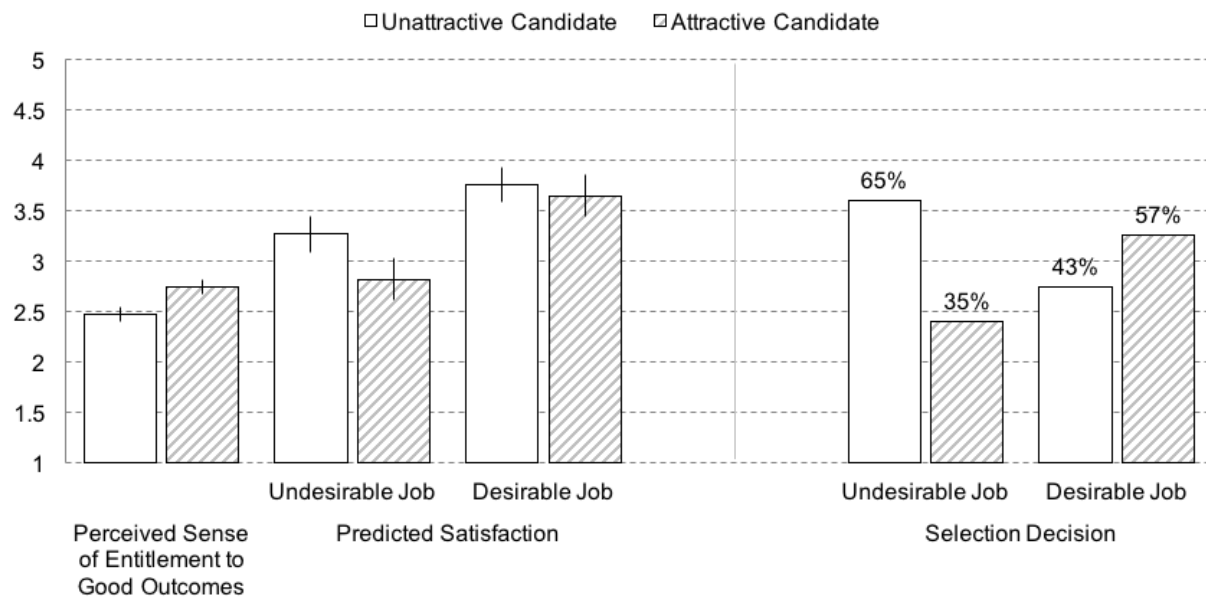


Figure 4. Study 3 responses by condition. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

**Manipulation checks.** The manipulations were effective. The relatively more desirable job ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ) was rated as more desirable than the relatively less desirable job ( $M = 1.91$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ),  $t_{148} = 12.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.06$ . In addition, the attractive candidate ( $M = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ) was rated as more attractive than the unattractive candidates ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ),  $t_{148} = 10.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.81$ .

**Hypothesis 1 test.** Attractive candidates ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ) were perceived as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than unattractive candidates ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ),  $t_{149} = 5.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.58$ . This result supports Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 2 test.** The same analyses as in Study 2 found that participants predicted greater satisfaction with the desirable job compared to the relatively less desirable job for all candidates,  $F_{1,148} = 36.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.00$ . More importantly, there was a significant interaction between candidate attractiveness and job desirability,  $F_{1,148} = 4.22$ ,  $p = .042$ ,  $d = 0.35$ . Simple effects analysis showed that participants predicted that attractive individuals ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) would be less satisfied with the relatively less desirable job than would unattractive individuals ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ),  $F_{1,148} = 14.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.63$ . However,

when the job was relatively more desirable, predicted satisfaction of attractive individuals ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) and unattractive individuals ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) did not differ,  $F_{1,148} = 0.82$ ,  $p = .368$ ,  $d = 0.20$ .

We next ran the same regression analysis as in Study 2 to examine whether the greater level of anticipated dissatisfaction of the attractive candidate on relatively more versus relatively less desirable jobs was due to the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate. The regression analyses results for Study 3 are displayed in Table 2. There was a significant interaction between the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate and job desirability,  $b = 0.77$ ,  $t = 2.89$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $d = 0.49$ . When the job was relatively less desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate made participants predict lower levels of satisfaction of the attractive candidate relative to the unattractive candidate,  $b = -0.75$ ,  $t = -4.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -0.73$ . However, when the job was desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate did not lead decision makers to predict that the attractive candidate would be less satisfied than the unattractive candidate,  $b = 0.02$ ,  $t = 0.09$ ,  $p = .928$ ,  $d = 0.01$ . The results support Hypothesis 2.

***Perceived competence.*** As in Study 2, the main effect of candidate attractiveness on perceived competence was not significant,  $F_{1,148} = 0.10$ ,  $p = .755$ ,  $d = .001$ , nor was the interaction between candidate attractiveness and job desirability,  $F_{1,148} = 3.30$ ,  $p = .071$ ,  $d = 0.29$ .

***Hypothesis 3 test.*** Selection preference for unattractive relative to attractive individuals was stronger when selecting for the relatively less compared to more desirable job,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.94$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $d = 0.44$ . Specifically, when selecting for the relatively more desirable job, 56.58 percent of participants selected the attractive individual (43.42 percent of

participants selected the unattractive candidate). This selection pattern was directionally (but non-significantly) in line with the attractiveness bias such that the proportion of decision makers selecting the more attractive candidates was higher than 50% (what would be expected if there were no bias),  $z = 1.15$ ,  $p = .251$ ,  $d = 0.19$ . However, when selecting for the relatively less desirable job, 64.68 percent of participants selected the unattractive candidate (35.14 percent of participants selected the attractive candidate). The selection pattern for relatively less desirable jobs was such that the proportion of decision makers selecting the unattractive candidate was significantly lower than 50%,  $z = 2.56$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $d = 0.43$ . Therefore, when participants were selecting for the relatively more desirable task, they exhibited a slight pro-attractiveness bias. The bias was not significant in this study, but we conducted a binomial meta-analysis to evaluate pro-attractiveness bias in selection for relatively more desirable job across Studies 2 and 3, and we found that the pooled percentage of selection of attractive candidate was 60%,  $z = 16.21$ ,  $p < .001$ , [95% CI 53%, 67%], demonstrating strong evidence of pro-attractiveness bias, in line with past work. However, we again find in Study 3 that when selecting for the relatively less desirable task, the discrimination pattern reversed in line with our theory, such that participants discriminated against the attractive candidate.

We tested the full moderated mediation model depicted in Figure 1 following the same procedure as in Study 2. We found that when the job was relatively less desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate reduced the likelihood of selecting the attractive candidate,  $b = -0.43$ , 95% CI [-0.96, -0.13], because participants predicted the attractive candidate would be less satisfied with the job. However, when the job was relatively more desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate had no effect on selection decisions because it did not prompt decision makers to predict that the attractive candidate would be less satisfied with

the relatively more desirable job,  $b = 0.01$ , 95% CI  $[-0.22, 0.29]$ . The results support Hypothesis 3.

***Supplementary analysis: Actual relationship between attractiveness and sense of entitlement to good outcomes.*** As mentioned above, we took this opportunity to test whether people are accurate in their judgment of attractive individuals feeling more entitled to good outcomes than unattractive individuals. This would suggest that though unfair, discrimination based on such a judgment could be objectively rational. Two coders blind to the purpose of the study rated all the pictures submitted by the participants for attractiveness on a 7-point scale (1 = very unattractive to 7 = very attractive). The interclass correlation coefficient for the two raters was 0.67, which demonstrates sufficient agreement between the raters. Therefore, we used an average of the two ratings as a measure of participants' attractiveness.

There was a negative correlation between participants' attractiveness rating and their self-reported sense of entitlement to good outcomes,  $r = -.16$ ,  $p = .047$ . Thus, the perceived relationship between attractiveness and sense of entitlement to good outcomes that is influencing selection decisions in relatively less desirable jobs documented across our studies seems to be inaccurate. People perceive that attractive people feel more entitled to good outcomes, while better-looking people seem to feel slightly less entitled to good outcomes, at least in our sample.

***Supplementary analysis: Effect of decision makers' attractiveness.*** We examined whether the decision makers' own attractiveness affected their perceptions of attractive versus unattractive candidates' senses of entitlement to good outcomes. Because each participant rated both an attractive and an unattractive candidate on perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes, the ratings were reshaped to a long format and nested within participants to account for the within-subject nature of the data. Perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the candidate was regressed on the candidate's attractiveness

(0 = unattractive, 1 = attractive), the attractiveness rating of the participant, and the interaction of these two variables. The interaction between candidate attractiveness and the participants' attractiveness was not significant,  $b = -.05$ ,  $z = -1.11$ ,  $p = .269$ ,  $d = -0.18$ , indicating that decision makers' own attractiveness did not affect the perceptions of sense of entitlement to good outcomes for attractive and unattractive candidates.

We also tested whether decision makers' attractiveness affected their predictions regarding how satisfied attractive and unattractive candidates would be. For both the relatively more ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $z = 0.65$ ,  $p = .518$ ,  $d = 0.11$ ) and relatively less desirable jobs ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $z = 0.66$ ,  $p = .510$ ,  $d = 0.11$ ), the interaction between candidate attractiveness and the participants' own attractiveness was not significant, indicating that the participants' attractiveness did not differentially affect their predictions of satisfaction for attractive and unattractive candidates.

The null findings for perceptions of sense of entitlement to good outcomes and predicted satisfaction suggest that participants' own attractiveness should also not affect the selection decision. We ran a logistic regression with the type of job (0 = relatively less desirable, 1 = relatively more desirable), the averaged attractiveness rating of the participant, and their interaction as predictors of the likelihood of selecting the more attractive candidate. The main effect of participants' attractiveness was not significant ( $b = 0.37$ ,  $z = 1.60$ ,  $p = .109$ ,  $d = 0.26$ ), indicating that more attractive participants were not more likely to select the more attractive candidate. Importantly, the interaction between job desirability and participants' attractiveness was not significant ( $b = -0.35$ ,  $z = -1.09$ ,  $p = .274$ ,  $d = -0.18$ ). The attractiveness of the decision maker does not seem to play a role in the discrimination against attractive candidates for relatively less desirable jobs.

#### Study 4

In our final study, we sought to increase the external validity of our theory tests. We recruited a sample of HR managers and examined their decisions in relation to actual jobs for which they make hiring decisions. Instead of manipulating job desirability by explicitly telling participants that the positions they are making decisions for was (not) popular, interesting, and satisfying, we asked participants about the actual jobs they were hiring for. This allowed for greater variability in relative desirability (albeit within the constraints of the sampling procedure) and for a more realistic reflection of decision makers' perceptions of job desirability. We were also able to test some assumptions about the correlates of relative desirability, including the extent to which the job satisfies intrinsic and extrinsic motives. While the study offered these advantages, one trade-off we made for this study was the need to use shorter (bipolar) measures due to presumed limited attention of HR managers and the higher cost associated with a longer study.

### **Participants and Design**

Two hundred sixty-four managers (mean age = 43.39,  $SD = 10.10$ ; 56.06 percent male) who make hiring decisions as part of their current job responsibilities took part in the study. The managers were recruited through Clear Voice, a U.S.-based research firm. Clear Voice extensively screens all panelists to verify their employment status (ClearVoice Research, 2016) and has been used in prior research (Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014; Podsakoff, Maynes, Whiting, & Podsakoff, 2015). Participants had 20.19 years of work experience on average ( $SD = 10.22$ ). Participants came from various industries, most notably professional, scientific, or technical services (15.65%), retail trade (10.31%), and finance or insurance (9.54%). Average size of participants' organization was in the 100–249 range. On average, participants had 4.02 organizational levels below ( $SD = 3.57$ ) and 3.03 above them ( $SD = 2.92$ ).

### **Procedure and Materials**

Participants were told that the study was on HR managers' decision making processes. HR managers were asked to list one specific position that they were responsible for hiring and to describe in a few sentences what the job entails. Some jobs rated as relatively less desirable (see below for measure details) included warehouse laborer, housekeeper, and customer service representative. Jobs rated as relatively more desirable included project director, IT internship, and entry-level manager. Participants then answered questions about the position.

***Job desirability measure and correlates of job desirability.*** We measured job desirability in a comparable way to Studies 2 and 3. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that the job they had listed described was desirable, attractive, and popular on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). We also included three additional items asking whether the job was prestigious, interesting, and satisfying. These items were based on our conceptual definition of job desirability and map onto the different key dimensions which contribute to satisfying an individual's intrinsic and extrinsic needs. All the items were highly correlated ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and a principal components analysis showed that they loaded onto a single component, so we combined them into the overall measure of job desirability. This result suggests that the different job facets relevant to the satisfaction of extrinsic (the extent to which the job is prestigious) and intrinsic motives (the extent to which the work is interesting and satisfying) are strongly correlated with the overall perception of relative job desirability.

We also asked the HR managers to give a numerical estimate of the pay level of the position they listed. This measure yielded somewhat noisy results as some HR managers either did not list a numerical estimate at all or listed a number that was not clear regarding the frequency of pay, leaving a total of 231 usable entries. Additionally, because some



participants reported this amount as a per-hour rate while others reported as a yearly total, we converted per-hour rates into a year estimate (40-hour work weeks for 52 weeks). There was a positive correlation between pay and job desirability such that jobs with relatively higher pay were also considered relatively higher in job desirability,  $r = .27, p < .001$ .

Finally, in this study we were also able to examine directly whether decision makers were concerned with candidate's satisfaction as a function of job desirability. We asked participants to indicate the extent to which they thought that risk of worker dissatisfaction is a concern with respect to the position on a 3-point scale (not a concern, a minor concern, a major concern). Consistent with our arguments, we found that the perceived risk of worker dissatisfaction was negatively associated with overall evaluation of job desirability,  $r = -.24, p < .001$ .

***Hiring simulation task.*** Next, participants moved on to the hiring simulation in which they were asked to imagine that they were hiring for the position they had listed. They were told to imagine that there were two entry-level candidates who had applied to the position, and participants should consider these candidates. We used the same profiles and photos materials used in Study 3 here.

***Measure of perceived candidates' senses of entitlement to good outcomes.*** We captured perceived sense of entitlement by asking participants to indicate, "Which of the two candidates do you think might feel more entitled, that is, have higher expectations of good outcomes for the self?" on a continuous 5-point scale with one end anchored on the unattractive candidate "feels more entitled," the other end anchored on the attractive candidate "feels more entitled," and the midpoint labeled as "both candidates feel similarly." The position (left end or right end) of attractive and unattractive candidate was counterbalanced between subjects in all measures. For ease of interpretation, we recoded all

the variables such that lower values denote the response associated with the unattractive candidate and higher the response associated with the attractive candidate.

**Measure of predicted dissatisfaction.** In a similar fashion, we asked participants to indicate, “Which of the two candidates do you think might be more dissatisfied working in the position?” on a continuous 5-point scale with one end anchored on the unattractive candidate “would definitely be more dissatisfied,” the other end anchored on the attractive candidate “would definitely be more dissatisfied,” and the midpoint labeled as “neither/not relevant for this position.” We gave instructions that if the decision maker did not believe dissatisfaction to be a concern for the position, they should select the midpoint.

**Measure of perceived competence.** We also included a measure of perceived competence, asking participants, “Which candidate do you think is more competent?” on a continuous 5-point scale with one end anchored on the unattractive candidate “is definitely more competent,” the other end anchored on the attractive candidate “is definitely more competent,” and the midpoint labeled as “similarly competent.”

**Selection decision.** Like in Study 2, participants were asked which of the two candidates they would hire for the job. The two profiles were presented side-by-side for the participant to see.

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation check.** The manipulation of physical attractiveness was effective. The attractive candidate ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) was rated as more attractive than the unattractive candidates ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ),  $t_{263} = 10.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.61$ .

**Hypothesis 1 test.** We tested whether attractive candidates were perceived as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than unattractive candidates by testing the continuous measure against the mid-point. If participants did not perceive a difference in perceived feeling of entitlement between attractive and unattractive individuals, this measure should not

differ significantly from the midpoint. The more participants perceived the unattractive individual as feeling more entitled, this measure should be lower than the midpoint, and the more participants perceived the attractive individual as feeling more entitled, this measure should be higher than the midpoint. Participants perceived the attractive candidate as feeling more entitled ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ), and this was significantly above the midpoint of 3,  $t_{263} = 5.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.32$ . This result supports Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 2 test.** We tested whether participants predicted different levels of dissatisfaction for attractive and unattractive candidates depending on job desirability. The measure of predicted dissatisfaction was similar in format to the measure of perceived entitlement such that if participants did not predict a difference in dissatisfaction between attractive and unattractive individuals, this measure should not differ significantly from the midpoint. The more participants predicted the unattractive individual as more dissatisfied with the job, this measure should be lower than the midpoint, and the more participants predicted the attractive individual as feeling more dissatisfied, this measure should be higher than the midpoint. To evaluate whether predicted dissatisfaction of the attractive candidate versus unattractive candidates (i.e., deviation from the midpoint in the measure of predicted dissatisfaction) is a function of job desirability, we first examined the zero-order correlation between the two variables (i.e., equivalent to interaction testing). We found that indeed predicted dissatisfaction of the attractive versus unattractive candidate marginally significantly correlated with job desirability,  $r = -.12$ ,  $p = .058$ . However, our hypothesis is that predicted dissatisfaction of the attractive versus unattractive candidate should differ for relatively less desirable jobs but not for relatively desirable jobs. Therefore, we further probed the relationship between these two variables.

Similar to the test of perceived entitlement, we tested whether there is a difference in predicted dissatisfaction between attractive and unattractive candidates by testing participant

responses against the midpoint of the scale. However, given the continuous nature of the job desirability measure, we make inferences from intercepts obtained from regression analyses to test predicted dissatisfaction against the mid-point of the scale at varying levels of job desirability. By centering the independent variable (job desirability) at varying points and the dependent variable (predicted dissatisfaction) at the scale midpoint, the intercept became a meaningful value that expressed the degree to which predicted dissatisfaction deviated from the midpoint (and the statistical significance of this deviation from the mid-point) at a given level of job desirability. We found that at higher values of rated job desirability (job desirability variable centered at +1SD above the mean), the intercept was not significant ( $p = .393$ ), suggesting that participants predicted no difference in dissatisfaction of the attractive versus unattractive candidates (i.e., the responses were not significantly different from the midpoint). At lower levels of rated job desirability ratings (job desirability variable centered at -1SD below the mean), the intercept became marginally statistically significant, such that the attractive candidate was seen as marginally more likely to be dissatisfied,  $b = .14$ ,  $t = 1.84$ ,  $p = .067$ ,  $d = 0.23$ . We note, however, that the -1SD point was (3.12) still above the midpoint of job desirability, suggesting the jobs we sampled were skewed towards relatively more desirable jobs. When we probed the trend at even lower levels of job desirability (scale points 2 and 1), the intercept became significant such that in all cases the attractive candidate was predicted to be more dissatisfied ( $ps < .045$ ).

We next ran a regression analysis to examine whether the greater level of predicted dissatisfaction of the attractive candidate on relatively less desirable jobs is due to the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate. The extent to which participants saw the attractive candidate as feeling more entitled to good outcomes than the unattractive candidate, the continuous ratings of job desirability, and their interaction were entered as predictors of the higher predicted dissatisfaction of the attractive candidate.

This analysis revealed a significant interaction between the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate and job desirability,  $b = -0.21$ ,  $t = -2.61$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $d = -0.16$ . When the job was rated one standard deviation below the mean in terms of job desirability, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate made participants predict lower levels of satisfaction of the attractive candidate relative to the unattractive candidate,  $b = 0.40$ ,  $t = 4.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.61$ . However, when the job was rated one standard deviation above the mean in terms of job desirability, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate did not lead decision makers to predict that the attractive candidate would be less satisfied than the unattractive candidate,  $b = 0.10$ ,  $t = 1.27$ ,  $p = .204$ ,  $d = 0.16$ . The results support Hypothesis 2.

***Perceived competence.*** We tested whether participants perceived competence differences between the attractive and unattractive candidates. We did this the same way we tested predicted dissatisfaction, by testing the continuous measure against the mid-point at different levels of job desirability. We found that at higher values of rated job desirability (job desirability variable centered at +1SD above the mean), the intercept was significant, such that the attractive candidate was seen as more competent than the unattractive candidate ( $b = .19$ ,  $t = 2.52$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $d = 0.31$ ). At lower levels of rated job desirability ratings (job desirability variable centered at -1SD below the mean), the intercept was not significant ( $p = .183$ ), suggesting that participants did not perceive a difference in competence between the attractive versus unattractive candidates (i.e., the responses were not significantly different from the midpoint). Again, we probed the trend at even lower levels of job desirability (scale points 2 and 1), the intercept became significant such that in all cases the unattractive candidate was predicted to be more competent ( $ps < .027$ ).

**Hypothesis 3 test.** We used a logit model to regression selection preference for attractive individuals (coded as 1) on job desirability. The effect of job desirability was significant,  $b = .46$ ,  $z = 2.63$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $d = 0.33$ , which shows that the selection preference for the attractive (unattractive) candidate increased as job desirability increased (decreased). To test whether one versus the other candidate was preferred at different points of job desirability, we again centered job desirability at its high versus low values, and we interpreted the regression intercepts, which express log odds of preferring the attractive candidate, and provide a statistical test of whether this preference is significantly different from zero. At high levels of job desirability (+1SD), the intercept was marginally significant and positive, indicating discrimination in favor of the attractive candidate at high levels of job desirability,  $b = .32$ ,  $z = 1.80$ ,  $p = .071$ ,  $d = 0.22$ . At low levels of job desirability (-1SD), the intercept was significant and negative, indicating discrimination in favor of the unattractive candidate at low levels of job desirability,  $b = -.35$ ,  $z = -1.97$ ,  $p = .049$ ,  $d = -0.24$ .

We again tested the full moderated mediation model. Unlike in the prior studies where we did not find differences in perceived competence between attractive and unattractive candidates, we did find a difference when hiring for a relatively desirable job, so we included perceived competence in the first step of the model. The regression analyses results for Study 4 are displayed in Table 3. We found that when the job was relatively less desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate reduced the likelihood of selecting the attractive candidate,  $b = -0.42$ , 95% CI [-0.79, -0.16], because participants predicted the attractive candidate would be less satisfied with the job. However, when the job was relatively more desirable, the higher perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate had no effect on selection decisions because it did not prompt decision makers to predict that the attractive candidate

would be less satisfied with the relatively more desirable job,  $b = -0.10$ , 95% CI  $[-0.32, 0.10]$ . The results support Hypothesis 3.

### **General Discussion**

Four studies found that attractive candidates are discriminated against in selection for relatively less desirable jobs. We found that decision makers believe attractive individuals feel more entitled to good outcomes, and because of this stereotype, they predict that attractive candidates would be more dissatisfied than unattractive candidates if selected to work on a job considered relatively less desirable (but not relatively desirable). As a result, decision makers discriminate against attractive candidates when selecting candidates for relatively less desirable jobs. Study 1 found that attractive candidates are perceived to have a greater sense of entitlement to good outcomes than unattractive individuals, and they are predicted to be less satisfied than unattractive individuals with relatively less desirable jobs. Study 2 extended the findings of the first study by examining hiring decisions using a hiring simulation. The findings of the study showed that the greater perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of attractive candidates compared to unattractive candidates led to a lower likelihood of attractive candidates being hired for relatively less desirable jobs compared to unattractive candidates by way of lower predicted satisfaction with the job. Study 3 replicated the effect with a selection decision in the laboratory where participants were choosing a partner to work with. Participants were less likely to select the attractive individual over the unattractive individual when the job was relatively less desirable compared to when the job was desirable. Again, a greater perceived sense of entitlement to good outcomes of the attractive candidate compared to the unattractive candidate led to lower predicted satisfaction in relatively less desirable jobs and subsequently the lower likelihood of selection for the attractive individual. Study 4 found the same effects with a sample of HR managers and examining their decisions in the context of actual jobs for which they make hiring decisions.

Finally, as supplementary tests, we also measured decision makers' own attractiveness and sense of entitlement to good outcomes (in Study 3). We found that decision makers' own attractiveness did not affect their discrimination against attractive candidates. We also found that more attractive participants felt somewhat less entitled to good outcomes. Decision makers thus defied the very stereotype they themselves exhibited toward attractive candidates.

### **Meta-Analytic Summary**

Taken together, these findings provide support for our theory that anticipated dissatisfaction with relatively less desirable jobs causes discrimination against attractive candidates. These findings stand in contrast to conclusions of prior work proposing pro-attractiveness bias operates in selection decisions. Despite some variance in the effect size, across the three studies involving selection decisions, we replicate pro-attractiveness bias documented in past work when participants made selection decisions for relatively more desirable jobs, they were more likely to select the attractive candidate (bootstrapped random-effects meta-analysis estimate: .370, 95% CI: .141, .600). We show that this trend is reversed in the domain of relatively less desirable jobs (bootstrapped random-effects meta-analysis estimate:  $-.430$ , 95% CI:  $-.662$ ,  $-.197$ ) and we consistently find the effect to be due to higher perceived entitlement, and in turn, anticipated dissatisfaction with relatively less desirable jobs among more physically attractive candidates. Finally, we note that the effect sizes we observe in selection for relatively more as well as relatively less desirable jobs are somewhat smaller than, but still comparable to those documented in past work looking at attractiveness and selection decisions. Specifically, we calculated that the average Cohen  $d$  of studies on attractiveness and selection decisions included in the Hosoda et al. (2003) meta-analysis was 0.47, while the average Cohen's  $d$  of the effects across our studies was 0.29, with slightly lower effect sizes in the domain of relatively more (average  $d$  0.32) than relatively less desirable jobs (average  $d$  0.26).



### **Theoretical and Practical Contributions**

**To attractiveness discrimination.** This research contributes to challenging the far-sweeping conclusion that being more attractive is always advantageous (Hosoda et al., 2003). We note that there are common situations in which the expectation of bigger and better things for attractive individuals (with the corresponding inference that attractive individuals also feel entitled to such outcomes) may backfire and lead to discrimination against attractive job candidates. By highlighting the role of salient situational goals that override the general tendency to give good outcomes to attractive individuals on account of positive stereotypes, we provide a more nuanced understanding of how stereotypes translate to good and bad outcomes. While we have tested our ideas in the context of employee selection, we expect a similar process of discrimination against attractive others to occur in other contexts where decision makers might anticipate that attractive others' sense of entitlement might be a problem. For example, people might opt to introduce less attractive acquaintances over more attractive ones to low status others who may be otherwise useful, or they may exclude more attractive individuals from social events which they anticipate to not be exciting. Future research might want to examine how the ascribed sense of entitlement leads to poor outcomes for attractive individuals in different contexts.

The results of our studies also add to the understanding of stereotypes of attractive people. Most research on attractiveness is based on the assumption that people ascribe positive qualities to attractive people (K. K. Dion et al., 1972; Griffin & Langlois, 2006). Meta-analytic evidence suggests that the strength of this effect varies substantially (Eagly et al., 1991). This work showed that positive stereotypes are more pronounced in judgments of competence than in judgments of social concern. This difference has not been theoretically elaborated, but our findings might help provide a theoretical grounding for the different associations documented in past work. Specifically, because social concern often entails

worse outcomes for the self (e.g., in the form of altruism or self-sacrifice) our results which show that attractive individuals are seen as entitled might explain why they are not stereotyped as more concerned about others' welfare.

**To personnel selection.** Our results also contribute to research on selection decisions by revealing that decision makers are considering more than a candidate's ability to perform well. Most prior work assumed that the main motivation of organizations and their decision makers is to select candidates whom they anticipate to perform well (A. M. Ryan & Ployhart, 2014; Sackett & Lievens, 2008). This literature looked at a broad range of candidate characteristics potentially relevant to whether the candidate would be able perform well, such as social skills rather than just task skills (Morgeson, Reider, & Campion, 2005), and individual values that are more versus less fitting to requirements of the job and the organization (Cable & Judge, 1997). Ultimately, all these candidate features are relevant primarily as determinants of whether the candidate can perform the work well.

We argued that taking into account not only whether a candidate can perform well but also predicted satisfaction with the job may be a rational strategy for decision makers because workers' satisfaction shapes a number of important workplace outcomes (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993). We find that this is precisely what decision makers do: Our participants readily made predictions about candidates' future satisfaction and these predictions determined their selection decisions. When making selection decisions for relatively less desirable jobs, participants' predictions of candidates' satisfaction with the jobs affected their choices. Because the potential costs are higher with someone who is more dissatisfied in a given position, decision makers are focused on the specific goal of ensuring that the selected candidate is sufficiently satisfied with (and thus motivated in) the job for which the selection decision is being made. This insight opens avenues for exploring selection dynamics in other situations that make candidates' future satisfaction relevant, as

well as with respect to other candidate features that might affect decision makers' predictions of candidates' future satisfaction.

One potential reason that prior work on selection did not examine decision makers' predictions of candidates' potential satisfaction with the job is the fact that applying for a job is an expression of candidates' interest in the position. It is tempting to conceptualize selection as a process of detecting the best people among a pool of candidates who are all interested in the job. Indeed, some classical models of selection, such as the attraction-selection-attribution model (Schneider, 1987), propose that based on the features of a job, a pool of relatively homogenous candidates forms with genuine interest in the job. The reality of the modern job marketplace, however, is that people seeking jobs often apply to a large number of openings (High Fliers Research, 2013) without necessarily considering each of them as their dream job. It is easy to imagine why a person who needs a job would claim to be interested in a particular job while in actuality merely preferring any job to no job. This issue is compounded by the rise in information technology, which made applying to many job openings easy. Human resource managers are aware of this trend (Graylink, 2013), which likely makes them more concerned about whether the candidate has genuine interest in the job and, consequentially, whether the candidate would be satisfied with the job in the long run. Because the discrimination against attractive candidates that we document in this research is based on concerns about candidates' satisfaction, the fact that candidate satisfaction is likely to become a greater concern among decision makers might mean that the phenomenon we document is on the rise. Large-scale, multi-wave studies are needed to formally test whether that is the case.

**To general processes of discrimination and stratification.** Finally, our work contributes to past research that showed that decision makers perpetuate structural social divisions through biased selection decisions. Most notably, previous research on

discrimination based on candidate and job status (King, Mendoza, Madera, Hebl, & Knight, 2006; Terpstra & Larsen Jr, 1980) found that decision makers perceive candidates who possess certain status characteristics (such as sex or race) as being more or less suitable for jobs based on occupational stereotypes. For example, high status occupations are seen as more appropriate for White, majority individuals (Terpstra & Larsen Jr, 1980). Our work shows that selecting people based on features signaling their social status (in our case, physical attractiveness) may occur not only at the high end of job desirability, whereby people possessing high-status characteristics are favored for desirable jobs, but that an inverse process occurs at the low end of job desirability, such that people possessing high-status characteristics are selected out of relatively less desirable jobs. It is easy to imagine how these two processes complement each other to perpetuate the structural division in society based on status-related candidate features. Decision makers' discriminatory behavior may perpetuate the very stereotype (association between attractive people and good outcomes) that drives discrimination against attractive candidates applying for relatively less desirable jobs in the first place.

The same process as the one we document in relation to physical attractiveness might be driving a similar pattern of discrimination based on other individual features (such as sex, socioeconomic status, or age) that people might associate with higher expectations of good outcomes for the self. Most research on the psychology of standards focuses on how one's own standards shape responses to received or prospective outcomes, so one more general takeaway from the current set of studies is that people also readily make predictions regarding other people's standards and thus potential dissatisfaction with outcomes offered. While this observation is rather straightforward, it could be useful in enriching current models of discrimination based on other characteristics, potentially uncovering discrimination at the lower end of the spectrum of theoretical choice set of desirable

outcomes against those perceived to have higher standards, but who have no better options. For example, because people of higher socioeconomic status (e.g., those coming from richer families) generally enjoy good outcomes in life, they might be perceived to be entitled to good outcomes. Yet even people from such families wishing to develop a career in a certain profession generally must start from relatively low-level positions. It is possible that the general process we document operates in such situations, such that decision makers anticipate that people of higher socioeconomic background would be more prone to dissatisfaction with lower-level jobs, leading to patterns of discrimination that are not accounted for by existing models. Similar extensions of the core theoretical logic could be made in relation to various other potentially relevant characteristics, such as sex, race, or age.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

We found support for our theory using three laboratory studies and one experiment using experienced HR managers. However, there are limitations in the current research and areas of future development of our theory and empirical tests. First, as the initial test of the theory, we believed laboratory experiments to be paramount, allowing us a high degree of control in detecting the effect. Empirically, our tests are in line with the most widely used paradigms for testing discrimination in selection. However, while there are no theoretical reasons to suspect that the effect would not replicate in a particular context, evidence for the effect would be strengthened through replication in specific contexts.

We note that we have largely limited the possible levels of job desirability to a dichotomous relatively more versus relatively less desirable categorization as well as the possible levels of attractiveness to a dichotomous attractive versus unattractive to secure experimental control. However, both job desirability and attractiveness can be captured in a more fine-grained manner. This methodological approach would allow for a more nuanced exploration of the effects we document, including the potential non-linearity of effects. For

instance, it is possible that the effect of candidate attractiveness is most pronounced at very high levels of attractiveness, and that the role of job desirability elicits greatest concerns about satisfaction at very low levels of job desirability. Exploring these possibilities would help develop more precise targeted interventions aimed at combatting the problematic phenomenon we document.

Another methodological limitation of our research is that across the three laboratory studies we operationalized differences in job desirability by manipulating perceived job desirability directly, that is, by describing the job itself as more versus less likely to be satisfying. Other features also make jobs desirable, and income is perhaps the most important one. We noted in Study 1 that we chose not to manipulate job desirability by varying remuneration associated with the job because there are arguments in the literature that, in certain cases, greater extrinsic rewards make jobs less inherently satisfying (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Frey, 1997; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980). For that reason, manipulating job desirability by varying remuneration would make the interpretation of our results less straightforward and this strategy would also potentially undermine the effectiveness of our manipulation. Nevertheless, in general, people probably do view jobs that pay more as being more desirable (Chapman et al., 2005) and there is evidence that decision makers in particular make an assumption that other people are motivated by extrinsic rewards (Heath, 1999). Thus, we would expect that decision makers would generally assume that candidates view better-paying jobs as more desirable. To the extent that this prediction is founded, our theory should also be able to explain attractiveness discrimination as a function of job remuneration level such that attractive candidates would be discriminated against on lower-paying jobs, compared to higher-paying jobs. While we were able to establish that there is variation in perceived job desirability across real jobs and initial evidence of correlates of

desirability in Study 4, further work is needed to verify the generalizability of our theory to different forms of job desirability.

Finally, we leave open the possibility that just world beliefs are an alternative to the effect we find such that perhaps decision makers are at some level, maybe implicitly, trying to sort attractive candidates into more desirable jobs by discriminating against them when selecting for relatively less desirable jobs. However, this requires a few assumptions. First, we must assume that decision makers believe rejection and not getting the job at hand, albeit a relatively less desirable job in the set of all possible jobs, is a “deserved” outcome for attractive individuals. We also must assume that decision makers believe other decision makers will decide in favor of the attractive candidate they rejected into a more desirable job. This would then suggest that belief in a just world would cause decision makers to give bad outcomes to good people in anticipation of a better outcome that does not exist yet. An extension of our work could be to exclude this possibility by measuring belief in a just world and examining whether that could lead to these outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

We presented and tested a model for how stereotypes associated with attractiveness could lead to poor outcomes for attractive individuals. We tested our model in the context of employee selection. Our studies, which show that attractive people are discriminated against in selection for relatively less desirable jobs, stand in contrast to a large body of research that concluded that attractiveness, by and large, helps candidates in the selection process. We noted that extant work largely ignored jobs marked by relatively less desirable features, such as jobs that are less interesting. This oversight is both theoretically important and socially consequential as different discriminatory processes seem to operate in selection for relatively less desirable jobs. We hope that our work motivates a scholarly as well as managerial effort

to promote fairness and efficiency of decision making in relation to less desirable jobs, which might be more relevant for many people who lack better options and opportunities in life.

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**Table 1.** Study 2: Regression Analysis Results

	Predicted Satisfaction (OLS)			Selection Decision (Logistic Regression)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>
Perceived Entitlement (PE)	-1.082	0.193	<.001	-2.126	0.671	.002
Job Desirability (JD)	0.378	0.134	.005	0.574	0.574	.092
PE × JD	0.816	0.268	.003	1.856	1.856	.087
Predicted Satisfaction (PS)	---	---	---	0.316	0.316	.021
Constant	-0.185	0.096	.053	-0.034	0.241	.887
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.210			.214	

Conditional indirect effect when undesirable job,  $b = -0.371$ , CI 95% [-.56, -.18]

Conditional indirect effect when desirable job,  $b = 0.148$ , CI 95% [-.04, .34]

$N = 194$ .

**Table 2.** Study 3: Regression Analysis Results

	Predicted Satisfaction (OLS)			Selection Decision (Logistic Regression)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>
Perceived Entitlement (PE)	-0.751	0.178	<.001	-0.728	0.446	.102
Job Desirability (JD)	0.058	0.175	.742	1.023	0.389	.009
PE × JD	0.769	0.267	.004	-0.856	0.619	.167
Predicted Satisfaction (PS)	---	---	---	0.571	0.207	.006
Constant	-0.166	0.130	.205	-0.671	0.298	.024
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.133			.139	

Conditional indirect effect when undesirable job,  $b = -0.429$ , CI 95% [-.95, -.13]

Conditional indirect effect when desirable job,  $b = 0.010$ , CI 95% [-.22, .29]

$N = 149$ .

**Table 3.** Study 4: Regression Analysis Results

	Predicted Dissatisfaction (OLS)			Selection Decision (Logistic Regression)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>p</i>
Perceived Entitlement (PE)	1.053	0.320	.001	-0.270	1.011	.789
Job Desirability (JD)	0.524	0.275	.058	-0.304	0.834	.715
PE × JD	-0.209	0.080	.010	0.176	0.257	.493
Predicted Dissatisfaction (PS)	---	---	---	-1.041	0.216	<.001
Competence	---	---	---	1.152	0.239	<.001
Constant	0.215	1.086	.843	-0.496	3.308	.881
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.099			.349	
Conditional indirect effect when undesirable job, <i>b</i> = -0.416, CI 95% [-.76, -.16]						
Conditional indirect effect when desirable job, <i>b</i> = -0.099, CI 95% [-.33, .10]						

*N* = 264.