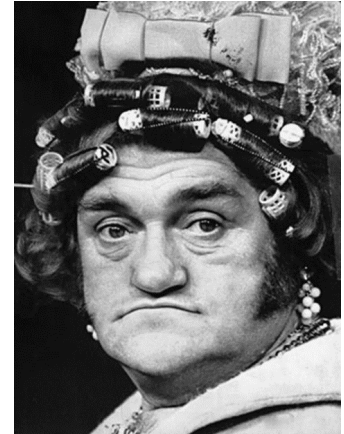


Physical attractiveness and careers

- 1 STUDIES HAVE shown that attractive women are more likely to be promoted than their plain-Jane colleagues. Because people tend to project positive traits onto them, such as sensitivity and poise, they may also be at an advantage in job interviews. The only downside to hotness is having to fend off ghastly male colleagues; or so many people think. But research by two Israelis suggests otherwise.
- 2 Researchers Bradley Ruffle and Ze'ev Shtudiner looked at what happens when job hunters include photos with their curricula vitae, as is the norm in much of Europe and Asia. The pair sent fictional applications to over 2,500 real-life vacancies. For each job, they sent two very similar résumés, one with a photo, one without. Subjects had previously been graded for their attractiveness.
- 3 For men, the results were as expected. Hunks were more likely to be called for an interview if they included a photo. Ugly men were better off not including one. However, for women this was reversed. Attractive females were less likely to be offered an interview if they included a photo.
- 4 At first, Ruffle and Shtudiner considered what they call the "dumb-blonde hypothesis" – that people assume beautiful women to be stupid. However, the photos had also been rated on how intelligent people thought each subject looked; there was no correlation between perceived intellect and pulchritude.
- 5 So the cause of the discrimination must lie elsewhere. Human resources departments tend to be staffed mostly by women. Indeed, in the Israeli study, 93% of those tasked with selecting whom to invite for an interview were female. The researchers' unavoidable – and unpalatable – conclusion is that old-fashioned jealousy led the women to discriminate against pretty candidates.
- 6 So should attractive women simply attach photos that make them look dowdy? No. Better, say the scientists, to discourage the practice of including a photo altogether. Companies might even consider the anonymous model used in the Belgian public sector, where CVs do not even include the candidate's name.



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