When Hair Color Influences Job Marketability: The Impact of Red Hair Color on Perceived Attributes and Employment Outcomes for Caucasian Male and Female Job Applicants

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Abstract

This study explores how hair color affects perceptions of male and female Caucasian job applicants seeking professional managerial positions. Using a between-subjects design, 158 participants from two samples (Sample 1: future managers, Sample 2: current managers in the banking industry) were asked to rate one of six "paper" applicants after examining a hypothetical job description, a résumé, and a profile picture of the applicant. Paper applicants differed in terms of their gender (male or female) as well as their hair color, which was electronically manipulated (blonde, red, and brunette). Results from both samples reveal partial support for the hypotheses. In a sample of future managers, red-haired applicants were rated significantly lower than blondes and brunettes on all dependent variables including likelihood to hire, beginning salary, physical attractiveness and intelligence, but not on ability to handle stress or ability to supervise others. There were no gender differences for red-haired female and red-haired male job applicants. Findings from the banking industry sample reveal similar effects for likelihood to hire, such that red-haired applicants were rated lower than blondes and brunettes, although none of the other differences were significant. Results of this study are discussed in terms of implications for research on stereotypes and workplace practices related to hiring discrimination and equal employment opportunity.

Keywords: Gender Stereotypes, Hair Color Stereotypes, Employment Decisions

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There are many factors that determine whether a job applicant will be deemed a 'good fit' for a position. However, in a competitive job market where multiple individuals may be roughly equally qualified in terms of their professional experience and formal education, surface-level individual differences such as physical characteristics (i.e., body traits and clothing) may influence the employment decisions of managers. This may be particularly likely today, as the increased use of social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook make applicant photos easily viewable from the earliest stages of the employment process. A well-established body of research shows that despite the many federal and state laws, company policies, and management training programs aimed at preventing employment discrimination, the hiring process is likely still influenced by implicit biases based on relatively superficial characteristics (Bendick and Nunes 2012; Rooth 2010). For example, over the past several decades, studies have shown that factors such as gender, race, and age may affect the perceived capabilities of job applicants (Quillian et al. 2017; Neumark, Burn, and Button 2016; Koch, D'Mello, and Sacket 2015). However, raising awareness of unconscious attributions and calling attention to unfair stereotypes may help to prevent unintended prejudice and discrimination.

The purpose of this study is to explore whether and how hair color affects the perceived attractiveness, intelligence, temperament, and capability of Caucasian male and female job applicants. Despite nearly three decades of research in workplace organizational justice literature highlighting the effects of bias in perceptions of job applicants, very few studies have examined the ways in which hair color affects the career marketability of job applicants. This is interesting given that hair color is a highly salient and visible feature of job applicants and because there are well established stereotypes associated with hair color. Furthermore, while prior studies have shown that stereotypes based on hair color do exist, very little attention has

been given to how gender may interact with hair color to create different perceptions for male and female job applicants. In this study, we examine the ways in which the hair color of job applicants affects participants' likelihood to hire the applicant, the starting salary assigned to the applicant, and decision makers' perceptions of the applicant's intelligence, physical attractiveness, ability to handle stress, and capability of supervising others.

Stereotypes

According to Feinman and Gill (1978), stereotypes serve a functional role in information processing by allowing individuals to create simplified images of the world in which they live, thereby conserving cognitive resources. Another benefit of stereotypes is that they enable individuals to respond quickly to different persons or situations based on pre-conceived beliefs about those individuals or circumstances. However, researchers have noted that while stereotypes may contain a "kernel of truth," many are not based on reality (Feinman and Gill 1978). Instead, they may be based on unrepresentatively small samples of known individuals or on highly conspicuous representations of groups of people as seen in popular culture, including those circulated in the mass media. Moreover, studies have shown that when evaluating members of a stereotyped group, individuals tend to engage in confirmation bias – searching for, interpreting, and recalling information in ways that confirms such stereotypes, whether or not actually true (Koomen and Dijker, 1998; Nickerson, 1998; Nelson, Acker, and Manis, 1996; Van Hippel, 1996). Allowing stereotypes to influence important decisions may thus yield inaccurate or unfairly biased results. Stereotypes can be particularly damaging in the context of the workplace, such as during job interviews or preliminary screenings, where they may lead to subtle and overt forms of bias towards or against job applicants (Taylor et al. 2019; Yemane and Fernández-Reino 2019; Swift, Abrams, and Cuthbert, 2017; Flint et al. 2016; Latu, Mast, and

Stewart 2015; Remedios, Chasteen, and Oey 2012; Pager and Karafin 2009). At worst, the influence of positive or negative stereotypes may lead to unfair and illegal discrimination in employment practices such as recruitment, selection, promotion, or employee development opportunities. Stereotypes can exist just below the level of consciousness (i.e., implicit biases), making them difficult to detect (Holroyd 2015). However, merely making managers aware of stereotypes may increase their ability to reject them when they are false or unfounded. Thus, studies which highlight the potential for biases can inform training which may improve the chances of fair and legal employment practices.

Stereotypes about Hair Color

Research on hair color suggests that it may play a significant role in how people are perceived and treated. Research on blondes, in particular, reveals significant stereotype effects related to attractiveness, intelligence and desirability (e.g. the "blonde bombshell" or the "dumb blonde") of blonde-haired women. Blonde women, while rated as more attractive than their brunette counterparts, are also seen as more likely to rely on their looks than their intelligence (Johnston 2010; Weir and Fine-Davis 1989). Less research has been done on red hair. Red is among the rarest of hair colors, occurring naturally in less than 2% of the world population (Heckert and Best 1997). Yet despite their minority status, red-haired individuals (i.e., 'redheads' or 'gingers') are not considered a protected class and therefore are not afforded special protections by law, policy, or similar authority for their hair color. In addition, research suggests that because there are so few of them in society, red-haired individuals are the subjects of frequent social stigmatization (Heckert and Best 1997). Harsh stereotypes about redheads can be explained by labeling theory, which posits that members of majority groups have the tendency negatively label other individuals belonging to minority groups or those who are otherwise seen

as deviant from cultural norms (Heckert and Best 1997). Red hair may be considered an example of such deviance. Studies show that redheads are rated as less likeable than individuals with different hair colors (Clayson and Maughan 1986; Feinman and Gill 1978). Researchers suggest that stigmas attached to red hair may lessen their general appeal (Takeda, Helms & Romanova, 2006).

Negative stereotypes about redheads have existed for thousands of years. During the Middle Ages, red hair was symbolic of sin and red-haired women were believed to have a connection with the Devil (Roach 2005). This led to stereotyped images of female redheads as being both powerful and closely associated with moral degeneration. References to this can be seen in today's popular culture. For example, the common phrase "Gingers don't have souls" can be traced to the American sitcom *South Park*. Another widely held stereotype about red-haired women is that they are wild and unruly (i.e., 'fiery redhead') (Heckert & Best 1997). Depictions of this may be seen in such iconic characters as Jessica Rabbit (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*), Mystique (*X-Men*), and Princess Merida (*Brave*), all of whom are bold, defiant, and self-assured. Yet, in contrast, red-haired men are frequently stereotyped as being weak, wimpy, and clownish (Heckert and Best 1997). Well-known examples in popular culture include Ron Weasley (*Harry Potter*), Philip J. Fry (*Futurama*), and the Mad Hatter (*Alice in Wonderland*). The existence of these male-specific stereotypes may be due, in part, to the popularized idea of the perfect male body as being that which is "tall, dark, and handsome." For example, men with dark hair are perceived as more ambitious, dependable, and successful than men with lighter hair (Matz, Krane, and Ryan 2007; Lawson 1971). Moreover, research suggests that individuals with dark hair are seen as more mature (Matz and Hinsz 2000). This can be potentially harmful to redheads since many employers seek competent, serious workers.

Physical Attractiveness

Research suggests that physical attractiveness, or the degree to which job applicants are considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful, affects – among other things – how they are perceived by hiring managers. Prior studies show that the more physically attractive a job applicant is, the greater the likelihood that he or she will be hired for a position (Paustian-Underdahl and Walker 2016; Watkins and Johnston 2000). This may be because people who are physically attractive are often believed to possess socially desirable personality traits, a generalization commonly referred to as the "what is good" stereotype, or the 'halo effect' (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster 1972). Although beauty is often considered to be 'in the eye of the beholder,' researchers have identified many bodily traits and features that contribute to physical attractiveness, including: facial symmetry, sexually dimorphic shape cues, and skin color (Little, Jones, and DeBruine 2011).

Hair color has also been found to be an important factor in determining physical attractiveness. For example, several studies suggest that both men and women find redheads to be less physically attractive than individuals with other hair colors (Guéguen and Lamy 2013; Guéguen 2012; Swami and Barrett 2011; Clayson and Klassen 1989; Clayson and Maughan 1986). In the context of the workplace, this may lead to potential issues, given that there is currently no legislation prohibiting employment discrimination based on physical attractiveness. Findings such as this have important implications for the job marketability of redheads. Based on these research findings, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Redhead applicants will be rated significantly lower on physical attractiveness than blonde and brunette applicants.

Intelligence

Intelligence has long been identified as one of the best predictors of work performance across all jobs (Schmidt and Hunter 2004). However, physical appearance may influence whether an individual is perceived as 'intelligent' or not. As noted by Kyle and Mahler (1996), stereotyped images in popular culture often depict blondes as having relatively low intelligence (i.e., "dumb blonde") and brunettes as being clever and smart (e.g., "brainy brunette"). Research by Weir and Fine-Davis (1989) further examined these hair-color stereotypes to reveal that, in accordance with these overgeneralized beliefs, blondes are often rated as less intelligent than both redheads and brunettes even though evidence suggests that there is no significant difference among these groups (Zagorsky 2016). In addition to this, researchers found a significant interaction between hair color and gender, such that brunette and blonde-haired men were rated as more and less intelligent, respectively, than their female counterparts (Weir and Fine-Davis 1989). These findings suggest not only that hair-color stereotypes are enduring and widely adopted, but also that their degrees of effect may vary based on gender. Stereotypes such as this may lead to unfair assumptions about the cognitive abilities of job applicants by hiring managers and therefore should be understood in greater detail.

Like brunettes, redheads may also be regarded as highly intelligent. A study by Heckert and Best (1997) suggests that red-haired men and women may be considered "intellectually superior" to both blondes and brunettes. Based on these research findings, we hypothesize the following:

H2: Redhead applicants will be rated significantly higher on intelligence than blonde and brunette applicants.

Temperament

Evidence suggests that stereotypes based on hair also lead to inaccurate judgements about personality. For example, in an interview-based study, Hecker and Best (1997) identified several stereotypes commonly associated with redheads in general, including the following personality traits: hot-tempered, wacky, strange, and different. However, there are some stereotypes about redheads that appear to be gender specific. For example, red-haired men may be more likely to be viewed as wimpy (Heckert and Best 1997), effeminate, shy, and weak (Clayson and Maughan 1976; 1986). According to Lawson (1971), these beliefs are incompatible with the typical gender role stereotypes of men as being strong, dominant, and assertive and thus may be very damaging. On the other hand, red-haired women may be more often seen as strong-willed, temperamental, and aggressive (Swami and Barrett 2011; Weir and Fine-Davis 1989; Lawson 1971). Therefore, although red-haired men and women are frequently characterized as impetuous or quick-tempered in nature, red-haired women may be perceived as being more capable of dealing with those stressors. Based on these research findings, we hypothesize the following:

H3a: Redhead applicants will be rated significantly lower than blonde and brunette applicants on their ability to deal with high-stress situations in the workplace.

H3b: Red-haired female applicants will be rated significantly higher than red-haired male applicants on their ability to handle high-stress situations in the workplace.

Job Competence, Employability, and Assigned Salary

A recent study by Gonzalez, Mercado, and Dilchert (2016) finds that redheads may generally be evaluated more negatively than blondes and brunettes in terms of their qualifications and suitability for a job. This further suggests that physical traits such as hair color can give individuals a slight advantage on the job market. In another study, Kyle and Mahler (1996) examined whether hair color affects perceptions of female job applicants and their ability for a professional position. They found that the job applicant was rated significantly less capable when depicted as a redhead or blonde than when depicted as brunette (Kyle and Mahler 1996). In addition, redheads and blondes were offered lower beginning salaries. However, there was no significant difference between the blonde and redhead conditions. Even so, there is some conflicting evidence that suggests that blondes may earn more than redheads and brunettes (Kyle and Mahler 1996). In one study, Johnston (2010) surveyed 13,000 Caucasian women and found that blondes earned, on average, seven percent more than women of any other hair color. These differences existed even when controlling for factors such as height, weight, and education, and similar effects were found for no other hair color. Further research suggest that blondes may earn more in certain work settings as well (Guéguen 2012). This research also suggests that redheads earn less than blondes and brunettes. In addition, gender-specific stereotypes about redheads characterize red-haired women as being more potent and powerful in the workplace, compared to red-haired men who may be considered as superior to none (Lawson 1971). Based on these findings, we hypothesize the following:

H4a: Redhead applicants will be rated significantly lower than the blonde and brunette applicants on effectiveness at supervising others in the workplace.

H4b: Red-haired female applicants will be rated significantly more effective at supervising than the red-haired male applicant.

H5: Redhead applicants will be rated significantly lower on likelihood to be hired than blonde and brunette applicants.

H6: Redhead applicants will be assigned a lower starting salary than the blonde and brunette applicants.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature about hair color and gender, and the effects of these two variables on perceptions in the workplace by bringing attention to how stereotypes can limit or give advantage to men and women with different hair colors. Many stereotyped images of red-haired individuals feature depictions of Caucasians. This is perhaps because red hair is frequently characterized by high levels of pheomelanin and low levels of eumelanin and is therefore often – though not always – associated with light-colored skin and freckles. Moreover, while red hair does not exclusively occur in Caucasians, European populations show much hair color variation than African or Asian populations (Rees 2003). Therefore, this study focuses specifically on perceptions of Caucasian job applications.

By examining gender, in addition to hair color, this research provides valuable information to psychologists and organizational behavior experts by distinguishing between perceptions of redheaded males and redheaded females. Being more informed about the limitations of stereotypes in the workplace, experts will be better able to work to dispel the false

labels attached to potential professional workers and move towards improved workforce inclusivity.

Methods

Participants

In the first sample, participants were 120 undergraduate management students enrolled in business courses from a small university in the southeastern United States. Attempts were made to obtain an equal number of upperclassmen and underclassmen participants. All participation was voluntary, and all participants read an informed consent cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and informing participants of their rights prior to beginning the survey. Criterion for selection of participants was to be a student attending classes in the management department. This criterion was selected because the target sample for this study was future managers. Forty-five percent (45%) of participants were male and 55% were female. Roughly 88% of participants were Caucasian, 1.6% were Hispanic, 4.2% were Asian, 5.8% reported 'other,' and less than 1% were African-American. Participants ranged from 18-50 years old and the mean age was 21.80 years. Approximately 62.5% were declared management majors or intended to declare a major in the field of management. Among them, nearly 17% of participants had some previous hiring experience in the workforce and 73% of participants predicted that they had a very-likely chance of acting as a manager in the future job. Response rate for this sample was 100%.

In a second exploratory field sample, participants were 34 professionals who worked for a large financial and banking institution in the US southeast. Criterion for selection of participants was to be a professional with previous hiring experience. This criterion was selected because researchers wanted to compare results from the student group, or future managers, to

professionals with hiring experience. Half (50%) of participants held a bachelor's degree, 23.5% held master's degree, 12% had obtained their doctorate, and 14.5% had attended some college. Among these managers, 44% of participants had been educated in a management-related field of study, and 56% reported concentration in another field of study. Thirty-eight (38%) of participants were male and 62% of participants were female. Most (73%) of participants were Caucasian, 12% were African-American, 6% were Asian, and 9% reported 'other.' Participant ages range from 24-78 years old and the mean age was 43 years old.

Procedure

Data was collected by paper and pencil survey. For sample 1, permission was obtained from professors in the Management Department to visit classes and seek participation from students. Surveys were administered in a classroom setting, at the beginning of the designated class period. Participants were randomly and unknowingly assigned to one of the six (2 [gender] x 3 [hair color]) conditions. Thus, each participant viewed only 1 of the 6 photographs. There were an equal number of participants (n = 20) in each condition.

The researcher explained the purpose and scope of the experiment, followed by instructions for those who wished to participate. The researcher read instructions aloud to participants before surveys were administered. Participants were asked to act as if they worked for a "hypothetical" retail establishment wherein their job is to hire people for open positions within the company. Next, participants were instructed to review the contents of the packet given to them, including a job description for an open store-manager position well as the résumé and photograph of an applicant applying for the open store-manager position. After all information was reviewed, participants were instructed to complete a survey to rate the applicant based on the information provided, by drawing conclusions based on their own perceptions of

the applicant. Participants were allowed to review information from the résumé, photo and job description as they completed the survey. Finally, to ensure confidentiality, participants were asked to deposit completed survey into a box at the front of the room.

In the second sample, surveys were administered by distribution through a Human Resources representative at a large financial and banking organization in the southeastern United States. The representative who distributed the surveys was instructed to pass-out materials enclosed in an envelope to employees of the firm whom had hiring experience that would voluntarily participate in the study. Participants were randomly and unknowingly assigned to one of the six (2 [gender] x 3 [hair color]) conditions. Thus, each participant viewed only 1 of the 6 photographs. Participants were asked to follow the enclosed instructions (identical to those in Study 1) and complete the survey and return in a sealed envelope to the HR representative.

Materials

Materials used in this study include an implied informed consent cover letter, a job description for an open store manager position, a gender-specific résumé for the paper applicant, one of six photographs of an applicant, and a survey. Photographs were digitally altered using Adobe Photoshop to show the exact same female or male applicant, with one of three different hair colors: blonde, brunette, or red hair color (see Figure 1). Thus, all variables were held constant, with exception of hair color, gender, and the name on the résumé, which was shown as either 'Jane' for the female applicants or 'John' for the male applicants.

The six dependent variables in this study were physical attractiveness, intelligence, ability to deal with a situation in the workplace involving high-stress, likelihood to hire, effectiveness at supervising others in the workplace and beginning salary assignment within the restricted range of $32,000 to $38,000. The first five of these were measured on a semantic-

differential scale ranging from 1-5, 1 being the lowest, and 5 being the highest. Following the six questions referring to the applicant, six additional questions were asked about basic participant demographic variables including past hiring experience, undergraduate declared field of study, and likelihood to act as a manager in the future.

Design

A 2 (gender) x 3 (hair color) experimental design was used. There was a total of six conditions: redheaded male, redheaded female, blonde male, blonde female, brunette male and brunette female. Optimally, researchers use MANOVA to test hypotheses regarding differences across groups in which there are two or more dependent variables. MANOVA relies on multivariate *F*, is generally advantageous to ANOVA in that it increases power by considering several dependent variables simultaneously. However, it is only appropriate to use MANOVA if statistical assumptions for the test are met (Stevens, 1992). In this case, violations of the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices was indicated by a significant Box's M ($F(105, 28{,}671) = 1.68$, $p < .001$). While this test tends to be very sensitive, we chose to use ANOVA due to the additional violations of the no multicollinearity assumption, which also indicate that MANOVA may not be appropriate in this case. In particular, several dependent variables were significantly and strongly correlated. Effectiveness at supervising and likelihood to hire were the most strongly correlated ($r = .62$, $p < .00$). Thus, hypotheses regarding differences between hair color groups were examined using a 1-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukey HSD Post-Hoc tests. Hypotheses regarding differences between redheaded females and redheaded males were further examined using t-tests.

To rule out confounding variables and increase internal validity in this experiment, participants were given the exact same job description and résumé, with the exception to the

name on the résumé, which was gender specific. Photographs of males and females shown were professional headshots taken by the same photographer, with the same pose and background for each. Male and female applicant photos were chosen to be close in age and facial features appeared to be very similar to each other. These photos can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Photographs of male and female applicants with brunette (left), blonde (center), and red hair (right)

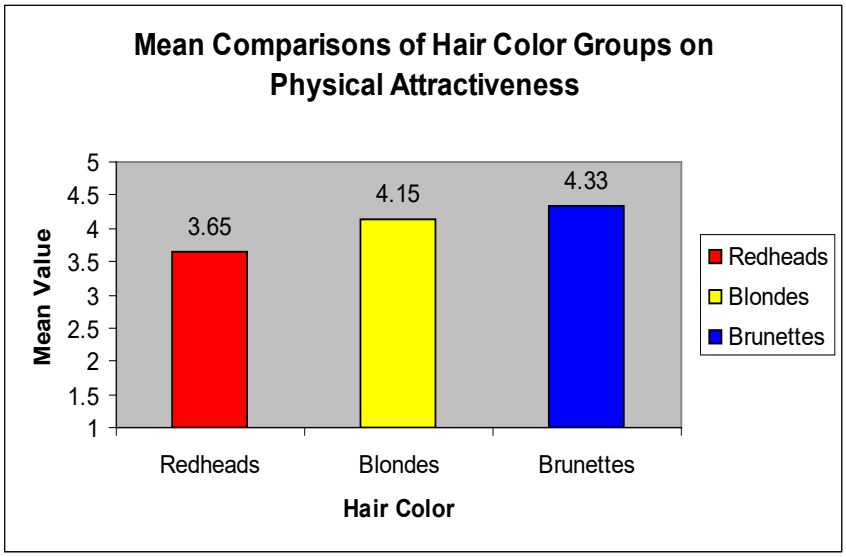
Results

Sample 1 Result

Hypothesis 1 stated that the redheaded applicant would be rated lower in attractiveness than the blonde and brunette applicants. This hypothesis was confirmed. There is a significant difference between groups on the dependent variable of physical attractiveness, $F(2, 116) = 7.30$, $p < .05$. Brunette applicants were viewed as the most attractive ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .87$), blondes

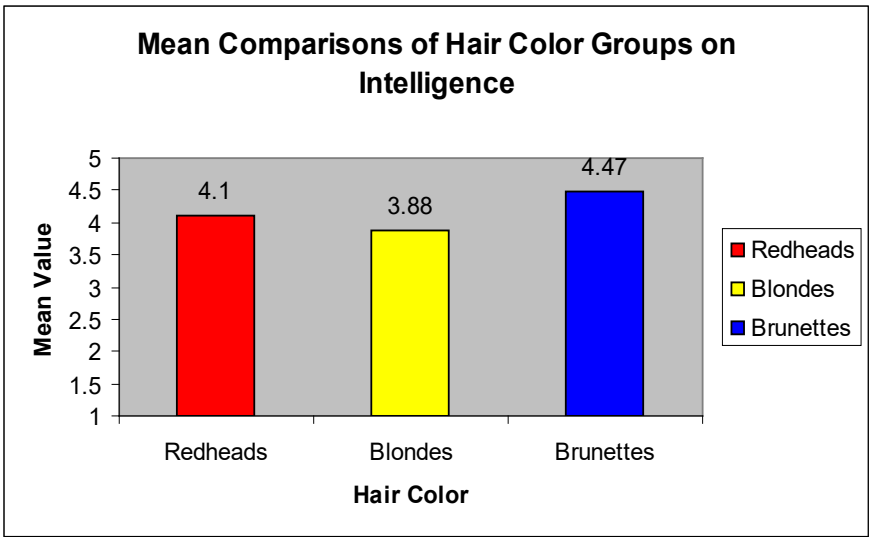
were rated second most attractive ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .80$), and the redheaded applicants were rated significantly lower than both other groups on physical appearance ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .80$). See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Mean Comparisons of Hair Color Groups on Physical Attractiveness



Hypothesis 2 stated that redheads would be rated significantly higher on intelligence than blonde and brunette applicants. Findings show that there was a significant difference between groups on the dependent variable of intelligence, $F(2, 116) = 7.60$, $p < .05$. However, the hypothesis that the redheaded applicants would be rated higher than the other two hair color groups was not supported. The results show that the redheaded applicants ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .68$) were not rated significantly higher than the blonde applicants ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .82$), but were rated significantly lower than the brunette applicants ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .55$). See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Mean Comparisons of Hair Color on Intelligence



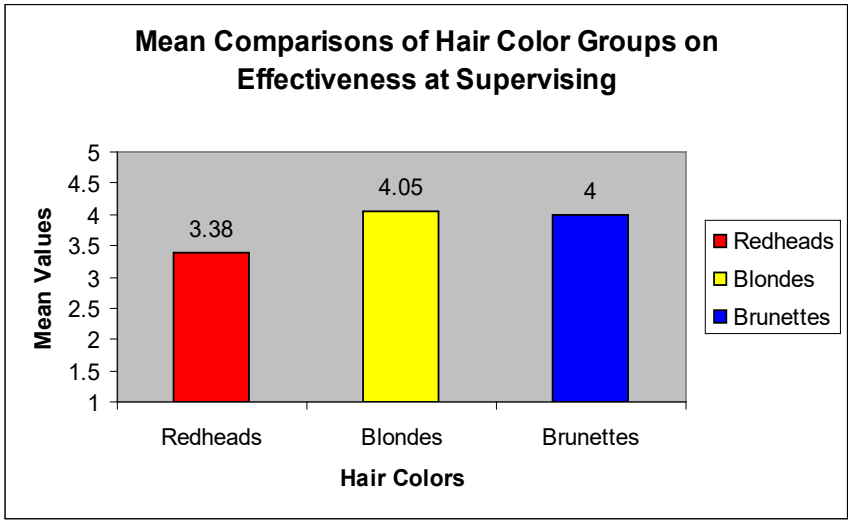
Hypothesis 3a stated that redheaded applicants would be rated significantly lower than the blonde and brunette applicants on ability to deal with high-stress situations in the workplace. Findings show that there was not a significant difference between hair color groups based on the ability to deal with high-stress situations in the workplace, $F(2, 117) = 1.88$, $p > .05$. The hypothesis that the redheads would be rated as significantly lower on ability to handle high stress was not supported in findings.

Hypothesis 3b stated that the redheaded female applicant would be rated significantly higher on ability to handle stress in the workplace than the redheaded male applicant. There was not a significant difference between the redheaded male ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .70$) and redheaded female ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .79$) on the ability to deal with high-stress situations in the workplace, $t(38) = .43$, $p > .05$. This hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 4a stated that redheads would be rated significantly lower than the blondes and brunettes on effectiveness at supervising others in the workplace. There is a significant difference between hair colors on the dependent variable of effectiveness at supervising others in

the workplace, $F(2, 117) = 9.84$, $p < .05$. A Tukey HSD Post-Hoc test indicates that the ratings of effectiveness for the redheaded applicants ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .84$) was significantly lower than the ratings for both the blonde applicants ($M = 4.05$, $SD = .78$) and the brunette applicants ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .64$). See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Mean Comparisons of Hair Color Groups on Effectiveness at Supervising Others

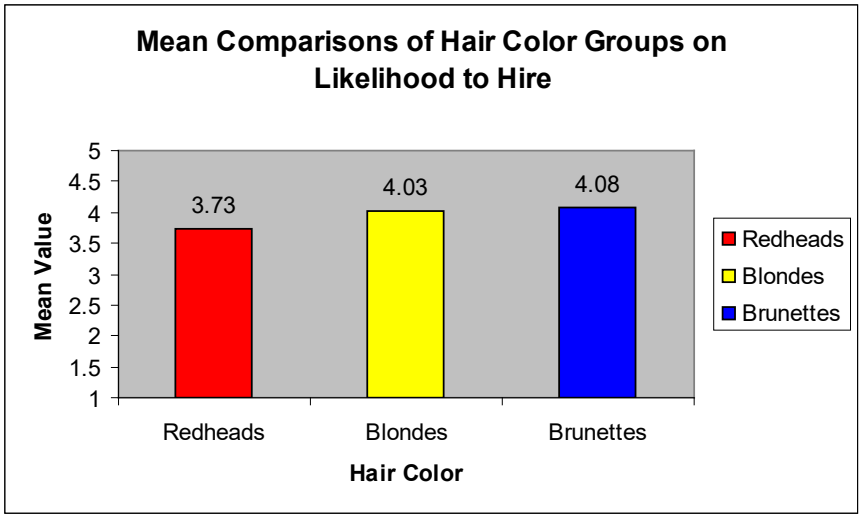


Hypothesis 4b stated that the redheaded female applicant would be rated significantly more effective at supervising than the redheaded male applicant. This hypothesis was not supported by the results $F(2, 117) = 3.00$, $p > .05$. No significant difference was found between the redheaded male ($M = 3.25$, $SD = .75$) and redheaded female ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .95$), $t(38) = -.94$, $p > .05$).

Hypothesis 5 stated that redheads would be rated significantly lower on likelihood to be hired than blonde and brunette applicants. There is a significant difference between hair color groups on likelihood to hire, and the hypothesis that redheads would be rated significantly lower than the other hair colors was confirmed, $F(2, 117) = 3.24$, $p < .05$. Redheaded applicants ($M =$

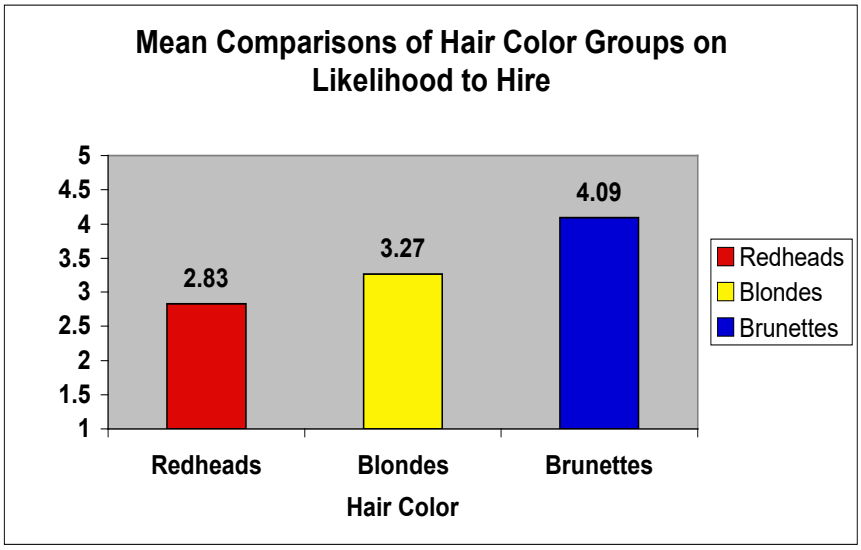
3.73, *SD* = .75) were rated significantly lower than both the blonde applicants (*M* = 4.03, SD=.66) and brunette applicants (*M* = 4.08, SD = .57). See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Mean Comparisons of Hair Color Groups on Likelihood to Hire



Finally, hypothesis 6 stated that redheads would be assigned a lower starting salary than the blonde and brunette applicants. Results show a significant difference between hair colors on the dependent variable of assigned salary within a restricted range, $F(2, 117) = 4.54$, $p < .05$. The redheaded applicants were assigned a significantly lower starting salary (*M* = $26,448.72, *SD* = $1,385.05) than blondes (*M* = $27,473.75, *SD* = $1,643.36), but not brunettes (*M* = $26,950.00, *SD* = $1,492.72). See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Mean Comparisons of Hair Color Groups on Beginning Salary Assignment Within a Restricted Range



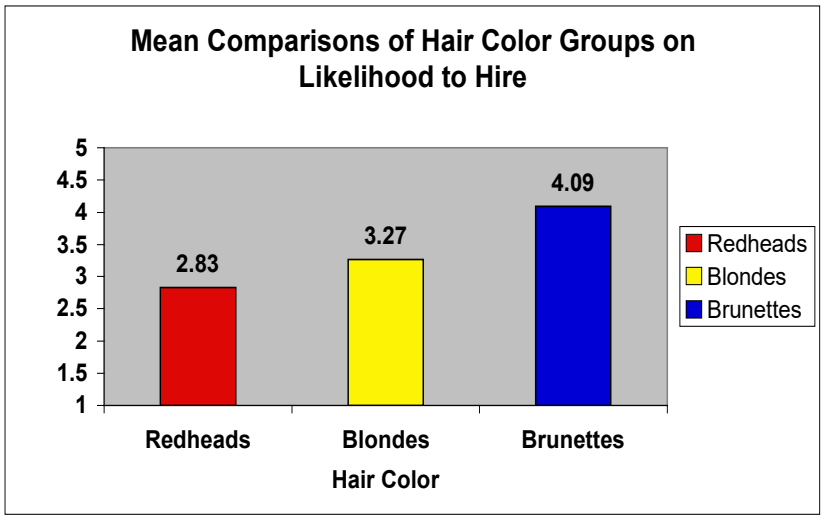
Sample 2 Results

Because of lower response rates among this sample, power is low to detect anything other than large effect sizes. Thus, our treatment of sample 2 is more exploratory. Results from sample 2 do show a significant difference between hair color groups on the dependent variable of likelihood to hire. In particular, results confirm the hypothesis that redheads would be rated significantly lower than blondes and brunettes on likelihood to hire, $F(2, 117) = 3.91$, $p < .05$. Redheaded applicants ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.34$) were rated significantly lower than the brunette applicants ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .70$), although not lower than blondes ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.1$) See Figure 7. However, show no significant differences between hair color groups on physical appearance, intelligence, effectiveness at supervising, or beginning salary assignment. Table 1 shows the ANOVA comparisons of the three different hair color groups.

Table 1. One-Way ANOVA Comparisons of Hair Color Groups for Banking Manager Sample

DV	Hair Color	*N*	Mean Value	*F*	df_B	Sig.
Physical Attractiveness	(1) Red (2) Blonde (3) Brunette	12 11 11	3.75 4.18 4.09	0.70	2	.51
Intelligence	(1) Red (2) Blonde (3) Brunette	12 11 11	3.67 3.82 3.82	0.10	2	.91
Ability to Handle Stress	(1) Red (2) Blonde (3) Brunette	12 11 11	3.08 3.18 2.82	0.46	2	.63
Ability to Supervise	(1) Red (2) Blonde (3) Brunette	12 11 11	3.25 3.36 3.91	1.09	2	.35
Likelihood to Hire	(1) Red (2) Blonde (3) Brunette	12 11 11	2.83 3.27 4.09	3.91	2	.031
Beginning Salary	(1) Red (2) Blonde (3) Brunette	12 11 11	$33,875 $33,909 $34,864	1.07	2	.36

Figure 7. Mean Comparisons of Hair Color Groups on Likelihood to Hire in Sample 2 (Professionals)



Discussion

The results of this study are significant to the fields of applied social psychology, human resource management and organizational behavior because they suggest that stereotypes based on hair color do exist, and further, that they may influence employment decisions. However, there were no significant interactions between gender and hair color in this study, which implies that different stereotypes for male and female red heads are not as prevalent, at least not with the population of undergraduate college students and professionals used as participants in this study.

The results found from the data collected in this study are partially consistent with past research on stereotypes for redheads. For instance, the finding from sample 1 that redheads are seen as significantly less physically attractive parallels with findings from past research conducted by Clayson and Maughan (1986) and Rich and Cash (1993). The fact that redheads were rated as less attractive could be related to the fact that redheads are less common in the population and considered to be a deviance from the familiar norms. As noted earlier, stereotypes can be a popular belief or hypotheses derived from popular culture, everyday experience, or media images (Clayson and Maughan 1986). Because there is a low frequency of redheads in the human population, it could be suggested that people are less attracted to physical characteristics that they are not accustomed to seeing.

The results found in sample 1 also partially support past research which suggests that redheads are perceived to be intellectually superior in comparison to other hair colors. In this study, the redheads were rated as significantly higher than the blonde, but no significant difference was found when comparing them to the brunette. This supports the popular and well-known stereotype that blondes are, or are perceived as, less intelligent than other hair colors. However, it does not fully support findings from past research conducted by Clayson and

Maughan (1986) showing redheads are perceived to have intellectual superiority. That is, while results of this study suggest that there are differences in perceived intelligence based on hair color, people do not actually perceive brunettes and redheads as differently from one another as they do blondes. There are possibly more recognized intelligence-related stereotypes associated with certain hair colors (e.g. blondes) than with others (e.g. brunettes and red heads).

Interestingly, results show no significant difference between ratings of redheads and other hair color groups in their ability to handle high-stress situations in the workplace. Surprisingly, this does not concur with one of the most popular redhead stereotypes of being temperamental and wild (Heckert and Best 1997). Equally surprising, there was no significant difference between ratings of the redheaded male and the redheaded female on ability to handle stress in sample 1 or sample 2. When comparing the mean values of the redheaded female ($M = 3.20$) and redheaded male ($M = 3.10$) in sample 1 on ability to handle stress, they are relatively nearly identical to one another. Additionally, it should be noted that these scores are relatively close to three, which is considered the 'middle' or 'neutral' score on the scale of measurement used. This does not coincide with stereotypes found by Clayson and Maughan (1986) which essentially showed redheaded males, described as being wimpy, effeminate, less potent, as the complete opposite of redheaded females, which were perceived as being hot tempered, wild, and professionally powerful. This may suggest that popular perceptions of redheads have changed over time, perhaps with greater representation of redheads in media. Or, perhaps the outcome variables we used are not strongly and directly measuring the stereotypes identified in previous literature. That is, to be wild and hot tempered may be perceived by some raters as a positive attribute for a leader, rather than a negative one, thereby washing out the expected negative effect. Finally, the results found in this study suggest that the differential stereotypes for

redheaded male and redheaded female are not strong enough to be detected using these outcome variables. Further research exploring whether differences exist between redheaded males and females on these variables should consider more nuanced measures more directly related to temperament.

Redheads were rated by participants in sample 1 as being significantly less effective at supervising in the workplace than were brunettes or blondes. This has important negative implications for how redheads are evaluated for opportunities in the workplace. In particular, this implies that redheads may be less likely to be considered for a leadership position in a professional setting. Interestingly, there were no significant differences found between the redheaded male and redheaded female on this outcome. Consistent with results discussed above, this implies that there may not be a big difference between how redheaded males and redheaded females are perceived. Or, it may also suggest that males and females are both perceived poorly on this dimension, but for different reasons.

Consistent with the other negative outcomes for redheads, these results from sample 1 show that participants were significantly less likely to hire the redheads compared to blondes and brunettes. Findings from sample 2 also show that professionals were less likely to hire red-haired applicants than brunettes, but there were no significant differences found between the redheads and blondes in sample 2. These findings from sample 2 were the only significant differences found between hair color groups among professional raters. This is interesting because many of the other dependent variables assessed in this study might strongly contribute to employability. While it is possible that we did not find more effects because our sample size was relatively low, we suggest further research to investigate the contributing factors to the overall employability of a male or female job applicant among professional raters.

Finally, in sample 1, participants assigned the redheads a significantly lower salary than blondes, but not brunettes. Blondes were assigned the highest salary of the three groups in sample 1. This is contradictory to past findings from Kyle and Mahler which showed blondes and redheads were rated as significantly less capable and assigned a lower salary than the brunettes. It is also rather interesting in light of the fact that blondes were rated second highest to brunettes on intelligence, temperament and ability to handle stress, which should be indicators of job competence. Future research should examine reasons behind starting salary assignment to determine what factors impact this variable, specifically.

Implications for Research and Practice

The findings of this study have several important implications for researchers and for organizations and managers that wish to decrease the potential that relatively superficial characteristics will influence employment decisions. First, if hair color stereotypes are likely to influence the way in which applicants are perceived for jobs, managers should be made aware of the potential for bias in favor of dispelling myths or unfair assumptions based on hair color. We would advocate for hair color stereotypes to be included among the typical topics discussed in diversity awareness and inclusivity training.

Second, hair color is relatively malleable. While we wouldn't condone changing one's hair color from red to brunette just for the sake of impression management, it stands to reason that persons considering various hair colors may be interested to know how these stereotypes affect other's perceptions of them. It would be interesting to explore whether applicants feel it necessary to change their hair color prior to applying for jobs. It would also be interesting to investigate how the internalization of stereotypes or stereotype threat might influence behavior

and performance at work, or how applicants may engage in contrary or compensatory behaviors to overcome such stereotypes during the hiring or promotion process.

Limitations

First, the low response rate for sample 2 means that we are unable to draw firm conclusions as to how hair color stereotypes affect the decisions of current managers. Therefore, this analysis is more exploratory in nature. Nevertheless, perceptions of future managers in sample 1, along with some significant findings in sample 2, are a good indication that hair color stereotypes do exist in professional work settings and may influence certain employment decisions made by managers.

Second, these findings do not fully explain why redheads were rated lower on various attributes and job outcomes. Further explanatory research is therefore needed to understand why differences between the hair color groups (redheads, blondes, and brunettes) emerged. For example, while we maintained hair style across the three hair color groups, we did not control for nuanced differences in appearance due to hair-style-hair-color match. Nor did we control for skin-color-hair-color match. Since redheads are disproportionately Caucasian and typically have fair skin, use of the same skin-tone across all hair colors may have affected the elicitation of stereotypes associated with red hair. That is, a redhead with fair skin may be perceived differently than a redhead with darker skin. It is also unclear whether hair color stereotypes are racially bound or if they would operate differently in other demographic groups such as black or African-American or Asian populations.

Third, there are some sampling limitations on the generalizability of this study. For example, both sample groups were rather homogeneous with respect to race and gender, with most participants being Caucasian and female. It is possible that stereotype effects would be

different with a more representative sample. A larger sample size would also allow for cross-comparisons to assess whether the race of the rater affects the score given to the applicant. Another interesting question is whether the hair color of the rater would affect their decision. A replication of basic research on present-day stereotypes may help to shed light on cognitive processes related to hair color bias and prevent unfair advantages (or disadvantages) for men and women in the workforce. Ideally, future research in this area will promote a leveled playing field for redheads, providing them with advantages based on their actual ability as opposed to false perceptions of ability rooted in hair color stereotypes.

In conclusion, the findings of this research have shown that physical appearance, specifically hair color, does influence the opinions and perceptions of hiring managers. Organizations and human resource professionals should consider ways in which to increase recruiter and supervisor awareness of these stereotypes so as to prevent unfair bias in employment decisions.

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