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“Beauty Discrimination During a Job Search” by Tara Parker-Pope, 2010.

How much do looks matter during a job search? A new study suggests that while handsome men do better while looking for work, good looks can end up hurting a woman’s chances of scoring a job interview. The study, conducted by economists at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, sent 5,312 résumés to more than 2,600 employers who had advertised job openings. Two applications were sent to employers, each with virtually identical résumés. The only real difference was that one of the résumés included a photograph of the applicant. Sometimes the applicant was an attractive man or woman, and sometimes the photo showed a more plain-looking man or woman. (While sending a photograph with a résumé isn’t typical in the United States, it’s not uncommon in Israel, the researchers noted.)

To choose the photographs used in the study, the researchers collected photos from 300 university students. A panel of four men and four women rated the pictures in terms of attractiveness. To eliminate potential racial bias, the judges selected photos of individuals who appeared to have a more ambiguous ethnic background.

Over all, employers sought interviews with 14.5 percent of the job candidates. Notably, 19.9 percent of the male candidates who sent attractive pictures were called in for interviews, compared to 13.7 percent of the men with “plain” photos. Only 9.2 percent of the men who didn’t send a picture were called to interview. Based on the response rate in the study, an attractive man needs to send an average of five résumés with a photo to get one interview. An ordinary-looking man needs to send 11 résumés with a photo to get a single interview.

Writing Directions

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.