

Abstract

Are pretty women more likely to get a good job in male dominated fields? This paper explores how appearance and gender interact to affect labor market outcomes. Using unique data on PhD graduates from top Economics departments in the U.S., we are able to test whether better looking job candidates are more likely to get hired at top institutions and to publish better, and whether this likelihood depends on the gender of the candidate, on the gender composition of the field, and most importantly, on the interaction of appearance, gender, and the field's gender mix. We find that both women and men publish better when they are more attractive. However, while men's job placement does not depend on appearance, for women graduates there is an inverse U-shape relationship between attractiveness and the likelihood of getting a first job at a top ranking university. That is, if they are attractive, but not too much so. Moreover, we find that this result is stronger the higher the share of males within the research field, suggesting that men's appearance preferences play a role in the placement of women at top academic departments.

JEL classification: J16, J71, I23, M51

Key words: gender, beauty, appearance, economists, gender bias