

What Makes a Voice Attractive? A Review of the Different Hypotheses.

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What makes somebody attractive? Many social psychology studies have focused on the role of looks in social interaction (Berry, 1990; Dion *et al*, 1972). Many studies have shown that a person with an attractive face is deemed to have more positive traits of personality. That what Dion *et al* (1972) call the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype effect. This phenomenon has important consequences in everyday life since we interact differently with people as a function of our expectation of them. If someone looks friendly because he has a pleasant face, we will behave differently toward them than we will toward someone who impresses us as hostile. Our differential behaviors toward people who differ in such non-verbal cues may, in return, evoke from them precisely the behavior that we expect.

It is much rarer to find studies of vocal attractiveness, based on the assumption that the vocal canal might also influence interpersonal communication. Similarities between the perception of faces and the one of the voices exist, for example just as positive characteristics are attributed to people with attractive faces, positive personality traits are attributed to those with pleasant voices (Zuckerman *et al*, 1991). It has been shown in 1990 (Langlois & Roggman) that one factor which modulates face attractiveness is “averageness”: averaged faces tend to be judged as attractive. Here we test whether the “averageness is attractive” effect extends to voices. We use the voice morphing technique to create “morphed voices” by averaging an increasing number of individual voices.

Two main explanations will be tested. 1) Averaged voices are attractive because they have a configuration close to the central tendency of the population (the “average” hypothesis; Langlois & Roggman, 1990), which makes them more prototypical: prototypes are attractive because of their fluent processing (Winkielman *et al*, 2006). 2) Averaged voices are more attractive because they are smoothed (vocal temporal irregularities are reduced as do skin texture irregularities in face domain), which could signal health, fertility and youthfulness (the “smoothing” hypothesis; Fink *et al*, 2001).

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