

You CAN Trust a Pretty Face: Perceived Physical Attractiveness and the Use of Credibility Related Linguistic Markers

Katy L. Krieger¹, Jill A. Brown², M.A. & Frank J. Bernieri¹, Ph.D.
Oregon State University¹, University of Toledo²

Background

Attractiveness and Credibility

Those who are perceived as more physically attractive are seen as less deceptive and more credible (Eagly et al., 1991). In fact, highly attractive individuals were judged as less dishonest even when the perceivers knew they were lying (Hartwig & Bond, 2011).

Credibility and Linguistic Markers

Hartwig and Bond (2011) identified linguistic categories that might help explain why physically attractive individuals appear more credible. They found that statements with a more **logical structure**, more **details**, and more **self-references** were perceived as less deceptive. Statements that appeared **ambivalent**, contained more **references to others**, more **unfilled pauses**, and more **speech disturbances**, were judged to be less spontaneous and therefore less trustworthy (Hartwig & Bond, 2011).

Present Investigation

We assessed the physical attractiveness, credibility and linguistic components of 99 participants during a deception task that required them to lie and tell the truth about autobiographical events to a group of their peers while they were being video recorded.

H1: Those perceived as more physically attractive would be judged as more trustworthy by their peers (Eagly et al., 1991, Hartwig & Bond, 2011)

H2: Is the honest linguistic style perceived as more credible, honest, and trustworthy within the sample of participants (Hartwig & Bond, 2011)

H3: Do the highly physically attractive participants use a more honest linguistic style when lying and when telling the truth



Method

Physical Attractiveness

Opposite sex coders rated the sexy/hotness of participants after viewing brief video clips of them performing a separate acting task.

Average:



High:



Credibility

A separate set of coders watched videos where participants delivered their autobiographical lie/truth statements and rated how trustworthy they were.

Deception Task

Video recordings of each participant delivering deceptive and truthful statements were transcribed and analyzed with the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software program that categorized each word into 72 linguistic categories.

Table 1.1 Examples of LIWC Categories

Linguistic Marker	Example
Logical Structure	Cognitive mechanisms
Details	Perceptual information
Self references	Mine, my, I, we
Other references	They, their, he, she
Pauses	Longer than 3 seconds
Ambivalence	Maybe, perhaps
Speech disturbances	Uh, uhm, mmm

Figure 1.1 Equation for the Honest Linguistic Style

$$\text{Honest Linguistic Pattern} = \text{Logical structure} + \text{details} + \text{self references} - \text{other references} - \text{ambivalence} - \text{unfilled pauses} - \text{speech disturbances}$$

Results

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations Matrix (N=99)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Credibility	56.99	5.03			
2. Sexy/Hot	37.93	14.45	0.07		
3. HLS	0.05	2.14	0.08	0.11	

* $p < 0.05$

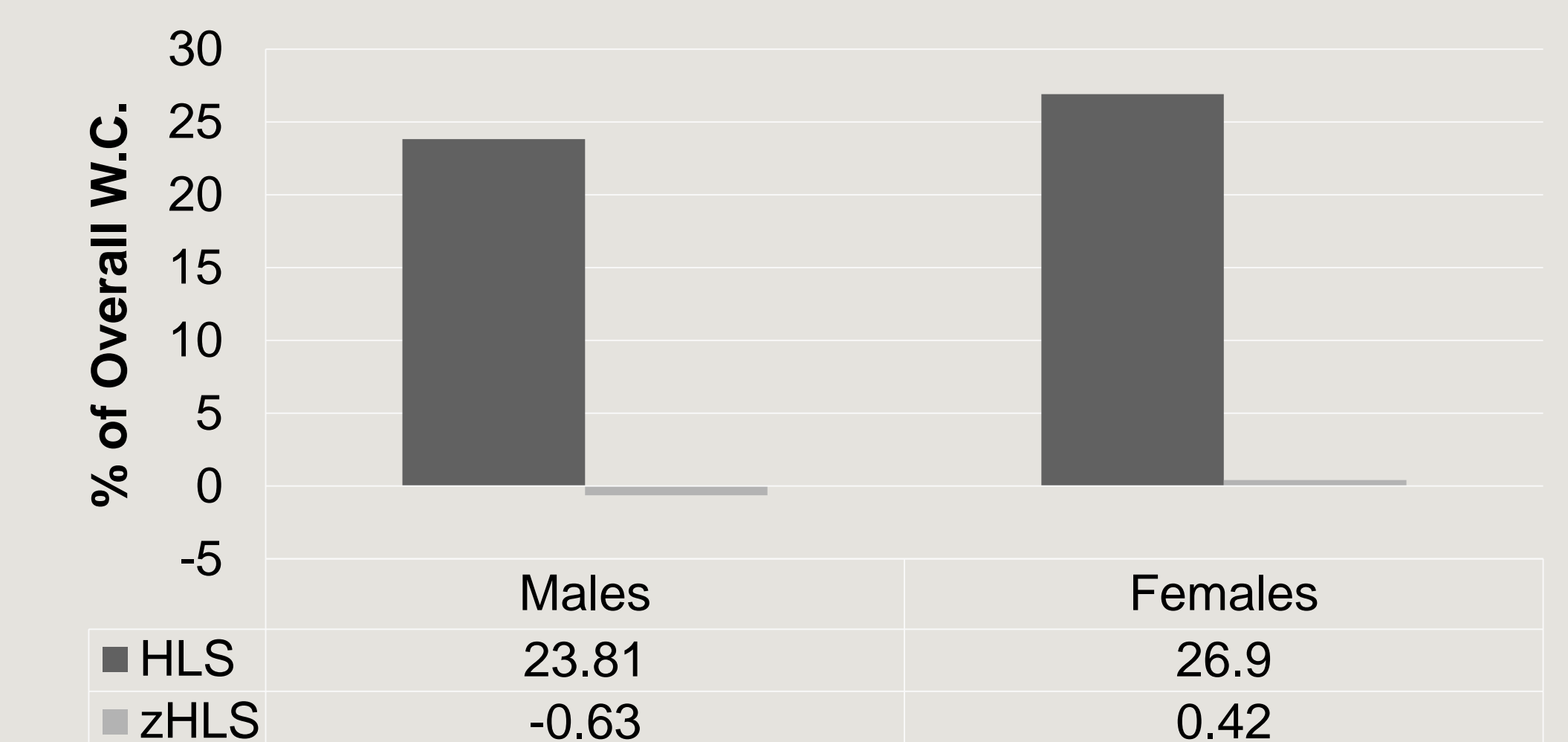
Table 1.3 ANOVA Table for Sexy/Hot Ratings

	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Within	1	2935.88	2935.88	16.34	0.0001
Between	94	16892.94	179.71		
Total	95	19828.82			

Table 1.4 ANOVA Table for HLS

	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Within	1	215.19	215.19	7.69	0.0067
Between	97	2715.53	27.995		
Total	98	2930.72			

Gender Differences for HLS Use



Conclusions

Although the hypotheses were not supported, this study shows that females use the Honest Linguistic Style at a higher rate than males. This unexpected finding is supported by previous research because the Honest Linguistic Style uses many of the categories that females typically use at a higher rate when writing and speaking (Newman, Groom, Stone & Pennebaker, 2003). In our study, as in others, females displayed the tendency to be aware of themselves and others during social situations (Newman et al., 2003).