

## The Effects of Facial Hair on Perception Formation

**Abstract**

The present study investigated the effects of varying levels of facial hair on perception formation. Participants evaluated the stimuli of four different men, each shown with three different levels of facial hair, on a one to seven Likert scale. The facial hair variances included clean shaven men, bearded men, goateed men, and mustached men. The stimuli were rated in four categories: attractiveness, masculinity, intelligence, and kindness. The correlation between different levels of facial hair and increasing or decreasing scores were observed and viewed as the effects of facial hair on the formation of perception. There were 45 participants in this study, all of which were high school students at a rural high school.

### **Review of Literature**

Physical appearance is a powerful contributor to initial impression formation in society. Physical appearance can influence perceptions in multiple environments, whether it be in voting (Bailenson, J. N., Iyengar, S., Yee, N., & Collins, N. A., 2008) or in hiring (De Souza, A. A. L., Baumgasten, V., Baiao, U., & Otta, E., 2003). Facial appearance also can influence the odds of beginning a relationship and how long a relationship might last (DeBruine, L. M., 2005). If someone is unfamiliar with someone else, or just meeting them for the first time they use physical appearance to make judgements and first impressions about someone (Petrican, R., Todorov, A., & Grady, C., 2014). One of the largest factors of physical appearance and first impressions is facial hair. Facial hair alone, without any other factors, has significant effects on perception formation of people. Facial hair has the ability to give people an advantage in terms of social interaction. Facial hair can influence a wide range of perceptions about another person, including their attractiveness, masculinity, parenting abilities, and prospect of employment.

The meaning of facial hair and the social classes associated with it have changed as cultures progress. In ancient Egypt only the poor would show even the slightest amount of scruff. It was believed that hairlessness was associated with divinity (Peterkin, A., 2001). During many times in European history, only the upper class had beards and if a lower class person had one then they were fined or had it forcibly cut off. In 13th century Europe the bearded fashion faded and if someone had a beard it was worn short. During the 14th century in Europe beards began to make a comeback among nobility. (p.27) During this time beards made such a return that in Spain people began to wear fake beards of different colors for different occasions. In 1521, King Francis I of France was involved in an accident that required head surgery, and a shaved head. After his hair regrew, he kept it short and the popular fashion soon followed not only in France,

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but also throughout Europe and in England, who had resisted previous French fashions. The fashion was completed by a full curly beard.(p.29) In response to a woman accidentally being selected as Pope in the 1400s, every Pope from Clement VII in 1523 to Clement XI in 1700 was bearded.(p.29) As anti-beard rules were repealed in England, long beards dominated in Germany. The beard that belonged to Andreas Eberhard Rauber Von Talberg was so long that he wore it down to the ground, back up to his waist, and once around himself. (p.31) As the 17th century started mustaches and goatees became increasingly popular, but as the century neared its end facial hair shrunk in size.(p.33) By the 18th century beards were viewed as an option only for people that are old, mad, or clueless. Near the end of the century facial hair was seen as hiding someone's "true face" and an option only for criminals or someone with inferior morals. (p.34) After that prejudice subsided facial hair flourished in all forms. whether it be through beards, side whiskers, or mustaches, in the 1800s.(p.35) In America, political figures such as President Abraham Lincoln and Uncle Sam grew beards.(p.36) Around the same time Harvard boasted that every person enrolled there had facial hair, without exception.(p.38) Their facial hair styles included the Vandyke, goatee, side whiskers and mustaches. While Napoleon was in power his facial hair style of choice, the mustache and beard combination, was widely copied. During this time it was unheard of to have facial hair in Asia. As Napoleons reign ended a mustache prejudice was created and it was seen as a mark of the beast.(p.39) As tastes and preferences have changed, the popularity and support behind facial hair grew. This has resulted in an increase in beard growth in recent years. (p.189)

Beards have often been associated with popular figures through the ages. These figures include Santa Claus, the 12 Apostles, Jesus, God, Merlin the Magician and Colonel Sanders( Peterkin, A., 2001) (p.11). Beards have become associated with a man who gives gifts to every

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child on Earth, the savior of the world, the creator of the world, a magician, and a good cook. These figures all are seen as positive figures and this is quite an extraordinary group of characters. Beards are also associated with males considering they are the prominent gender in facial hair development.

Considering the importance of physical appearance and the strength of influence facial hair has on physical appearance and therefore the impressions that are formed because of physical appearance many studies have been done on facial hair. Some sources claim that facial hair has a positive correlation with attractiveness, health, masculinity, and parenting abilities (Dixson, B. J., & Brooks, R. C., 2013). In said study, participants were shown ten pictures of men as stimuli with different levels of facial hair, including clean shaven, light stubble, heavy stubble and full beard, and asked to rate the pictures on a scale from zero to six in terms of attractiveness, health masculinity, and parenting abilities. This showed that men with full beards were considered to be the healthiest, most masculine and to be the best parents. Men with heavy stubble were shown to be considered the most attractive. The conductor of this research has written many other articles concerning perception and physical appearance, and has garnered respect within the community. By these standards I found this study to be a credible source of information. Other sources show a negative correlation between facial hair and attractiveness (Dixson, B. J., & Vasey, P. L., 2012). In this study the participants were shown images of men that are clean shaven and that are bearded and were asked to rate them on a zero to six scale in terms of attractiveness. There are many reasons that contribute to the difference in the results of these studies. As facial hair increases the perception of age increases, which, to people forming first impressions of bearded people, is an indication of fading physical ability and sexual availability (Dixson, B. J., & Vasey, P. L. 2012). As these things fade, this can cause people to

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be viewed as less attractive. A possible reason for beardedness being found attractive is that as something happens more or is more frequent, it is perceived as less attractive (Janif, Z. J., Brooks, R. C., & Dixson, B. J., 2014). As someone being bearded is not always as frequent as someone being clean shaven this could result in an increased attractiveness associated with beardedness. More facial hair is actually desired more than there already is among men, which would mean that facial hair isn't at its peak frequency, but it is in high demand (Muscarella, F., 2002). Another quality that is found attractive in men is masculinity, which is shown to have a positive correlation with beardedness (Burriss, R. P., Rowland, H. M., & Little, A. C., 2009). Although this article does not directly measure the effects of facial hair, it is still relevant because it measures the effects of masculinity, a quality associated with facial hair. This correlation is one of the points that give bearded men an advantage in beginning relationships. Bearded faces are also considered to be very potent, meaning that the qualities, such as attractiveness, of that face are more noticeable (Roll, S., & Verinis, J. S., 1971). This deals directly with the effects of facial hair and is relevant to this research. This means that if there is a face that already has attractive qualities, then those qualities will be more powerful and the person will be seen as more attractive. The perceived attractiveness of men with facial hair isn't caused by only the presence of hair. Body hair is considered unattractive and facial hair is still considered attractive (Dixson, B. J., & Rantala, M. J., 2015). This shows that the perceived attractiveness is connected with facial hair, rather than hair on any part of the body, even though the attractiveness of facial hair is not always considered present (Wogalter, M. S., & Hosie, J. A., 1991). Men that are considered attractive have many benefits in life, such as increasing the likelihood of getting hired and the likelihood and creating and maintaining a relationship, as many other desirable traits are associated with attractiveness.

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Facial hair has a strong connection with personal relationships, considering the influence it has on the creating and maintaining of relationships. Men that are considered more masculine are more likely to be entered into a short term relationship (Burriss, R. P., Rowland, H. M., & Little, A. C., 2009). Facial hair is often associated with masculinity, so bearded men are more likely to become part of a short term relationship. This connection between the normally associated traits of facial hair increased the validity of this source which studies masculinity. Beardedness is also positively correlated with health, masculinity, and parenting abilities, which are all desirable traits of a male counterpart (Dixson, B. J., & Brooks, R. C., 2013). If men are perceived to have more desirable traits for entering a relationship, they are more likely to have women attempt to start relationships with them, and therefore more likely to be in a relationship. One factor that not only will help men begin relationships, but will also help them maintain relationships is trustworthiness. Men with beards are considered to be more trustworthy, especially in terms of relationships, than men with other forms of facial hair or no facial hair (Bakmazian, A., 2014). This is another trait that can give men with beards an advantage in creating relationships compared to men without beards. Another factor in helping men maintain romantic relationships is masculinity. Men that are more masculine are desired more by women for long term relationships (Little, A. C., Burriss, R. P., Jones, B. C., DeBruine, L. M., & Caldwell, C. A., 2008). This works in favor of men with facial hair because of the association between facial hair and masculinity. These perceptions of men with facial hair are not always accurate, but they continue. Just because men are perceived to be more masculine or dominant, which are desirable traits for men to have, that does not necessarily mean that they are and there is no actual correlation between facial structure and other physical traits (Fink, B., Neave, N., & Seydel, H., 2007). Men with facial hair that are perceived to have these desirable traits, but truly

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don't are at a major advantage compared to men without facial hair. One disadvantage that bearded men have in creating a relationship, is that bearded men are considered dirtier than men with clean shaven faces (Kenny, C. T., & Fletcher, D., 1973). This is just one observed disadvantage of having facial hair compared to the large amount of benefits having facial hair has in creating and maintaining a relationship. In terms of relationships with other men, possibly friendships, facial hair might not have as strong of implications compared to impressions that they create in relationships with women. Men are not as prone to notice certain masculinized traits in other men (Watkins, C. D., Jones, B. C., & DeBruine, L. M., 2010). This means that other men will not be likely to feel inferior because of one man's masculinity.

Another aspect of life that is influenced by facial hair is the business world. It has been shown that the beardedness of an endorser increases the intent to buy from customers, when expertise or trustworthy products are involved (Guido, G., Peluso, A. M., & Moffa, V., 2011). This seems logical considering the other studies that have shown that the perceived trustworthiness of a person increases if they are bearded. Beardedness also has an influence in terms of being hired. Bearded men are ranked higher by possible employers in categories that are important in the workplace, such as competency, composure and personality (Reed, J. M., 1990). If men are perceived as more, competent, composed, and to have a better personality, then they are more likely to be hired. Bearded men are also clearly understood in their speaking, which allows them to properly convey their ideas (Fuchs, Susanne, Weirich, Melanie, Kroos, Christian, Fecher, Natalie, Pape, Daniel, & Koppetsch, Sabine, 2010). People that are considered to have a more mature face, which is often associated with beardedness, are considered to have higher expertise when they are talking (Brownlow, S., 1992). This would lead me to believe that bearded men have an upper hand in terms of job interviews and potentially being hired, especially if they

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are actually qualified. Men are also more likely to be hired if they are considered attractive, which is often influenced by beardedness (Shannon, M. L., & Stark, C. P., 2003). If beardedness increases attractiveness, and attractiveness increases the likelihood of being hired then it would seem logical that bearded men are more likely to be hired. Facial hair also has an effect on the possibility of getting an interview online. When using a LinkedIn profile, bearded men were perceived to have more expertise and were more likely to be asked for an interview by potential employers (Van der Land, S., & Muntinga, D. G.). This study is valid because it asked potential employers which man with different facial hair that they would be more likely to give the opportunity for an interview. This shows that bearded men are not only more likely to get hired once they are interviewed, but they are also more likely to get an initial interview. Although bearded men are more likely to be placed in the workplace, there are limitations to the advantage of beardedness. Most men in manager or boss rolls were clean shaven, and that is how employees prefer it. This could be a result of bearded men not being considered as creative as clean shaven men (De Souza, A. A. L., Baumgasten, V., Baiao, U., & Otta, E., 2003). This study showed personnel managers images of men and asked them to assign these men different roles in the workplace. This study is directly related to perceptions formed because of facial hair, making it valid. This study was reliable because the participants in the study were all personnel managers, who are already in a company. Facial hair can also alter the perception others have on a man's occupation. Men with beards are perceived to have jobs with minimal social interactions, except for occupations of being a psychologist or a professor (Hellström, Å. J., 1994). The exception to this rule could be a result of the association between beardedness and perceived perception.

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It is predicted that beardedness will have a positive correlation with masculinity, attractiveness, and intelligence, as facial hair is mainly associated with masculinity and previous studies have shown that facial hair is correlated with intelligence and positions of intelligence. Many studies have shown a correlation between facial hair and attractiveness. Mustachedness is predicted to have a negative correlation between intelligence and attractiveness. This prediction is created because of the stigma that has formed against mustaches and how they are the "mark of the beast." Mustachedness should still have a positive correlation with masculinity because the ability to grow facial hair is an ability that, for the most part, is a male quality. The presence of a goatee is predicted to have positive correlations with masculinity, attractiveness, and intelligence because of the similarities between goatees and beards. This prediction is also formed because of the results of previous studies with these results. The absence of any facial hair is predicted to have a lower association with masculinity, attractiveness, and intelligence in comparison to the results of facial hair. Facial hair is predominantly a male quality, so the masculinity of a clean shaven person should be lower than the masculinity of a person with facial hair. It is predicted that men clean shaven men will be considered less attractive and less intelligent than men with facial hair because a presence of facial hair has a positive correlation with these traits then an absence of facial hair should have a negative correlation with these traits.

### **Methods**

Participants were asked to fill out an online survey regarding men with varying levels of facial hair (see appendix B). The survey asked for the grade and gender of the participant and included four different men with three levels of facial hair. The pictures included men with

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beards, mustaches, goatees and clean shaven faces. The men were to be ranked on a scale of one to seven, in terms of attractiveness, masculinity, intelligence and kindness. A Likert scale from one to seven is the standard scale in this field of study. For this scale one is the lowest rating in the category and seven is the highest rating in the category. The participants were shown the same man with different facial hair in order to solidify the facial hair as the continuous factor, rather than the other factors of appearance of the men shown. The images used as stimuli were manipulated using Photoshop, rather than letting men grow natural facial hair and using pictures of them as stimuli, because of time restraints. All of the stimuli in this study were of white males, so that race would not become another variable when the entire purpose of this study is to look at only the correlation between facial hair and higher ratings in different areas of interest.. In completing the survey participants will show what they think about men with different types of facial hair. The purpose of this study is to show correlation between different levels of facial hair and the ratings that they receive in each tested category.

### **Population Sampling**

In this survey there were 48 participants (20 male and 28 female), but 3 did not complete the survey (all female) and resulted in 45 total participants. All of the participants were high school students at a rural, southeast high school and the classes that were offered this survey included three marketing essentials classes and three literature classes. All of the participants were high school students because the intended purpose of this study was to measure the effects of facial hair on perception formation in high school students. These classes were given the opportunity to participate due to the availability of computers in class, which were necessary to take the online survey. All participants received and filled out an IRB approved form of consent before participating in this survey (see appendix A). All participants maintained complete

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anonymity and the forms of consent will be shredded after the analysis of data. The participants were not rewarded in any way and participation was completely voluntary.

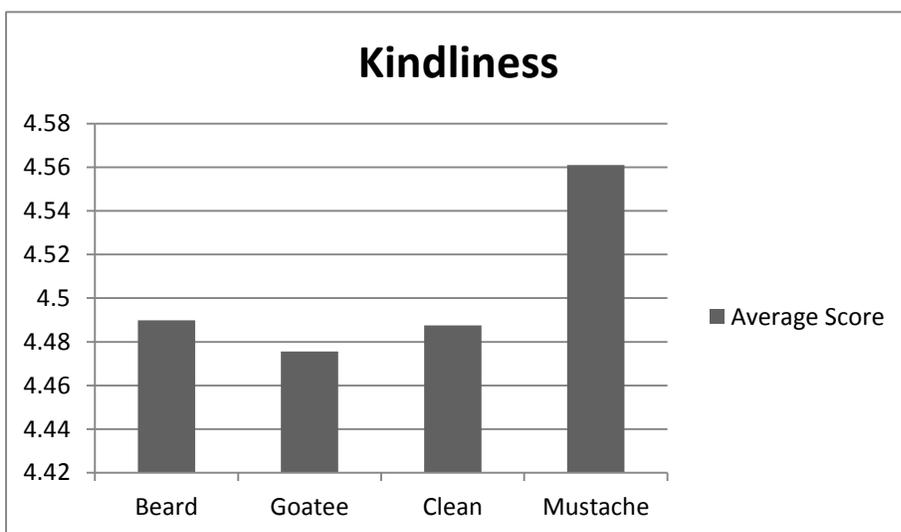
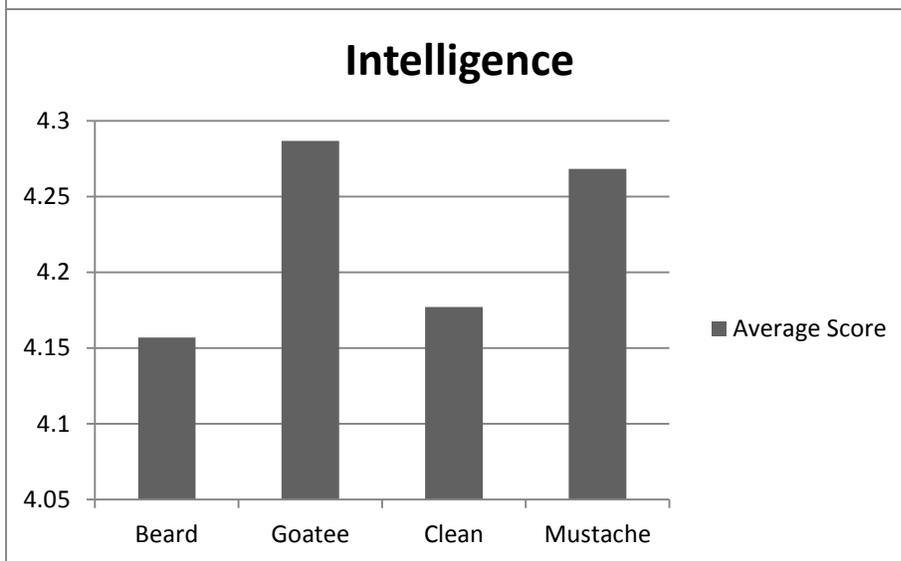
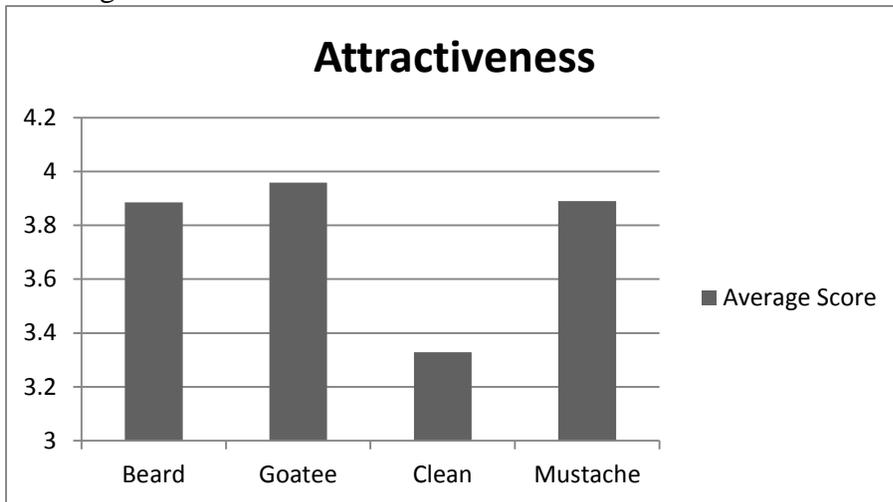
### **Analysis of Data**

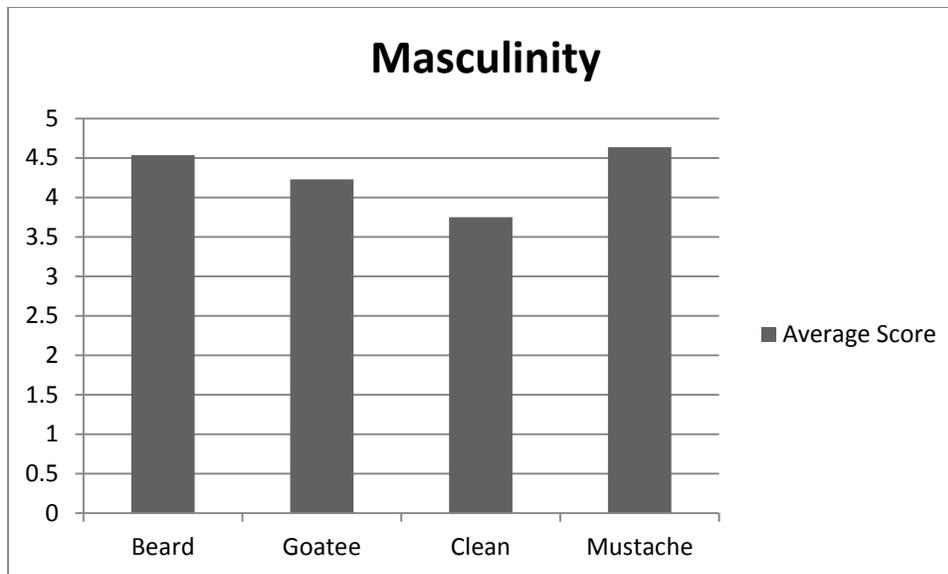
During the analysis of this data, the mean score for each question was taken and then averaged again with the other averages from the questions involving the same level of facial hair. This was done because there is only one variable being measured (level of facial hair) and this method of analysis will show correlation between the different levels of facial hair and higher, or lower, ratings on the one to seven Likert scale. Showing this correlation was the purpose of this study, so that is why this method of analysis was used. These averages were taken and compared between the categories of facial hair.

### **Results**

Data showed that men with goatees are considered to be the most attractive (3.9585) and clean shaven men were considered to be the least (3.3292). In this study, men with mustaches were shown to be considered the most masculine (4.6341) and clean shaven men were considered to be the least (3.7482). Men with goatees were shown to be considered the most intelligence (4.2868), but not significantly more than men with mustaches (4.2683), and men with beards were shown to be the least intelligent (4.1569), according to this study. Mustached men were considered the kindest (4.560976), but not significantly more than men with goatees (4.4756). Clean shaven men were considered to be the least kind in this study (4.4875).

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### Discussion

After analysis of the data, the hypothesis that bearded men would be considered the most attractive was proven to be null, as they scored the third highest score out of the four levels of facial hair. Beards were also predicted to score the highest in intelligence and masculinity. Bearded men scored lower in terms of intelligence than any other variance of facial hair, and scored only below mustached men in terms of masculinity. The predicted stigma against mustached men was not noticeably present in this study as they did not have the lowest score in any category. The predicted correlation between mustachedness and masculinity was proven to exist in this study, as mustached men scored higher than any other facial hair variance did in terms of masculinity. The prediction that clean shaven men would be not be considered masculine was proven to be true in this study as that category received the lowest average score out of any category tested in the study. As predicted, men with beards and men with goatees were given similar ratings in this study. After analysis of the data it is apparent that beards are not as favored, overall, as predicted. Men with goatees scored highest in two categories, men

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with mustaches in one, and men with beards in one. According to this study in order to increase perceived attractiveness and intelligence, men should have their facial hair in the form of a goatee. In order to increase their perceived masculinity, men should grow a mustache and in order to increase perceived kindness, men should have their facial hair in the form of a beard. These results are important to men that are trying to make impressions on someone, whether it be in order to do well in a job interview, help create a new relationship, or make friends with a new co-worker. Knowing how facial hair can affect the perception that is formed by others towards a person can allow that person to manipulate their facial hair to achieve desired results. Also, advertisers can use this information to improve how consumers think of their product. For example, if an advertiser used a man with a goatee in their commercial, then consumers would see a man they consider attractive and would think that attractive people use that product. This would increase the chances of that consumer buying that product.

One of the limitations to this study was that only eleven pictures were shown and not all levels of facial hair had the same amount of appearances in the study. Also, the men used as stimuli are not all equally attractive, masculine, intelligent, and kind, so other factors of appearance, such as facial structure, hair, and eye color could have manipulated the scores that were given to each stimuli in each category. Participants were also made aware of the purpose of the survey they were taking, which was to study the effects of facial hair on perception formation, when they filled out the consent form and that could have created a bias from any participant in trying to artificially create desired results. There was also not a large amount of participants in this study, but the number of participants was significant for the population being studied, five high school classes, or approximately 150 students. Due to time constraints the photos of men were manipulated using Photoshop rather than the facial hair stimuli being grown

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naturally and this could have resulted in some results not being true to what the participant believed because the facial hair was unnatural. The participants were not in solitude when completing this survey and their responses may have been altered by the people around them. Also, it should be noted that this study only included high school students and the results are only applicable to high school students.

In future replications of this study, the survey should be longer and there should be more participants in order to get a better judgment of what the participants truly think about each variations of facial hair. Also the participants should not be fully aware of the purpose of the study until they are debriefed at the end in order to avoid a possible bias to artificially create results that aren't true. In future studies, the levels of facial hair could be naturally created on the men, rather than them being artificially manipulated on Photoshop, in order to make the pictures look more realistic and hopefully, make the responses more accurate. The selected stimuli should all be pre-rated with no facial hair and only pictures with nearly identical pre-ratings should be used in the survey in order to prevent pictures of men who are considered to be higher or lower scorers in certain categories due to factors other than facial hair from being used in the study, reducing the only factor to being the level of facial. One way of doing this would to only have one man with different backgrounds, in different positions, and with different levels of facial hair. Also, when taking this survey, the participants should be alone so that the opinions of others nearby do not influence the answers of the participant. If the purpose of the replication of this study was to measure these effects on a larger scale, with a wider range of targets, the participants would have to include more demographics than only high school students, but the responses from high school students and other demographics could be compared to each other in order to expand the study. The race of stimuli and race of participants could also be entered as

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possible things to observe and compare in future studies. How people rated people of different, or of similar races could be a way to expand the study to get even more specific results on how a person's facial hair effects the formation of perception of different people in different ways. In other possible expansions of this study, rather than comparing the types of facial hair that the stimulus has, the study could compare the perception of the participants toward different lengths and thicknesses of the same facial hair. Also, more categories could be added than the four that were in this study, such as trustworthiness, age appearance and aggression, which all have believed correlation with facial hair.

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## **Appendix A**

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### **INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Your child is invited to participate in a research study on the effects of facial hair on how perception is formed amongst peers. Your child will be asked to complete a survey involving the ratings of faces about multiple areas of interest. The survey will be conducted online and will be completely anonymous.

#### **RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There are no risks associated with this study. The benefits which may possibly be expected to result from this study are a better understanding of business research. We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that your child will receive any benefits from this study. Your student's responses will be completely anonymous and the data will be destroyed after April 12, 2016.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will not affect your child's grades or participation in school.

#### **TIME INVOLVEMENT:**

Your child's participation in this experiment will take approximately 10 minutes in class.

#### **PAYMENTS:**

Your child will not receive any incentive as payment for his/her participation.

#### **SUBJECT'S RIGHTS:**

If you have read this form and have decided to allow your child to participate in this project, please understand your child's participation is voluntary and your child has the right to withdraw his/her consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which he/she is

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otherwise entitled. Your child has the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your child's individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

\*Questions, Concerns, or Complaints: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this **research study**, its procedures, risks and benefits, you should ask the AP Capstone Research instructor (Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_).

Indicate **Yes** or **No**:

I give consent for my child to participate in and complete an anonymous survey during this study:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature(s) of Parent(s), Guardian or Conservator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





















