

Lookism Climate in Organizations: Construct Development and Validation of a Scale

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Research suggests that physically attractive employees receive myriad workplace and career advantages compared to less attractive employees. Despite calls for more attention to the role of organizational context in understanding this phenomenon, a theoretically grounded conceptualization of an employer's value for physically attractive employees and a method of measuring this aspect of the work environment is currently absent from the literature. In this study, we introduce the construct lookism climate, which reflects perceptions that a given work environment implicitly or explicitly values employee physical attractiveness. We develop and validate a measure of lookism climate using eight samples comprising 1,857 full-time employed adults in the United States and South Korea. We establish the psychometric properties and nomological network of the Lookism Climate Scale (LCS), including its factor structure, convergent, discriminant, and criterion validity, and measurement equivalence. We provide evidence that the LCS can be used as an assessment of an individual's perceptions of workplace climate as well as employees' shared conceptualization of climate. We also offer narrative examples of employee experiences with lookism climate. The introduction of the construct lookism climate and the LCS provides a pathway for future researchers to develop a deeper understanding of how organizational context contributes to the "beauty premium" in the workplace.

Keywords: careers; measure development; organizational culture and climate

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We specifically looked to hire people deemed conventionally attractive to work in customer-facing positions.

My manager at a previous job said I would make more money if I “got dolled up.” He wanted me to wear more dresses, skirts, and makeup.¹

The idea that physically attractive individuals receive greater work and career benefits than those judged to be less attractive has motivated a “surge in research” (Nault, Pitesa, & Thau, 2020: 1104) that continues to build evidence for a “beauty premium” in organizations (e.g., Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994; Judge, Hurst, & Simon, 2009). Physically attractive job applicants are more likely to receive favorable evaluations during employment interviews (Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback, 1975; Tsai, Huang, & Yu, 2012) and more job offers (Jawahar & Mattsson, 2005) compared to less attractive applicants. Once employed, attractive individuals are more likely to receive greater exposure and visibility within the organization (Dossinger, Wanberg, Choi, & Leslie, 2019), are rated higher on job performance and leadership effectiveness (e.g., Burnett & Motowidlo, 1998; Poutvaara, 2014), receive more promotions, and earn higher wages than their less attractive counterparts (e.g., Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996). The preference for those who are attractive has also received substantial media attention. For example, American clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch received public criticism for allegedly using physical attractiveness as a criterion for hiring store employees (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019; McGregor, 2015).

To date, most research on this topic has focused on identifying the type and extent of favored treatment received by attractive versus less attractive employees. This work has been instrumental in establishing that physical appearance plays a discernible role in individuals’ career success. Yet, a recent review revealed considerable heterogeneity in the effects of physical attractiveness in the workplace, resulting in a call for greater attention to the organizational contexts in which these processes unfold (Nault et al., 2020). Existing research is “context poor,” often occurring in laboratories, preventing a broader understanding of when and why attractiveness results in favorable outcomes in organizations (Nault et al., 2020: 1125). The examination of organizational context, involving the circumstances or environment surrounding an individual, is critical to developing deeper insights into organizational behavior as well as to help explain discrepant research findings (Johns, 2006).

We propose that work contexts vary in the extent to which they emphasize and value physical attractiveness. The term “lookism” has been used to describe a preference for individuals who are physically attractive (e.g., Warhurst, van den Broek, Hall, & Nickson, 2009, 2012) but has not been studied systematically or measured as a feature of the work environment. One aspect of work environments that has been shown to be important in understanding employee attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes is organizational climate, which reflects shared perceptions and experiences of what is rewarded, supported, and expected in the organization (Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macey, 2013; Schneider, González-Romá, Ostroff, & West, 2017). Research suggests that specific dimensions of organizational climate, such as competitive climate and climate for sexual harassment, are associated with individuals’ career and work processes and outcomes (Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). Groups or organizations whose climate emphasizes a value for physical attractiveness

may similarly play a role in employee outcomes. The literature, however, is currently missing a way to conceptualize and measure an organizational climate that emphasizes employee physical attractiveness. As a result, our understanding of how the work environment may facilitate or inhibit the attractiveness advantage remains limited.

The objective of our study is to introduce, develop a measure for, and establish the utility of a new contextual construct to study physical attractiveness in the workplace—*lookism climate*. First, we conceptualize lookism climate as involving individual or collective perceptions that a given work environment implicitly or explicitly values employee physical attractiveness. Second, using eight independent samples comprising 1,857 full-time employed adults, we develop and evaluate the psychometric properties of the Lookism Climate Scale (LCS) and establish its nomological network, including tests of factor structure, convergent and discriminant validity, and relationships with employee outcomes. Third, we incorporate samples from two countries, the United States and South Korea, to examine cross-cultural measurement equivalence. Finally, we provide evidence that the LCS can be used to assess psychological climate (i.e., individual perceptions of organizational context) and shared conceptualizations of workplace climate (Chan, 1998; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013; Schneider et al., 2017).

Our study makes important theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, we introduce a new construct and measurement instrument that adds previously unavailable insight into the role of context in the relationship between physical attractiveness and work-related outcomes (Nault et al., 2020). The LCS provides a new tool to advance understanding of when, where, and to what ends attractiveness plays a role in real world organizational settings. Current research on the effects of employee physical attractiveness in the workplace has primarily focused on a powerful decision maker who is displaying bias towards an attractive (or unattractive) employee, and the resulting positive or negative outcomes for that individual. We offer a complement to the emphasis on focal actors as driving this phenomenon by conceptualizing the value for physically attractive employees as a dimension of organizational climate. Research on organizational climate emphasizes a holistic study of perceptions and experiences (Schneider et al., 2017). The introduction of the construct *lookism climate* to the literature therefore opens up new opportunities to look beyond individuals' biased decisions in the workplace and instead take a more expansive view of how preferences for physically attractive employees become ingrained in the work environment.

From an empirical perspective, we present diverse forms of evidence for the lookism climate construct and its operationalization. Our research provides a solid foundation from which researchers may confidently integrate the LCS into future models of physical attractiveness in the workplace. Validation studies play an important role in shaping future research and theory testing as well as diagnosing organizational issues that can inform practice (Tracey & Tews, 2005). We expect that the new measurement tool and other insights generated within this paper will motivate additional research on this important topic. We provide a comprehensive discussion of future research directions in our discussion. Finally, from a practical perspective, organizations face increased accountability for the equitable treatment of employees. Via the LCS, we offer a method of identifying the sources and consequences of the "attractiveness advantage," an important first step in eliminating workplace discrimination.

Extant Literature

Available research links physical attractiveness with several important individual and organizational processes and outcomes. We highlight major findings in this research before elaborating on the lookism climate construct and the development and validation of the LCS.

The job interview and hiring process has been a popular setting for examining whether and to what extent individuals who are physically attractive experience differential treatment and outcomes. The lack of tangible information about job applicants' productivity during the selection and hiring process makes applicant physical attractiveness a salient source of first impressions (Lee, Pitesa, Pillutla, & Thau, 2018). A 2003 meta-analysis of experimental research studies revealed a small-to-moderate, positive relationship between attractiveness and hiring decisions (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003). Nault and colleagues' update (2020) found similar results for outcomes, including interview and hiring decisions.

Physical attractiveness is also positively associated with leadership emergence—being perceived or recognized as having leadership ability—and overall effectiveness once an employee is in a leadership role (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017; Cherulnik, Turns, & Wilderman, 1990; Dietl, Rule, & Blickle, 2018). For example, voters evaluate attractive political candidates more favorably than unattractive candidates (e.g., Budenheim & DePaola, 1994). Height, a physical characteristic that has been linked to perceptions of attractiveness (Little & Roberts, 2012), is associated with selection into managerial positions, particularly for men (Lindqvist, 2012). Perceived height and facial maturity are positively related to leadership judgments and leadership ratings are lower for overweight individuals (Re et al., 2012). Overweight people with high facial adiposity are perceived to be less attractive and lower in leadership ability (Re & Perrett, 2014).

Research suggests that facial attractiveness is related to higher levels of income—an objective indicator of career success—after controlling for other characteristics (e.g., Biddle & Hamermesh, 1998; Robins, Homer, & French, 2011; Scholz & Sicinski, 2015). For example, the attractiveness of selling agents is related to the higher dollar value of real estate transactions after controlling for characteristics of the real estate (Salter, Mixon, & King, 2012). National Football League quarterbacks who have higher facial symmetry have higher salaries, even after controlling for their performance (Berri, Simmons, Van Gilder, & O'Neill, 2011). Attractive servers earn more in tips than unattractive servers (Parrett, 2015).

Scholars have theorized and, to a limited extent, empirically tested mechanisms that may explain the above relationships. For example, organizational decision makers may attribute valued job-relevant personal traits to physically attractive individuals, such as competence, dominance, intelligence, and warmth, which may explain more favorable selection and leadership outcomes (e.g., Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017; Dietl et al., 2018; Little & Roberts, 2012). Other research suggests that the positive relationship between physical attractiveness and income is explained in part by attractive individuals having higher education and core self-evaluations (Judge et al., 2009) and receiving higher career exposure and visibility at work (Dossinger et al., 2019).

Finally, some research has examined factors that differentiate the strength or direction of the relationship between attractiveness and organizational outcomes. Being well groomed, having positive personality traits, and adopting power poses can reduce the effects of physical

attractiveness on work outcomes (Robins et al., 2011; Tu, Gilbert, & Bono, 2022). The role of gender has also been examined as a challenge to the “what is beautiful is good” effect. For example, one study found that more attractive job applicants receive lower “likelihood of hiring” ratings from same-sex evaluators (Agthe, Sporrle, & Maner, 2011). Sex-type of the job has been examined as a moderator alongside other variables, such as degree of interpersonal contact with others (Stinebrickner, Stinebrickner, & Sullivan, 2019; Tsai et al., 2012). Other studies, using experimental or scenario-based designs, have examined interactions between sex-type of the job with gender and job level, finding the existence of a “beauty is beastly” effect. For example, attractive women may be penalized when in managerial positions (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985) or when holding male-typed jobs (Johnson, Podratz, Dipboye, & Gibbons, 2010; Paustian-Underdahl & Walker, 2016).

Defining Lookism Climate

The research reviewed in the previous section suggests that physically attractive individuals have advantages in nearly every aspect of the employment relationship. Emerging research has described mediating processes and moderators involved in these relationships. One particularly strong need is for research to advance the understanding of contexts in which the effects of attractiveness are more or less salient (Nault et al., 2020). We propose lookism climate (i.e., individual or shared perceptions that a given workplace implicitly or explicitly values employee physical attractiveness) is a salient contextual variable requiring more elucidation.

The value placed on employee physical attractiveness represents a pervasive aspect of some work environments, one that is noticed and perceived by those working within them. We suggest that lookism climate is an aspect of the work environment that exists alongside other climate dimensions in an organization, such as health climate (Zweber, Henning, & Magley, 2016), diversity climate (McKay & Avery, 2015), and safety climate (Griffin & Curcuruto, 2016). Like other climate constructs, lookism climate arises from individuals observing and interpreting social cues and events over time. Repeated exposure to these events and experiences leads to shared perceptions of the extent to which employee physical attractiveness is emphasized, valued, and rewarded in the workplace. This may lead employees to alter their behaviors regarding their own dress and appearance, and may even affect work attitudes. We examine these outcomes as part of lookism climate’s nomological network.

Climate also takes on different functional forms to reflect the level at which it is operationalized (Schneider et al., 2017). As noted by Ashforth (1985: 383), climate is “a joint property of both the organization and the individual ... both a macro and micro construct.” We therefore conceptualize lookism climate as existing across multiple levels, including individual psychological perceptions of climate as well as collective climate perceptions that are aggregated to a higher level (e.g., job, group, or organization level; Chan, 1998).

The Nomological Network of Lookism Climate

The nomological network of a construct specifies its relationships with other variables and represents a form of construct validity evidence alongside convergent and discriminant

validity (Campbell, 1960). Empirically establishing meaningful patterns of relationships and differentiating a construct from other related constructs is particularly important when developing a new scale measure (Hinkin, 1998). Delineating the similarities and differences between lookism climate and other constructs, as well as connecting it to antecedents and outcomes, positions lookism climate within a larger construct domain while minimizing concerns about construct overlap and proliferation. Using existing theory and research as guides, we propose relationships between lookism climate and (a) relevant climate-level constructs found in the extant literature, (b) employee job characteristics, and (c) employee outcomes.

Lookism climate and related constructs. Competitive climate reflects employees' shared perceptions that performance differences are accentuated and used as the basis for organizational rewards or sanctions (Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008). We propose that organizations high in lookism climate will be evaluated as having a more competitive climate. Similar to competitive climate, lookism climate reflects a workplace environment where individual characteristics are emphasized, differentially valued, and assumed to have productivity or performance advantages (Nault et al., 2020). At the same time, we expect lookism climate to be a distinct construct from competitive climate. Although organizations may value employee physical attractiveness because of beliefs that attractive employees are higher performing and more productive, the taste-based discrimination perspective on physical attractiveness suggests that value for employee attractiveness may also result from general preferences unrelated to assumptions of performance differences.

Hypothesis 1: Lookism climate is positively related to yet distinct from competitive climate.

In contrast, we expect that lookism climate will be negatively associated with *perceived justice climate*, involving perceptions that the work unit or organization treats employees fairly (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002; De Dreu & Nauta, 2009); and *climate for inclusion*, which reflects a work environment in which employees' unique self-concepts are welcomed, policies and practices are fairly implemented, and status characteristics are deemphasized (Nishii, 2013). Lookism climate should be negatively related to both of these climate constructs because existing literature suggests that many people consider an emphasis on beauty and physical appearance in the workplace as unfair and morally questionable (Warhurst et al., 2009). Therefore, it is unlikely that high levels of lookism climate would coexist with a climate characterized as highly inclusive or just.

Hypothesis 2: Lookism climate is negatively related to (a) perceived justice climate and (b) climate for inclusion.

Lookism climate and job characteristics. Job characteristics are associated with myriad important outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Morgeson & Campion, 2003). We expect to find higher levels of lookism climate in work settings where *interaction outside of the organization* is central to employees' job requirements. Research suggests that attractive workers achieve higher pay or tips in samples of employees

whose work necessitates contact with external clients or customers, such as lawyers (Biddle & Hamermesh, 1998), restaurant servers (Parrett, 2015), and real estate agents (Salter et al., 2012), among others. Further, scholars have theorized that attractiveness should be more strongly related to earnings and other indicators of career success for individuals in professions that require social contact outside of their organizations because the value customers and clients place on physical attractiveness will increase employers' beliefs that attractiveness and productivity are related (Biddle & Hamermesh, 1998; Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994). We therefore propose that individuals with jobs that require higher levels of interaction with people outside of the organization should report higher lookism climate.

Hypothesis 3: Lookism climate is positively related to the job characteristic of interaction outside the organization.

We also expect that jobs involving higher levels of interaction with others inside the organization will be positively associated with lookism climate. One way of conceptualizing the extent to which jobs involve more interpersonal interactions is the degree of *interdependence* exhibited in the job, that is, work that relies on others to accomplish key tasks and meet requirements (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993; Kiggundu, 1981). Interdependence is a social job characteristic that reflects the “connectedness” of one’s job to other jobs within the organization (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Interdependence requires interpersonal interaction and relationships where individuals engage in communication, information-seeking, and attribution, and fosters increased visibility, interpersonal vulnerability, and concern about self-presentation (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Jobs involving greater interdependence should be positively associated with work environments where individuals use cues, such as attractiveness, to reduce uncertainty in the interpersonal situation (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Therefore, we expect that individuals in jobs with greater interdependence will also report higher lookism climate:

Hypothesis 4: Lookism climate is positively related to the job characteristic of interdependence.

Lookism climate as a predictor of social comparison and appearance orientation behavior. Organizational climate is an important predictor of employee interpersonal interactions and behaviors (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Schneider et al., 2017). As part of our construct and scale development process, we propose that lookism climate will be associated with theoretically relevant interpersonal and behavioral responses to a workplace social context that emphasizes physical attractiveness.

First, we expect a positive relationship between levels of lookism climate and the frequency with which employees compare themselves to others in their workplaces. According to social comparison theory, people make upward social comparisons, in which comparisons are made with individuals perceived to be better off than oneself, as well as downward social comparisons, in which one compares oneself to others who are worse off (Festinger, 1962). Social comparison theory states that people will make both upward and downward social comparisons when they experience uncertainty or perceive psychological threat in their social environment. Research on social comparisons in the workplace supports this, with evidence suggesting that perceived ambiguity and lack of control at work are antecedents of social comparison frequency (Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007). Because

an emphasis on an individual difference such as physical attractiveness in the workplace likely heightens a competitive environment among employees and ambiguity about one's place compared to others, we propose that higher lookism climate will be associated with both upward and downward social comparisons at work:

Hypothesis 5: Lookism climate is positively related to (a) upward and (b) downward social comparisons with coworkers.

We also expect that lookism climate will be associated with an employee's *appearance orientation behavior*, which reflects the importance of physical appearance to an individual and his or her investment in appearance-related maintenance and monitoring (Cash, 1990). A central feature of organizational climate is that employees adjust their behavior to align with what is emphasized and valued by the group or organization (Zohar & Luria, 2004). Because lookism climate represents perceptions that the organization and its representatives value physical attractiveness, we propose that working in a group or organization with higher levels of lookism climate will be associated with higher employee attention, monitoring, and effort toward enhancing their own physical appearance:

Hypothesis 6: Lookism climate is positively related to appearance orientation behavior.

Lookism climate as a moderator between attractiveness and work-related attitudes. In addition to the above, an individual's level of attractiveness may have stronger implications for work-related affect and attitudes in climates that emphasize lookism in comparison to those that do not. An emphasis on attractiveness creates pressure for individuals to meet expected standards to be thin, fashionable, and youthful, and can result in expended time, effort, and money from individuals to keep up (Mason, 2021). When employee attributes are consistent with the expectations of their job, employees are more likely to be satisfied with their job and less likely to experience work stress, anxiety, and withdrawal cognitions (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). On the other hand, when individuals experience a discrepancy between their work environment and their personal attributes, lower job satisfaction, higher work stress and anxiety, and higher withdrawal cognitions are more likely (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). We propose:

Hypothesis 7: Lookism climate moderates the relationship between physical attractiveness and job satisfaction, such that the relationship is more strongly positive when lookism climate is higher than when it is lower.

Hypothesis 8: Lookism climate moderates the relationship between physical attractiveness and (a) work anxiety, (b) work stress, and (c) turnover intention, such that the relationship is more strongly negative when lookism climate is higher than when it is lower.

Development and Validation of the Lookism Climate Scale

A new scale measure must be psychometrically sound to offer value to the field and contribute to future research. We therefore adopted recommendations from the scale development and validation literature (e.g., Anderson & Gerbing, 1991; Colquitt, Sabey, Rodell, & Hill,

2019; Cortina et al., 2020; Hinkin, 1995, 1998) as guiding principles. In Phases 1 and 2, we generated an initial set of items for the LCS and then reduced the item pool based on an evaluation of content validity and initial factor structure. In Phase 3, we assessed the convergent, discriminant, and criterion validity of the scale as a measure of individual-level psychological climate perceptions. In Phase 4, we evaluated the group-level properties (i.e., shared perceptions within individuals in the same job role) of the LCS. Table 1 displays summary information for the eight samples used in Phases 1 through 4, including sample source, demographic details, and key measures collected.² The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Phase 1: Item Generation and Content Validity Assessment

We generated an initial pool of 39 items following recommendations to develop more items than intended for the final scale (Hinkin, 1995, 1998). We chose a deductive approach to writing items using our conceptual definition of lookism climate—perceptions that a workplace implicitly or explicitly values employee physical attractiveness—and the existing literature on physical attractiveness in the workplace as the foundation for our work. A deductive approach is ideal when there exists an ample theoretical and empirical literature from which to draw (Hinkin, 1998). The research team worked collaboratively to write items that were easy to understand, adequately sampled the lookism climate construct domain, and worded so that the referent was the workplace to align with common practices in operationalizing organizational climate (Chan, 1998, 2014).

Phase 1: Method. We evaluated the item pool using a three-step process comprising qualitative and quantitative approaches. First, the research team reviewed the items and removed 20 items that did not adequately meet criteria for clarity, conciseness, or relevance. Second, seven subject matter experts (SMEs) who were business administration doctoral students evaluated the remaining 19 items for clarity, uniqueness, and fit with the lookism climate construct definition (the extent a workplace values employee physical attractiveness) with the following added narrative to further clarify the construct: “beyond the basic level of wanting employees to engage in professional dress and grooming.” Based on their feedback, we revised the wording of several existing items and added 2 new items. Third, we designed an item-sort exercise (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991) with the remaining 21 items and administered it to Sample 1. Item-sort exercises use naïve subjects as judges and provide two forms of content validity evidence: definitional correspondence, which reflects the degree to which a scale item aligns with the focal construct’s definition, and definitional distinctiveness, which reflects the degree to which an item’s alignment to its construct exceeds that to which it aligns with other conceptually similar constructs (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Sample 1’s participants were recruited from the online panel provider Prolific (prolific.co). We used Prolific’s pre-screening capabilities to ensure that we only invited individuals to participate who were full-time employed, lived in the United States, had completed a bachelor’s degree or higher, and had a minimum 95% approval rating. We rescreened individuals as they entered the survey and before they completed the measures to confirm their qualifications. We also included a quality check self-report item at the end of the survey to confirm careful attention and response to the measures which read “As researchers, it is important for us to know if

Table 1
Participant Characteristics and Measures Collected

Phase	Sample	Description	Demographics	Key Measures Collected
1	1	Full-time employed (FTE) adults United States	$N = 125$; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.31$ ($SD = 8.18$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 4.43$ years ($SD = 3.57$); female (%) = 41.00; White (%) = 69.60	21 lookism climate items from item pool
2	2	FTE adults United States	$N = 198$; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.30$ ($SD = 7.32$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 4.81$ years ($SD = 4.85$); female (%) = 41.90; White (%) = 71.70	17 lookism climate items
3	3	FTE adults United States	$N = 379$; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.42$ ($SD = 8.58$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 5.02$ years ($SD = 4.99$); female (%) = 40.30; White (%) = 73.90	Time 1: Final 6-item lookism climate scale (LCS); convergent and discriminant validity variables; job characteristics; Time 2: Social comparisons; appearance orientation
3	4	FTE adults South Korea	$N = 435$; $M_{\text{age}} = 43.18$ ($SD = 9.05$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 9.01$ years ($SD = 7.70$); female (%) = 35.60; Korean (%) = 100.00	LCS
3	5	FTE adults United States	$N = 663$; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.63$ ($SD = 10.81$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 7.03$ years ($SD = 6.32$); female (%) = 37.70; White (%) = 75.40	Time 1: LCS; physical attractiveness; Time 2: Anxiety, stress, turnover intention, job satisfaction
4	6	FTE flight attendants United States	$N = 16$; $M_{\text{age}} = 31.50$ ($SD = 5.83$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 6.07$ years ($SD = 5.30$); female (%) = 93.80; White (%) = 75.00	LCS
4	7	FTE flight attendants South Korea	$N = 19$; $M_{\text{age}} = 35.00$ ($SD = 3.70$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 7.60$ years ($SD = 3.49$); female (%) = 100.00; Korean (%) = 100.00	LCS
4	8	Hair salon employees United States	$N = 22$; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.36$ ($SD = 13.64$); $M_{\text{tenure}} = 12.11$ years ($SD = 11.40$); full-time (%) = 63.64; female (%) = 90.91 White (%) = 95.45	LCS

the data collected are valid. Please indicate if you were paying close attention and answering carefully when responding.” All participants successfully passed this quality check. Our final sample consisted of 125 participants, which exceeds the minimum recommended sample size for content validation studies (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991; Colquitt et al., 2019).

Participants read the lookism climate construct definition and the definitions of two conceptually related climate constructs: competitive climate (Fletcher et al., 2008) and perceived organizational value for diversity (Avery et al., 2013). Next, the items from the three scales were presented together in randomized order, with the construct definitions available for review. Participants assigned each item to the construct they felt it best represented. An “other” option was available if participants did not feel the item represented any of the three constructs.

Phase 1: Results. We calculated two content validity indices (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991; Colquitt et al., 2019). Higher values for the proportion of substantive agreement (p_{sa}) indicate that the scale items correspond closely to the lookism climate construct definition. Higher values for the substantive validity coefficient (c_{sv}) indicate that the items correspond more closely to the lookism climate construct definition than to the definitions for competitive organizational climate and perceived organizational value for diversity. All 21 items met the criteria for being either “strong” or “very strong” representatives of the lookism climate construct (Colquitt et al., 2019), indicating that our items represent the content domain of lookism climate. We retained 17 items: the 15 items that reached the “very strong” criteria for both the p_{sa} and the c_{sv} and the two items that reached the “very strong” evaluation criterion for one of the two content validity indices.

Phase 2: Factor Structure

In Phase 2, we examined the factor structure of the 17 lookism climate items using a new participant sample and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) strategy. We also used the results from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 to shorten the scale to six items, which aligns with recommendations for choosing a scale length of five to six items that balances the need for parsimony with the need to adequately represent the construct domain (Hinkin, 1998).

Phase 2: Method. We recruited 200 adults from Prolific as the basis for Sample 2. We used the same prescreening and rescreening criteria from Phase 1. For this and subsequent samples from Prolific, participants who had already completed a survey as part of this study were screened out using Prolific ID numbers before survey invitations were sent to ensure there was no overlap in participation across samples. We also added an additional quality check item because we collected this phase of data during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many employed adults were working remotely. The additional quality check item was, “How accurately were you able to recall the characteristics of your work environment when you answered the questions in this survey?” Two participants were removed from the data because they indicated that they were only able to recall their work environments “slightly accurately”; therefore, the final sample consisted of 198 participants (completion rate = 99%). Participants responded to the lookism climate items using 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Phase 2: Results. We conducted EFA with maximum likelihood extraction. One factor was extracted with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 that accounted for 67.09% of the total variance; the factor loadings for each of the 17 items were greater than .63 (the range was .63 to .90). These results aligned with our intended design of a single dimension representing lookism climate. Next, we trimmed the scale down to six items based on guidelines for scale length by Hinkin (1995). Following other scale development studies and recommendations (e.g., Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014), we used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to guide our decision-making.³ We first examined the EFA factor loadings and prioritized the items with higher loadings (.80 or higher), which resulted in 11 items. To further reduce the scale, we performed a qualitative assessment to identify items that captured the lookism climate content domain while minimizing redundancies or repetitive words across items. We selected six items as the basis for Phase 3 and the examination of the final scale's psychometric properties and nomological network.

Phase 3: Psychometric Properties and Nomological Network

A critical step in establishing the soundness of a new measure is to evaluate its psychometric properties and establish its place within a theoretical nomological network (Cortina et al., 2020). Following these recommendations, Phase 3 involved a comprehensive examination of the psychometric properties of the LCS. We evaluated the scale's reliability, confirmed its single-factor structure, and examined the degree of measurement equivalence of the scale in two countries, the United States and South Korea. We examined Hypotheses 1 through 8 in two samples of participants from the United States (where we had the ability to administer a lengthier survey).

Phase 3: Method. Three new participant samples were collected in the United States (Samples 3 and 5) and South Korea (Sample 4). Participants in the United States received two online surveys with a time lag of 2 to 3 weeks between them. Participants in South Korea received one online survey. All multi-item scale measure used Likert-type response scales.

Sample 3: Participants and measures. Participants were recruited from Prolific. Screening procedures were identical to those used for Samples 1 and 2. A total of 402 participants completed the Time 1 survey. After 23 participants were removed during the quality check process, the final Time 1 sample consisted of 379 participants. A total of 340 participants responded to the Time 2 survey.

The Time 1 survey contained the following measures: *Lookism climate* was assessed with the 6-item Lookism Climate Scale (LCS) from Phase 2; *competitive climate* was measured using 4 items from Fletcher et al. (2008); *perceived justice climate* was assessed with the 3-item scale from De Dreu and Nauta (2009); *climate for inclusion* was measured using the 11-item scale from Nishii (2013); *interaction outside the organization* and *interdependence* of one's job with other people within the organization were measured using 4 and 6 items, respectively, from Morgeson and Humphrey's (2006) Work Design Questionnaire. The Time 1 survey included an open-ended item asking individuals to provide narrative accounts about "experiences, observations, or events" related to lookism

climate (see Footnote 1). We also measured the following control variables to account for any potential alternative explanations for the results in our analysis of lookism climate's relationship with employee attitudes and behaviors: *job tenure* (in years); *gender* (0 = female, 1 = male); and *conscientiousness* and *neuroticism*, using 8 and 7 items, respectively, from Saucier (1994). The Time 2 survey contained measures of *upward and downward social comparisons* using the 8-item scale from Brown et al. (2007) and *appearance orientation behavior* using 12 items from Cash (1990).

Sample 4: Participants and measures. Participants were recruited from Invight (<http://www.esurvey.kr>), an online survey and research organization in South Korea. We screened respondents so that only employed adults with a bachelor's degree or higher were recruited. Quotas based on participant gender, industry, and employment sector were implemented so that the distribution of the South Korea sample approximated that of the U.S. sample in terms of demographic and employment variables, thus facilitating the interpretation of the results when testing for mean differences in lookism climate. The final sample in South Korea consisted of 435 participants.

The survey administered to Sample 4 contained the LCS, the open-ended item (see Footnote 1), and demographic questions and was translated into Korean using recommended procedures (Erkut, Alarcón, Coll, Tropp, & García, 1999). The initial translation from English to Korean was carried out by a professional translation company (<https://www.enago.co.kr>) located in South Korea. Back-translation of the survey from Korean to English was used to ensure translation quality and item clarity.

Sample 5: Participants and measures. Participants were recruited from Prolific. Screening procedures were identical to those used for Samples 1 through 3. A total of 782 participants completed the Time 1 survey. After 37 participants were removed during the quality check process, the final Time 1 sample consisted of 745 participants. A total of 663 participants responded to the Time 2 survey, which exceeds the recommended minimum sample size of $n = 226$ as determined by an a priori power analysis we conducted using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009).

The Time 1 survey contained the LCS, a 3-item measure of self-reported *physical attractiveness* from Pozzebon, Visser and Bogaert (2012), and the same control variables measured in Sample 3. The Time 2 survey contained the following measures: *workplace anxiety* was measured using 3 items from Diener and Emmons (1984); *work stress* was measured using 4 items from Motowidlo, Packard and Manning (1986); *job satisfaction* and *turnover intention* were measured using 3 and 2 items, respectively, from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1979).

Phase 3: Results.

Confirmatory factor analysis and measurement equivalence. We used multiple steps to evaluate the factor structure of the LCS. First, as shown in Table 2, we conducted separate confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) in Samples 3 and 4 to confirm the LCS's single-factor structure. Following prior scale development studies (Djurdjevic et al., 2017; Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008), we also evaluated model fit using the comparative fit index (CFI) and the standard root-mean-square residual (SRMR). Results supported the single-factor

Table 2
Phase 3, Samples 3 and 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Item	Factor Loading (Sample 3)	Factor Loading (Sample 4)
1. It is preferred that employees be physically attractive.	.87	.76
2. Employees are expected to manage their physical appearance in ways that emphasize or increase their attractiveness.	.83	.83
3. Employees are pressured to manage their appearance so that they are as attractive as possible.	.80	.83
4. Being physically attractive is highly valued in my workplace.	.93	.82
5. My workplace favors employees who are physically attractive.	.90	.88
6. In my workplace, being attractive in appearance is important.	.86	.86

Note. Sample 3 $N = 379$ (Time 1); Sample 4 $N = 435$.

structure of the LCS in both countries (Hu & Bentler, 1999): for Sample 3, CFI = .99, SRMR = .02; for Sample 4, CFI = .97, SRMR = .03. In each sample, standardized item loadings were greater than .70 and statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Next, we conducted tests for measurement equivalence using Mplus 8.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998) to determine whether participants in the United States and South Korea interpreted the LCS items similarly. Administering and evaluating the LCS in different countries provides an evaluation of its performance when translated into different languages and assurance that the instrument is measuring the same underlying construct (Davidov, Meuleman, Cieciuch, Schmidt, & Billiet, 2014; Schmitt & Kuljanin, 2008). Using a bottom-up approach (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000), we began by examining configural equivalence across the two countries by estimating both factor models simultaneously. This baseline model fit the data well (CFI = .98, SRMR = .02; Hu & Bentler, 1998). Next, we imposed equality constraints to examine the degree of measurement equivalence. We examined metric equivalence (same factor loadings across countries), scalar equivalence (same factor loadings and intercepts across countries), and full equivalence (same factor loadings, intercepts, and residuals across countries). The results showed that the difference in CFI between the configural equivalence and metric equivalence models was 0.005, which is smaller than the recommended cutoff value of 0.01 (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). However, the difference in CFI between the metric equivalence and scalar equivalence models was 0.04, which exceeds the cutoff value (see Footnote 3). These results suggest that the factor structure and loadings of the LCS can be assumed equivalent across the U.S. and South Korea samples.

Reliability. We used Cronbach's alpha to calculate the coefficient alpha reliability of the LCS in the three samples. Coefficient alpha reliability was .95 in Sample 3, .93 in Sample 4, and .95 in Sample 5. These results suggest acceptable reliability of the scale in both the United States and South Korea, as all values exceeded the commonly used threshold value of .70.

Convergent and discriminant validity. Hypotheses 1 and 2 related to the convergent and discriminant validity of the lookism climate scale and were tested using Sample 3. As shown

Table 3
Phase 3, Sample 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Lookism climate (T1)	3.04	1.51	(.95)												
2. Competitive climate (T1)	3.82	1.35	.39***	(.84)											
3. Perceived justice climate (T1)	3.75	0.84	-.17**	-.00	(.89)										
4. Climate for inclusion (T1)	3.67	0.71	-.15**	.09	.74***	(.91)									
5. Interaction outside organization (T1)	3.27	1.15	.13*	.21***	.05	.05	(.92)								
6. Interdependence (T1)	3.61	0.85	.06	.08	.01	-.05	.15**	(.88)							
7. Upward social comparisons (T2)	3.32	0.76	.22***	.23***	-.04	-.02	.05	.03	(.85)						
8. Downward social comparisons (T2)	3.02	0.87	.19***	.21***	.02	.10	-.00	.08	.60***	(.90)					
9. Appearance orientation (T2)	4.37	1.17	.34***	.22***	.05	.12*	.16**	.01	.24***	.17**	(.91)				
10. Job tenure (T1)	5.02	4.99	.05	.04	-.17***	-.12*	.07	-.08	-.05	-.04	.04				
11. Gender (T1)	0.60	0.49	.04	.13**	.05	-.02	.03	-.01	-.00	.03	-.16**	.09			
12. Conscientiousness (T2)	5.54	0.85	-.08	.04	.14**	.22***	.08	-.01	-.08	-.08	.11*	.08	-.06	(.81)	
13. Neuroticism (T2)	3.09	1.09	.03	-.04	-.28***	-.30***	-.09	-.04	.20***	.17**	-.06	-.08	-.14*	-.45***	(.82)

Note: Pairwise *N* ranges from 339 to 379. T1 = Time 1. T2 = Time 2. Gender coded as 0 (female) and 1 (male). Job tenure is in years. Coefficient alpha reliabilities are in parentheses.

**p* < .05

***p* < .01

****p* < .001

Table 4
Phase 3, Sample 3: Results of χ^2 Difference Tests Between Lookism Climate and Related Constructs

Measurement Models	Comparison of 1- Versus 2-Factor Models								Difference $\Delta \chi^2$
	One-Factor Model				Two-Factor Model				
	χ^2	df	CFI	SRMR	χ^2	df	CFI	SRMR	
Lookism climate and competitive climate	541.94**	35	.82	.14	72.58**	34	.99	.02	469.36**
Lookism climate and perceived justice climate	709.30**	27	.75	.17	64.32**	26	.99	.03	644.98**
Lookism climate and climate for inclusion	2220.44**	119	.50	.27	368.47**	118	.94	.05	1851.97**

Note. $N = 379$. All χ^2 difference tests have one degree of freedom.
 ** $p < .01$.

in Table 3 and consistent with our expectations, lookism climate was positively correlated with competitive climate ($r = .39, p < .001$) and negatively correlated with perceived justice climate ($r = -.17, p = .001$) and climate for inclusion ($r = -.15, p = .003$).

To evaluate discriminant validity, we conducted a series of paired CFAs between lookism climate and the related constructs of competitive climate (Hypothesis 1) and perceived justice climate and climate for inclusion (Hypothesis 2). We modeled lookism climate and its comparison construct as both a one-factor and two-factor model and compared fit between them using a chi-square difference test. Results for the three paired CFAs are shown in Table 4. For all paired combinations of lookism climate and a related comparison construct, the two-factor models, which reflect lookism climate as a distinct construct, demonstrated superior fit compared to the one-factor models, in which lookism climate and its comparison measure were modeled as a unitary construct. Overall, these results support Hypotheses 1 and 2.⁴

Nomological network results. Hypothesis 3, proposing positive relationships between the job characteristic of interaction outside the organization and lookism climate, and Hypothesis 4, proposing positive relationships between the interdependence job characteristic and lookism climate, were also assessed using Sample 3. As shown in Table 3, the bivariate correlation between lookism climate and the job characteristic dimension of interaction outside the organization was positive and significant ($r = .13, p = .01$), supporting Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 was not supported; although the bivariate correlation between lookism climate and interdependence was positive, it was not statistically significant ($r = .06, p = .29$).

We proposed relationships between lookism climate and social comparisons (Hypothesis 5) and appearance orientation behavior (Hypothesis 6). We examined these relationships using the 339 participants from Sample 3, who completed both the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys. Hypotheses were tested using observed variable path analysis in Mplus 8.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Results are presented in Table 5. Hypotheses 5a and 5b predicted

Table 5
Phase 3, Sample 3: Path Analysis Results

Variable	Column 1:		Column 2:		Column 3:	
	Upward Social Comparisons		Downward Social Comparisons		Appearance Orientation	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Job tenure	-.01	.01	-.01	.01	.00	.01
Gender	.05	.08	.10	.10	-.37**	.12
Conscientiousness	.03	.05	.03	.06	.16*	.08
Neuroticism	.14***	.04	.15**	.05	-.03	.06
Lookism climate	.11***	.03	.11***	.03	.27***	.04
<i>R</i> ²		.09**		.07**		.16***

Note. *N* = 339. Gender was coded as 0 (female) and 1 (male). Job tenure is reported in years.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

that lookism climate is positively associated with upward and downward social comparisons, respectively. As shown in Columns 1 and 2 of Table 5, the regression coefficient for lookism climate was positive and significant for upward social comparisons ($B = .11, p < .001$) and downward social comparisons ($B = .11, p < .001$), respectively; therefore, Hypotheses 5a and 5b were supported. Hypothesis 6 was also supported; as shown in Column 3 of Table 5, there was a positive relationship between lookism climate and appearance orientation behavior ($B = .27, p < .001$).⁵

Hypotheses 7 and 8 were tested using the 663 participants from Sample 5 who completed the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys and observed variable moderated path analysis in Mplus 8.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Descriptive statistics and correlations for Sample 5 are shown in Table 6. The variables comprising the interaction term (physical attractiveness and lookism climate) were mean centered before entering into the regression equation. As shown in Table 7, lookism climate was significantly related to job satisfaction ($B = -.11, p < .001$), work anxiety ($B = .09, p < .001$), job stress ($B = .18, p < .001$), and turnover intentions ($B = .08, p = .02$).

Hypothesis 7 predicted that the relationship between physical attractiveness and job satisfaction is moderated by lookism climate. The interaction term was significant ($B = .04, p = .03$). An examination of the simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the mean of lookism climate revealed that, when lookism climate was higher, the relationship between physical attractiveness and job satisfaction was positive and significant ($B = .15, p < .001$); when lookism climate was lower, the relationship between physical attractiveness and job satisfaction was not significant ($B = .04, p = .41$). Therefore, Hypothesis 7 was supported.

Hypothesis 8a predicted that lookism climate moderates the relationship between physical attractiveness and work anxiety. This hypothesis was not supported, as the interaction term was not statistically significant at the 5% level ($B = -.04, p = .05$). Hypothesis 8b predicted

Table 6
Phase 3, Sample 5: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Lookism climate (T1)	2.91	1.45	(.95)									
2. Physical attractiveness (T1)	4.35	1.23	.19**	(.97)								
3. Work anxiety (T2)	2.21	1.03	.16**	-.15**	(.92)							
4. Work stress (T2)	3.08	1.06	.27**	-.05	.57**	(.91)						
5. Turnover intention (T2)	2.44	1.26	.10*	-.08*	.43**	.39**	(.88)					
6. Job satisfaction (T2)	3.72	1.00	-.17**	.13**	-.45**	-.44**	-.72**	(.91)				
7. Job tenure (T1)	7.03	6.32	.04	-.09*	-.09*	.07*	-.13**	.03				
8. Gender (T1)	0.62	0.49	.01	.07	-.11*	-.06	-.11**	.06	.05			
9. Conscientiousness (T1)	5.94	0.78	-.03	.19**	-.29**	-.09*	-.20**	.19**	.08*	-.02	(.89)	
10. Neuroticism (T1)	2.74	1.02	.15**	-.11**	.46**	.28**	.30**	-.31**	-.14**	-.12**	-.45**	(.80)

Note. *N* = 663. T1 = Time 1. T2 = Time 2. Job tenure is in years. Gender coded as 0 (female) and 1 (male).

**p* < .05.

***p* < .01.

Table 7
Phase 3, Sample 5: Path Analysis Results

Variable	Job Satisfaction		Work Anxiety		Job Stress		Turnover Intention	
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Job tenure	-.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.02** (.01)	.02** (.01)	-.02* (.01)	-.02* (.01)
Gender	.03 (.08)	.04 (.08)	-.13† (.07)	-.13† (.07)	-.07 (.08)	-.07 (.08)	-.19* (.10)	-.19* (.10)
Conscientiousness	.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)	-.13* (.05)	-.13** (.05)	.05 (.06)	.05 (.06)	-.14* (.07)	-.14* (.07)
Neuroticism	-.27*** (.04)	-.24*** (.04)	.39*** (.04)	.37*** (.04)	.32*** (.04)	.28*** (.04)	.29*** (.05)	.27*** (.05)
Physical attractiveness (A)	.07* (.03)	.10** (.03)	-.07* (.03)	-.09** (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.05 (.03)	-.04 (.04)	-.06 (.04)
Lookism climate(B)		-.11*** (.03)		.09*** (.02)		.18*** (.03)		.08* (.03)
A x B		.04* (.02)		-.04† (.02)		-.04† (.02)		-.06* (.03)
<i>R</i> ²	.11***	.14***	.23***	.25***	.10***	.15***	.11***	.12***

Note. *N* = 663. Job tenure is reported in years. Gender was coded as 0 (female) and 1 (male). Standard errors are in parentheses.

† *p* < .10.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

that lookism climate moderates the relationship between physical attractiveness and work stress. This hypothesis was not supported, as the interaction term was not statistically significant at the 5% level ($B = -.04, p = .06$). Hypothesis 8c predicted that lookism climate moderates the relationship between physical attractiveness and turnover intentions. This hypothesis was supported as the interaction term was significant ($B = -.06, p = .02$). An examination of the simple slopes revealed that when lookism climate was higher, the relationship between physical attractiveness and turnover intention was negative and significant ($B = -.14, p = .01$); when lookism climate was lower, the relationship between physical attractiveness and turnover intention was not significant ($B = .03, p = .53$).

Additional analyses. We conducted additional analyses using Sample 5 to explore the possibility that gender may play a role in lookism climate perceptions and outcomes. First, we examined whether women were more likely to perceive lookism climates in their organizations versus men; however, the bivariate correlation between gender and lookism climate was not statistically significant ($r = .01, p = .83$). We next explored whether gender moderates

the main effects of lookism climate on the outcomes shown in Table 7. Gender did not moderate the relationship between lookism climate and these outcomes. Finally, we also tested for three-way interactions between employee physical attractiveness, lookism climate, and gender for the outcomes shown in Table 7. None of these three-way interactions were statistically significant.

Phase 4: Group-Level Properties

In Phases 1 through 3, we validated the LCS as an individual-level psychological climate variable. In Phase 4, we further examined the functional form of the scale. We expect that lookism climate also functions as a referent-shift group-level variable (Chan, 1998, 2014) representing shared perceptions among employees in the same job role or within the same organization.

Phase 4: Method. We recruited participants from one job role (airline attendant) and one organization (a hair salon/spa). The first group of participants were full-time employed flight attendants working at two major airlines, one based in the United States (Sample 6, $n = 16$) and the other based in South Korea (Sample 7, $n = 19$). We recruited participants by having one flight attendant from each airline distribute an email invitation containing a link to an online survey to other flight attendants at their respective organizations. The survey contained the LCS and demographic questions. Sample 8 included employees from multiple job roles (team member, hair stylist, cosmetologist, esthetician, manager, receptionist) working at two jointly-owned locations of a hair salon/spa (Sample 8; $n = 22$). These participants were recruited using a QR code on a survey flyer.

Phase 4: Results. We calculated $r_{wg(j)}$ to assess interrater agreement within each group; high values for $r_{wg(j)}$ supports aggregating data at the climate level (Chan, 1998; James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993). The $r_{wg(j)}$ was .85 and .84 for the job role of flight attendant in the United States and South Korea, respectively. The $r_{wg(j)}$ was .76 for the 22 hair salon/spa employees. All three scores exceed .70, suggesting strong within-group agreement and supporting our expectation that lookism climate also functions as a group-level climate variable.

Discussion

We introduce the term “lookism climate” and develop the 6-item Lookism Climate Scale (LCS) to facilitate future research. Results from eight samples support the psychometric soundness of this new measure. Supporting convergent and discriminant validity, we find that lookism climate is positively associated with and distinct from competitive climate (Fletcher et al., 2008) and negatively associated with and distinct from perceived justice climate and climate for inclusion (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009; Nishii, 2013). Lookism climate is reported as higher among individuals with jobs that require interaction with people outside their organization. Supporting criterion validity, we find that lookism climate is related to theoretically relevant employee outcomes and also moderates the relationships between employee physical attractiveness and work outcomes. We provide evidence of

measurement equivalence for the LCS in the United States and South Korea. We also show that lookism climate can function as a group-level climate variable by showing within-group agreement of lookism climate from individuals in the same job category in two different countries, and within one organization in the United States.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study provides only initial information about the lookism climate construct. The introduction of the construct lookism climate, along with a measure to assess it, provides the means to study new research questions that will help to advance knowledge and theory about the role of employee physical attractiveness in organizations. For example, the LCS will allow researchers to generate more information about the possible advantages or disadvantages of having a lookism climate. Our study illustrates that perceptions of lookism climate at work are associated with lower job satisfaction and higher employee social comparisons, appearance orientation behavior, work anxiety, job stress, and turnover intentions. It would be valuable to learn more about the extent that lookism climates are related to employee expenditures of time and money on efforts to be attractive, as employees who perceive lookism in their organization may spend more money on grooming, dermatology services, or even plastic surgery (Akuffo, Smith, & Briggs, 2022). In addition, lookism climates may generate more time-based work-to-family conflict among employees due to the time it takes to purchase wardrobes, cosmetics, manicures, and hair services, and to work on their appearance. Our findings illustrate that perceptions of lookism climate are related to work anxiety and job stress. Future research could examine to what extent high lookism climate relates to other employee well-being outcomes such as eating disorders or lower mental health, through the mechanisms of increased employee social comparison, heightened appearance orientation behavior, and/or time spent on appearance. Another possible outcome is that lookism climate may increase social sexual behavior in the workplace (Sheppard, O'Reilly, van Dijke, Restubog, & Aquino, 2020).

As noted in the introduction, attractiveness is related to better career outcomes. It is possible that the relationships between attractiveness and career success outcomes are stronger for individuals in organizations, work groups, and job roles with stronger lookism climates. For example, a hiring manager may be more likely to make a biased hiring decision in a setting with high lookism climate than in a setting with low lookism climate. In a similar vein, an incumbent subjected to attractiveness bias may confront the situation and advocate for change where lookism climate is low, whereas (s)he may hesitate to voice concerns where lookism climate is high. Additional study of lookism climate will help identify where biased decisions or discriminatory behaviors are likely to occur and understand factors that inhibit or facilitate these decisions and behaviors.

Future research can extend the understanding of moderators of the relationship between lookism climate and outcomes. For example, it is possible that the pressure of appearing attractive may generate more distress among older employees compared to younger ones. The pressure of appearing attractive may also be harder for lower wage workers who cannot afford extensive wardrobes and beauty services. The moderating role of gender can also be explored further. Specifically, the lookism climate scale may help researchers examine the “beauty is beastly” effect, in which women appear to suffer workplace penalties

due to their attractiveness in certain contexts. Previous work on the “beauty is beastly” effect tends to use experimental or scenario-based designs to examine how gender and attractiveness interact to predict outcomes such as job suitability (e.g., Paustian-Underdahl & Walker, 2016). Future research might extend into real-world hiring contexts by examining how hiring personnel signals lookism climates in their organizations to potential applicants, or how lookism climate might further influence evaluations of job applicants alongside gender and physical attractiveness. Since our participant samples in Phase 4 worked in jobs and settings that are primarily female-typed (flight attendant, hair salon), extending this work to examine lookism climate and its consequences in male-typed positions would be valuable.

The gender distribution or other characteristics of work groups, organizations, or even customers may affect lookism climate perceptions. A narrative comment by one of our participants suggested that lookism climate might differ by the socioeconomic status of customer served. Specifically, our participant noted, “As my clinic serves a higher socioeconomic demographic, it seems to be beneficial to be more attractive.” Future research would benefit from more in-depth qualitative work to enrich our understanding of employee perceptions and experiences of lookism climate. One work characteristic that will be valuable to examine is the role of remote work. Emerging work suggests that climate within an organization can influence employee behavior outside of the organization, and scholars have called for more study of climate dimensions and their spillover effects (Naveh & Katz-Navon, 2015). To date, trends suggest that employee attempts to become more attractive have not diminished since recent increases in remote work. For example, as reported by Meeson (2020), cosmetic surgery procedures have increased, rather than decreased, resulting in the “Zoom Boom.” Speculation has been that individuals notice their features more on Zoom. We see a fruitful opportunity to examine lookism climate’s effects outside of traditional organizational boundaries in light of the changing nature of work and how and where it is performed.

This investigation provides evidence that lookism climate functions as both an individual-level perception of psychological climate and as a shared perception among employees in the same job role or organization. Yet, we provide evidence for the latter from only a few employee groups. It will be valuable to provide more data that demonstrates that employees nested within various job roles, departments, organizations, and industries agree on their perception of lookism climate. The relative strength of lookism expectations across different job roles (e.g., IT vs. sales), organizations, and industries (e.g., retail vs. manufacturing) are also of interest. We recommend that researchers adapt the item wording of the LCS where needed to reflect the appropriate referent being studied (e.g., job role, organization, or industry). For example, one of our items is “In my workplace, being attractive in appearance is important.” If an investigator was studying the extent of lookism in retail, we suggest they change the referent to read “In my industry, being attractive in appearance is important.”

Finally, the LCS will aid in future studies to examine cross-cultural differences in organizational lookism climate. Potential cross-cultural differences may manifest at the individual level, such as in employees’ affective reactions to lookism climate,⁶ or differences at the group or organizational level. For example, imagine a company with two subsidiaries in two different countries. In one subsidiary, lookism climate may be high, as a reflection of emphasis given to beauty in the larger cultural context, whereas in another subsidiary

lookism climate may be low, even if management in both subsidiaries enforce equity and equality in their practices. It would be informative to have the LCS administered to nationally representative samples in multiple countries to further discern these differences.

Practical Implications

The introduction of the construct of lookism climate and the development of the LCS provide a means for leaders to assess the extent to which they implicitly or explicitly value employee physical attractiveness. The LCS can be used to identify a new aspect of company culture that leaders may not be aware of, and therefore can be a useful addition to leadership development efforts, a critical need in today's organizations (Day, Riggio, Tan, & Conger, 2021). For example, along with other climate measures, organizations may administer the LCS across the organization and share results with leaders on a regular basis. Leaders may use the LCS results as an evidence-based foundation for their self-reflection and action planning, activities which are foundational to developing an array of leadership capabilities (e.g., Nesbit, 2012).

Beyond using the LCS as part of a leader's own self-development toolkit, it can also be used by leaders seeking to eliminate less-acknowledged forms of bias in the workplace. An important step in such efforts is to recognize where and when bias manifests within a leader's scope of responsibility and then build in accountability systems to address it (Williams & Mihaylo, 2019). The LCS could be used by leaders to first identify and then work to reduce biases related to physical appearance in their departments or organizations by linking results over time to direct reports' (e.g., line managers') compensation and rewards.

Our findings suggest that employees in lookism climates may experience lower job satisfaction, higher social comparisons, appearance orientation behavior, work anxiety, job stress, and turnover intentions. These findings do not suggest that employers should allow employees to come to work without good grooming. Instead, they suggest employers (and employees) should think twice about overemphasizing physical attractiveness. We suggest that managers and employees avoid commenting extensively on individual appearance; calling out employees as being pretty, handsome, or gorgeous; and/or giving awards based on physical appearance (all examples given in the narrative comments in the online supplement). Such comments may overemphasize physical attractiveness and make some employees feel anxious that they are not attractive enough.

Conclusion

By conceptualizing and measuring the construct of lookism climate, we offer a means to more closely examine the role of context in the "beauty premium." Via multiple samples and different forms of validity evidence, we demonstrate that the Lookism Climate Scale (LCS) is a psychometrically sound measure of individual psychological perceptions of lookism climate. We also provide initial evidence that the LCS can be used to measure employees' shared perceptions of lookism climate. The construct of lookism climate and the LCS offer a fruitful avenue for continued theory building and organizational interventions around this important topic.

Notes

1. These quotes were collected from study participants in Sample 3 (United States). We also collected narrative comments from study participants in Sample 4 (South Korea). Additional narrative comments about individuals' experiences with lookism climate in their organizations are in the online supplemental material.
2. Data collection procedures for all samples were conducted in compliance with standards for the ethical treatment of human subjects and were approved by the [Suffolk University] institutional review board (#1557922).
3. Please refer to the online supplemental material for additional details.
4. Phase 3, Sample 5, also included the Workplace Generational Index (WGI) scale, which assesses ageism climate (King & Bryant, 2016). To show the lookism climate's distinctiveness from the ageism climate, we conducted a paired Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Our analysis showed that the two-factor model, which reflects lookism climate as a distinct construct, showed superior fit ($CFI = .94$, $SRMR = .05$) compared to the one-factor model, where lookism and ageism climates are modeled as a unitary construct ($CFI = .76$, $SRMR = .16$). A chi-square difference test further supported the two-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 973.48$, $p < .001$).
5. We conducted a sensitivity analysis to compute the required effect size given our sample size to achieve a power value of 0.95 using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009). The computed required effect size is 0.05, which is a smaller value than the effect sizes in our regressions, indicating a high achieved power in our models.
6. Please refer to the online supplemental material for preliminary findings regarding individuals' affective reactions to lookism climate using data we collected in Phase 3, Samples 3 and 4.

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