

The Effect of Expert Attractiveness on Juror Decision-Making (#32727)

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Author(s)

Mariam Younan (University of New South Wales) - m.younan@unsw.edu.au

Kristy Martire (University of New South Wales) - k.martire@unsw.edu.au

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?

It's complicated. We have already collected some data but explain in Question 8 why readers may consider this a valid pre-registration nevertheless.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?

This study aims to investigate the effect of providing extraneous cues, such as attractiveness, on jurors' perceptions of expert credibility and opinion quality. Specifically, this study will be a first step in examining whether jurors are sensitive to and persuaded differently by high- and low- quality expert opinions (as defined by the normative ExPEX framework) even in the presence of logically irrelevant, but possibly influential, extraneous cues (e.g., attractiveness). Specifically, this study asks: when provided with all the necessary information to ascertain expert opinion quality, does attractiveness impact jurors' evaluation of expert opinion quality?

We expect to replicate earlier studies (Martire et al., in submission) and find a significant main effect of expert evidence quality. Specifically, we predict that jurors that observed the normatively strong expert testimony will render higher persuasiveness ratings compared to jurors that observed normatively weak testimony. We also predict that persuasiveness will predict verdict, and be highly correlated with expert agreement.

Regarding attractiveness, if participants are affected by attractiveness even in the presence of information about logically relevant attributes, we would expect to replicate prior studies and find a significant main effect of attractiveness. For example, if attractiveness is an influential cue on jurors' evaluation of expert evidence, we expect to find a significant main effect of attractiveness on persuasiveness ratings. We tentatively predict that jurors that observe the attractive expert (i.e., high attractiveness conditions) will render higher persuasiveness ratings and be more likely to render a guilty verdict relative to the control conditions (i.e., attractiveness absent conditions). Further, we predict the opposite pattern of results with jurors that observe the unattractive expert (i.e., low attractiveness conditions) relative to the control conditions (attractiveness absent conditions).

Given the novelty of this research, it is unclear whether attractiveness cues function differently, if at all, when considering normatively high- and low-quality opinions. It is possible that attractiveness may have less impact when ExPEX attribute information is available, or it is possible that the ExPEX and attractiveness cue will interact (i.e., attractiveness will influence ratings of ability, which will influence ratings of credibility). Therefore, no specific predictions were made regarding the interaction and mediation effects.

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.

Participants' persuasion to the expert opinion will be measured by ratings of expert credibility (how credible is the expert?), value (how valuable was the expert's testimony?) and weight (how much weight do you give to the expert's testimony?) on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 100 (the most possible) that are averaged to produce a persuasion score. A higher score is indicative of greater persuasion by the expert opinion.

Expert agreement will be measured by asking participants if they agree with the expert's opinion (i.e., If the expert conclude that ____, would you agree with that opinion?). A binary (yes/no) response will be measured to cross-validate persuasiveness ratings.

Jurors will also be asked to indicate their final verdict based on the evidence (i.e., by answering guilty/not guilty to the question 'considering all the evidence provided to you, what is your individual verdict?').

Witness credibility (aggregated by ratings of knowledge, confidence, trustworthiness and likeability) will be obtained via the Witness Credibility Scale (Brodsky et al., 2009)

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?

Participants will be randomly allocated to 1 of 6 conditions (between-subjects). The 6 conditions:

1. Extraneous Cue Present (HIGH attractiveness) + Strong ExPEX: involves the provision of a normatively high-quality expert opinion on all attributes along with an image of a highly attractive expert.
2. Extraneous Cue Present (HIGH attractiveness) + Weak ExPEX: involves the provision of a normatively low-quality expert opinion on all attributes along with an image of a highly attractive expert.
3. Extraneous Cue Present (LOW attractiveness) + Strong ExPEX: involves the provision of a normatively high-quality expert opinion on all attributes along with an image of a highly unattractive expert.
4. Extraneous Cue Present (LOW attractiveness) + Weak ExPEX: involves the provision of a normatively low-quality expert opinion on all attributes along with an image of a highly unattractive expert.
5. Extraneous Cue Absent + Strong ExPEX: involves the provision of a normatively high-quality expert opinion on all attributes with no image of an expert.
6. Extraneous Cue Absent + Weak ExPEX: involves the provision of a normatively low-quality expert opinion on all attributes with no image of an expert.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.

Data from this study will be analysed using a 2 (expert evidence quality; weak, strong) x 3 (extraneous factor level; absent, low, high) ANOVAs and ANCOVAs in SPSS. We will include covariates relating to extraneous attributes if we have not been able to control these in the experimental stimuli. To investigate any null results, a Bayesian ANOVA will be conducted using JASP. Data will also be analysed using linear and multiple regressions to examine whether the extraneous factor (i.e., attractiveness) by condition and by subjective ratings predicts persuasiveness ratings, expert agreement, verdict as well as individual ExPEX attributes (e.g., ability, trustworthiness). Further, mediation and path analyses will be conducted to examine whether the extraneous factors have a direct effect on expert persuasiveness and verdict, or an indirect effect (i.e., by altering perceptions of a defined ExPEX attribute). Finally, partial least squares analyses will be conducted to examine the optimal weighing of ExPEX attributes that lead to optimal decision-making.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.

Participants will be excluded if they fail any of the attention checks. Participants will also be provided a comprehension measure. Data will be analysed with and without participants who score less than 75% to see if this effects the results. If there is a difference, participants with lower than sound comprehension of the expert testimony will be excluded from the final analyses.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.

A sample size of 450 (75 assigned to each condition) is expected to provide sufficient data and power to examine between group differences and predictions of persuasion.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)

Regressions will be conducted to examine whether the WCS ratings influence persuasion scores and verdict. Regressions will also be conducted to examine whether need for cognition and scientific reasoning influence persuasion scores and verdict, and whether attractiveness may mediate the relationship between these variables.