**Case Study**

"Applied Case Study he Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa was about to open the first new resort in Atlantic City in 13 years. The 2,000-room casino and resort needed to hire 5,000 employees across hundreds of positions. To find enough high-quality employees, the Borgata engaged in a creative recruitment campaign that resulted in 30,000 well-qualified job applicants. T n FOCUS ON ETHICS H n what factors would affect not only the number of available applicants but the quality as well? n How would you handle the practical aspects of receiving and screening the 30,000 applications? To see how the hotel handled this situation, follow the web links on your text website. How would you have conducted such an extensive recruitment campaign? The Ethics of Recruiting and Hiring Based on Physical Appearance Harvard economics professor Robert Barro believes that physical appearance is always a bona fide worker qualification as long as customers and coworkers think that it is. That is, if customers want to be served by beautiful people and coworkers prefer working with beautiful people, then it should be okay for companies to recruit and hire based on an individual’s looks. When people refer to someone’s “looks” or “physical appearance,” they are generally referring to that person’s height, weight, and facial symmetry (i.e., high cheekbones v. no visible cheekbones; small nose v. big or bulbous nose). Because looks are subjective, beauty really is in the eyes of the beholder. In the United States, as well as other countries, beautiful people are often judged based on their external characteristics, rather than such internal characteristics as per- sonality and ability. And it appears that many employers want employees who are tall and strong (for men), small/petite (for women), with no visible body fat, and a handsome or pretty face. Even those HR professionals who know better can often fall into the “looks” trap when recruiting and hiring. Although some cities have laws against discrimination of applicants based on their height, weight, and/or physical appearance (e.g., San Francisco, CA; Santa Cruz, CA; Washing- ton, DC), basically, there is no real protection from appearance-based discrimination unless it singles out appli- cants based on race, gender, or age. That is, you don’t have to hire ugly people so long as you aren’t hiring them because of their race, gender, or age. The hiring professionals at the Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa in Atlantic City, New Jersey, embrace this philosophy. Applicants for positions of waiters and waitresses are told that once hired, their weight cannot increase by more than 7%. This means that a 125-pound woman cannot gain more than 8 pounds over her tenure at the company. Of course, if you are a little too heavy to begin with (not obese, though), you won’t even get an interview. Defenders of the right to hire based on looks say that physically attractive people are perceived as smarter, more successful, more sociable, more dominant, and as having higher self-esteem. And customers would rather be helped by those types of employees instead of by the less attractive ones. The assumption is that the more beautiful employees a company has, the more clients or customers that business will attract. This, of course, means more money for the company. And, the more money the company brings in, the higher the salaries employees can earn. So, according to the defenders, it’s a win-win situation. Well, win-win for the beautiful peo- ple, anyway. And speaking of salaries: In 2005, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis reviewed the correlation between looks and wages. The research showed that workers with below average looks earned, on average, 9% less per hour than above average looking workers. Above average looking employees earn 5% more than their average looking cow- orkers. And Fortune 500 companies seem to hire male CEOs that are about 6 feet tall, which is 3 00 taller than the aver- age man."

"Competency and the ability to do the job are often over- looked when emphasis is placed on looks. Although these beautiful people may be able to do the job, there may be less attractive people denied a position who could do the job more successfully. So, like Professor Barro implies, as long as we, the cus- tomer, prefer looks over highly skilled professionals, companies should have the right to refuse employment to unattractive, short, and overweight applicants. What Do You Think? n Do you see any potential ethical dilemmas of recruiting and hiring based on looks? If so, what are they? n Is it ethical to take a less skilled applicant over a more skilled one just because one is more attractive than the other? n Is it fair or ethical for places like Borgata Casino and Spa to refuse employment to less than average looking employees? n Is there a more ethical way to balance the rights of companies to have attractive people and the rights of people who are perceived as unattractive? n Do you think that more states and cities should make laws against discrimination of people based on their looks?"