

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

IS THE HALO EFFECT UNIVERSAL? AN INVESTIGATION OF THE GENERALIZABILITY AND APPLICATIONS OF THE HALO EFFECT

GIULIO GABRELI, PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract

The influence of a global evaluation of a person based on the perception of a single trait is a phenomenon widely investigated in social psychology. Mostly defined as *Halo Effect*, this phenomenon has been deeply studied for more than a hundred years now, and findings such as the relationship between aesthetic perception and other personality traits like competence and trustworthiness have since been uncovered. The latter plays an especially crucial role in individuals' social interactions. Despite the large body of literature published on the Halo Effect, and especially on the relationship between aesthetic appearance and perceived trustworthiness, little is known about the overall generalizability of the effect. Almost all of the studies have been conducted on adult participants from western countries. Moreover, nothing is known about the stability of the effect over time, in the event of major destabilization, such as a new pandemic outbreak. In this work, the cross-cultural generalizability of the Halo Effect is investigated. In Study 1, a comparison of the evaluation of participants of different ethnicities toward individuals of their ethnic ingroup or outgroup is made. Additionally, the differences between the strength of the effect in adults and children are investigated. In study 2, the time-evolution changes of the strength of the Halo Effect during the recent SARS-CoV-2 pandemic outbreak are investigated, to study the stability of the effect over time. In Study 3, the application of the effect in a real-world scenario study is examined. An analysis of American politicians' photo-taking behavior has been conducted on the presidential campaign conducted across the years (from 1924 to 2002). Taken together, the results of the three studies confirm that the effect extends across individuals of different cultures, but not across individuals of different ages. Significant differences have in fact been found in the strength of the relationship between adults and children. Additionally, the effect has been proven to be affected by external events, such as the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, with a fast return to the baseline level. Finally, the analysis of politicians' photo-taking behavior revealed that politicians are more likely to engage in the practice of appearing in pictures with children and infants the closer it gets to the actual election day.

Tuesday
05 May 2020

2pm

Venue:
via TEAMS
Meeting

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This suggests that politicians are taking advantage of children and infants to enhance their image toward their possible electors. Overall, the results confirm the generalizability and stability of the effect in adults, the specificity of children's faces, and the possibility of exploiting the effect for enhancing perceived traits, such as trustworthiness.

Proceedings

Duration	Session
5 mins	Chair Welcome & Introduction of Panel
30-45mins	Presentation by Student
15 mins	Q&A (by audience – faculty / students)
Break	Audience to leave the TEAMS meeting
30 mins	Q&A by Panel
15 mins	Chairperson to ask candidate to leave the TEAMS meeting Private Panel Discussion and Decision on the Student's examination
15 mins	Candidate invited back by Chairperson to the TEAMS meeting Feedback and Outcome of Qualifying Examination

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