

## Tekst 9

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# Taking our leaders at face value

**A new study suggests that how we respond to a candidate's face could determine who we vote for**

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR**

- 1 The qualities that voters think they can discern in a candidate's face have a surprisingly strong influence on how they vote. In fact, if you take the new research at face value, how much voters like a candidate's face is the only thing that will decide who wins or loses. What matters to voters isn't so much whether a candidate is attractive or not. Instead, voters look for facial cues for personality traits like aggressiveness, intelligence, honesty, friendliness and competence.
- 2 The surprising thing is not that people look for these cues – it's that judgments about a candidate's face all by themselves seem to predict whether he or she will win or lose the election. It seems to be the very features of the face that attract or repel voters. It's hard to untangle how actual voters, faced with a live candidate, are affected by the face, partly because their feelings about a candidate's policies and personality might affect their perceptions. So Anthony C. Little, a psychologist at the University of Stirling in Scotland, decided to use computerized "morphing" techniques to examine the phenomenon. In research he used the faces of candidates from eight real elections, including candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry from the 2004 U.S. presidential election. Then he used a computer-imaging technique to combine each face with a nondescript male face that had been created by averaging the faces of 10 university students. The result was a pair of faces that was not recognizable as either candidate, but nevertheless bore a sort of family resemblance to the originals – young, unblemished; they could have been the candidates' college-age nephews. So, the altered Bush still has narrow-set eyes and a slightly heavy brow, the altered Kerry wide-set eyes and a long face.
- 3 Then Little asked people to look at the faces and say who they would vote for. In all eight rounds, the votes based on composite faces gave the same results as the actual elections. That bears emphasizing. Sitting at a computer screen, with nothing to go on but a face, a majority of the hundred or so volunteers consistently chose the same candidates as did the millions of voters who had been exposed to newspaper articles, television reports, and intense campaigning. Although the percentages weren't exactly the same for each round, the volunteers always chose the same candidate who ended up winning the popular vote in the actual election.

- 4 In a second experiment, Little's researchers looked in detail at what people saw in the faces, and whether circumstances would change their choices. First people were surveyed about what they thought they saw in the altered Bush and Kerry faces. The Bush face was judged as more masculine and dominant. The Kerry face was rated as more attractive, forgiving, likeable and intelligent. Then researchers asked people to choose which face would be a better leader in a time of war, and which in a time of peace. Bush won 74 per cent of the war-time vote, while Kerry won 61 per cent of the peace-time vote. 37, people will choose a candidate they perceive as dominant if they think he'll have to handle a war, but prefer intelligence and likeability as long as there's no shooting going on.
- 5 But how likely is it that people are really making their decisions based solely on faces? Even Little doesn't really believe it. After all, large chunks of the electorate still vote for a strong party line, and are going to vote for their party's candidate no matter what he or she looks like. On the other hand, undecided voters are more likely to base decisions on their judgment of individual candidates. Those are the ones who could be heavily influenced by a candidate's face, whether they realize it or not.
- 6 The problem is, despite our specialized cognitive machinery for dealing with faces, it turns out that faces aren't a very good guide for judging other people. Studies show that people think they can read all sorts of things about people based on their faces, including intelligence, basic character and personality traits. Unfortunately, the same studies show that we're not as accurate as we think we are.
- 7 Like everyone else, I know that I shouldn't judge a book by its cover. And like everyone else, I do it all the time. I'm usually pretty confident I'm right, but I'm also probably wrong. Misjudging someone at a party based on his face is one thing. Misjudging the leader of a country for the same reason is another, much more serious thing. Faces and gut feelings are no way to choose a leader.

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- 2p **33** Geef van elk van de volgende beweringen aan of deze wel of niet overeenkomt met de inhoud van alinea 1.  
People seem to vote for a particular candidate because they like
- 1 handsome candidates with attractive faces best.
  - 2 the characteristics they seem to detect in the candidate's face.
  - 3 the political ideas and changes they think a candidate stands for.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p **34** What is the main function of paragraph 2?
- A To analyse the research into the subject matter.
  - B To describe the research into the subject matter.
  - C To question the methods to research the subject matter.
  - D To stress the importance of the research into the subject matter.
- 1p **35** Which of the following is made clear by the last sentence of paragraph 2?
- A In the computer images great care was taken to make Bush and Kerry look very unlike each other.
  - B Some facial characteristics of Bush and Kerry were maintained in the computer images.
  - C The Bush and Kerry computer images were given facial characteristics that made recognition more difficult.
- "That bears emphasizing." (paragraph 3)
- 1p **36** What does the author want to make clear with this remark?  
He thinks that the outcome of the research mentioned in the text
- A is highly remarkable.
  - B may not be trustworthy.
  - C should be ignored.
  - D was common knowledge all along.
- 1p **37** Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 4?
- A Apparently
  - B Instead
  - C Nevertheless
  - D Unexpectedly
- 1p **38** Wie gaan, volgens alinea 5, het sterkst af op uiterlijke kenmerken bij het kiezen van een politicus?

- 1p **39** What does paragraph 6 make clear?
- A** Attractive people are not necessarily the best politicians.
  - B** How people determine whether or not they trust anyone.
  - C** The opinions people form about others may not always be correct.
  - D** Why studies into face recognition come up with conflicting results.

- “Misjudging someone ... a leader.” (paragraph 7)
- 1p **40** How can the tone of this part of the text be characterised?
- A** As arrogant.
  - B** As cynical.
  - C** As disapproving.
  - D** As objective.
  - E** As resigned.