

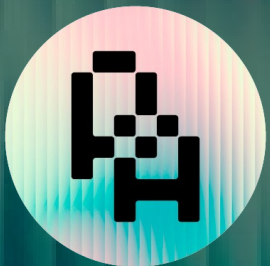
The ‘reverse halo effect’ in the asylum process – do looks matter?

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Psychology at the Frontiers: Asylum Interviewing and Decision Making [Psych-AID]

Introduction

The halo effect
"what is beautiful is good"

The horn effect
"the reverse halo effect"



"Hey, those people fleeing war in Syria aren't poor at all! Look, they all have smartphones!" is one increasingly tedious complaint that has been **bubbling away on social media** recently. Owning a mobile phone, it seems, should render one ineligible for help when trying to stop themselves and their families from dying in a war.

Voices > Comment

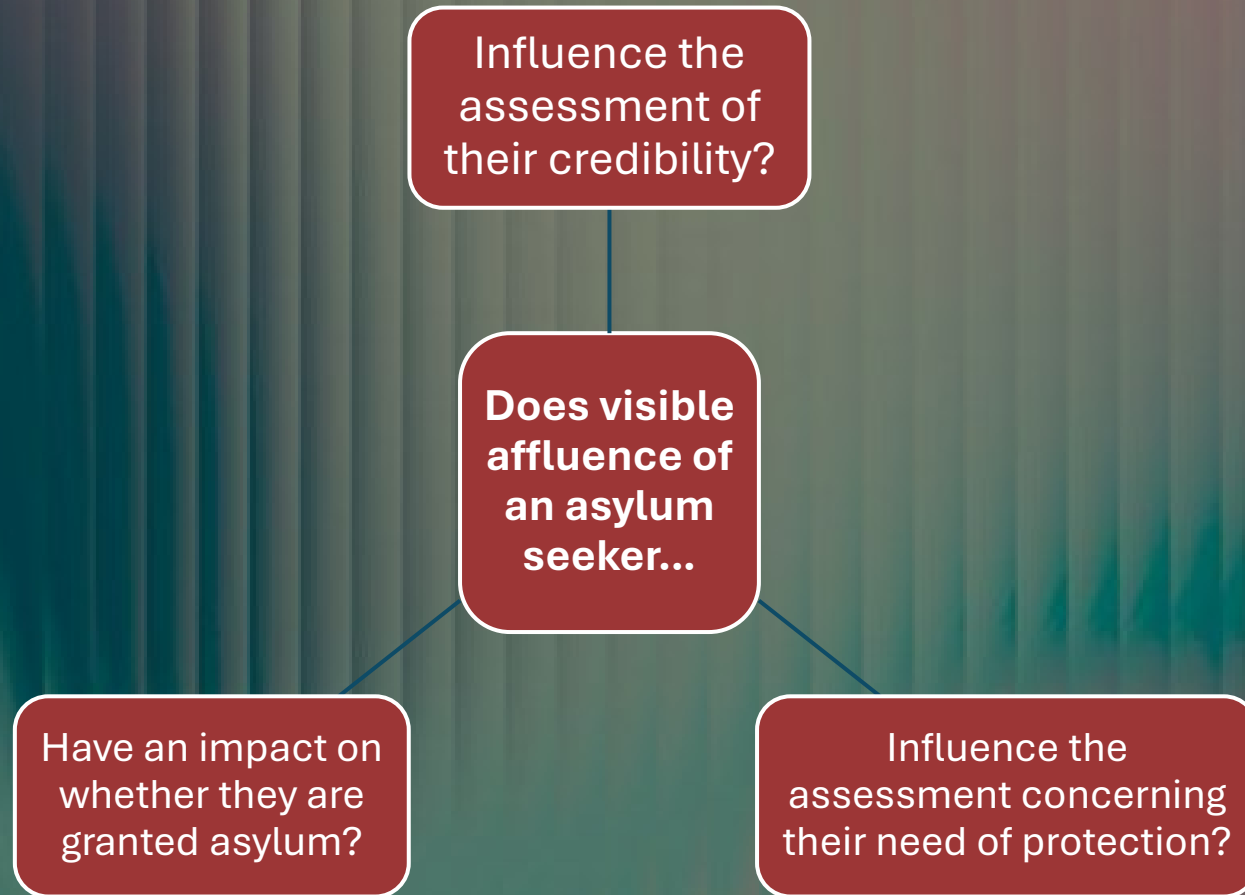
Surprised that Syrian refugees have smartphones? Sorry to break this to you, but you're an idiot

You don't need to be a white westerner to own a relatively cheap piece of technology

James O'Malley • Monday 07 September 2015 13:57 BST • [0](#) Comments



Aim of the Study



Hypothesis

When the asylum seeker shows signs of affluence
→ Less credible
→ Less in the need of protection
→ Lower positive rates for asylum

Methods

200 participants

Text-based vignettes

Fictitious backstories &
images

2 different stories, 2 different images

→ Each story paired with each image & each place of origin

→ 8 different vignettes



Participants = mock asylum officials

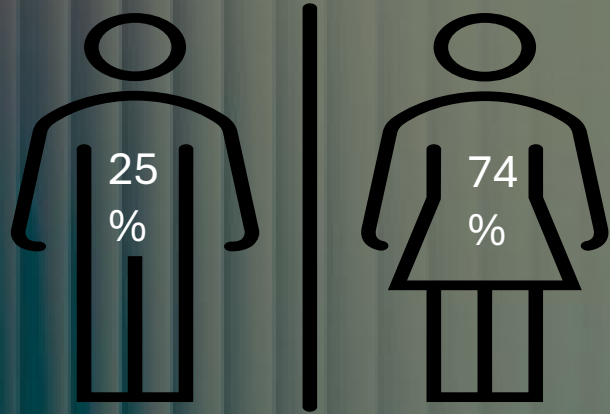
→ assess the credibility and need of protection of the asylum seekers (0-100)

→ would you grant asylum (yes/no)

- Story 1:
 - ongoing conflicts in home country
 - part of a minority group that has been targeted in the conflicts
- Story 2:
 - part of a political party in which the government is targeting different violent methods



Sample demographics



Age categories: 18-74

Fields of education:
Law (23%), Health (20%), Natural
Sciences (19%)

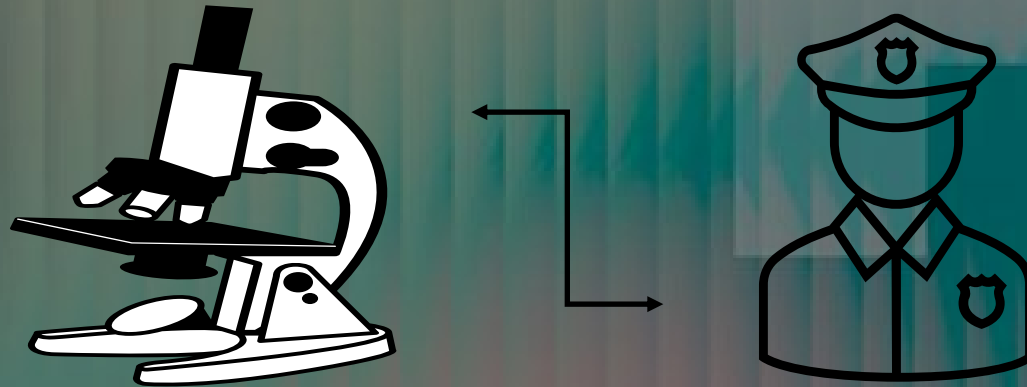
Preliminary results

No difference between affluent and non-affluent conditions in terms of...

- Perceived credibility ($t(199) = -0.99$, $p = .319$)
- Perceived need of protection ($t(199) = -0.79$, $p = .434$)
- Decision to grant asylum ($\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 0.16$, $p = .688$)

Discussion

- The results were much more even than we would have expected – why?
- The weight of prior attitudes?
- The use of AI created pictures and short backstories – problems?



Thank you for your attention!

Questions?



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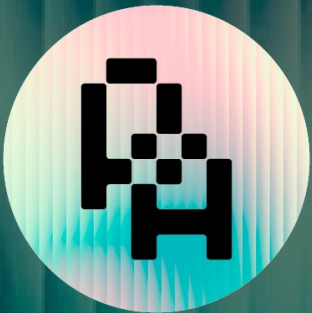


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