Predicting Political elections from rapid and unreflective face judgments

* In all experiments, participants were presented with the faces of the winner and the runner-up and asked to decide who is more competent.
* Predictions were as accurate after 100ms exposure to the faces of the winner and the runner-up as exposure after 250ms and unlimited time exposure.
* Asking participants to deliberate and make a good judgement dramatically increased the response time and reduced the predictive accuracy of judgements relative to both judgements made after 250ms of exposure to the faces and judgements made within a response deadline of 2s.
* The findings suggest that rapid, unreflective judgements of competence from faces can affect voting decisions.
* In experiment 1, we tested whether competence judgements made after 100ms of exposure to the faces of the candidates predict the outcomes of gubernatorial elections better than chance and whether additional time exposure (250ms and unlimited time) improves the accuracy of prediction
* In experiment 2, we tested whether deliberation judgements are less accurate in predicting the election outcomes than judgements made after 250ms of exposure to the faces and judgements made under response deadline of 2s, forcing participants to rely on quick judgements
* In experiment 3, we collected competence judgements for both gubernatorial and Senate races in 2006 before the actual election. We tested whether these judgements based solely on facial appearance would predict the election outcomes better than chance
* Ex 1. Participants in all three conditions were more likely to choose the winner than the runner-up as more competent. The findings suggest that simple, fast, binary judgements of competence aggregated across a relatively small sample size of raters are sufficient to predict the outcomes better than chance.
* Ex 2.The response deadline procedure should force participants to rely on quick judgements. If trait judgements from faces are rapid and unreflective, participants’ judgements in this condition should predict the outcomes of the elections better than chance. However, the judgements in the deliberation condition should be less predictive of the election outcomes than the judgements in the 250ms and response deadline conditions. Participants in all three conditions were more likely to choose the winner than the runner-up as more competent. However, the effect was smaller in the deliberation condition than in the 250ms and response deadline conditions. The percentage of correctly predicted races in the deliberation condition was not significantly different from chance. Aggregating across the 250ms and the response deadline conditions, the binary competence judgements predicted 70.9% of the gubernatorial races, which was significantly higher than chance
* As in ex.1, judgements made after 250ms of exposure to the faces of the candidates predicted the outcomes of gubernatorial elections. This result was also obtained for judgements that were made within a response deadline of 2s, forcing participants to rely on rapid, unreflective judgements. The judgements of participants who were asked to deliberate and make a good judgement were less accurate in predicting the election outcomes ad substantially slower than the judgements of participants in the other two conditions
* Ex 3. We collected competence judgements 2 weeks before the gubernatorial elections in 2006 to demonstrate that these judgements can predict elections prospectively. Participants were presented with the pictures of the Democratic and Republican candidates for each gubernatorial race ad asked to choose the more competent person by using their gut feeling. We also included the 2006 Senate races in this experiment. Participants were more likely to choose the winner than the runner-up as more competent for both the gubernatorial and Senate races. Aggregating across participants, the judgements predicted 68.8% gubernatorial races against the chance prediction of 50%, and 72.4% of the Senate races. Replicating our prior findings of prospectively predicting the outcomes of the Senate races in 2004 (3), judgements of competence based solely on the facial appearance of the candidates and collected before the actual elections in 2006 predicted the outcomes of both gubernatorial and Senate elections.
* Extending our prior work on forecasting the outcomes of Senate elections (3), we have shown that rapid, unreflective judgements of competence based solely on facial appearance predicted the outcomes of gubernatorial elections. Even after 100ms of exposure to the faces of the winner and the runner-up, participants were more likely to choose the winner as more competent.
* In addition to showing that people rapidly extract trait information from faces (5, 6), we also show that instructions to deliberate and make a good judgement led to less accurate predictions of the election outcomes. These findings are consistent with research showing that deliberation can interfere with the quality of unreflective judgements (7) and even with judgements that can characterized on simple quantitative dimensions (12).
* Benjamin & Shapiro research. Participants predicted outcomes of gubernatorial races after observing 10s of gubernatorial debates. When the sound of debate was off of muffled, these judgements predicted the outcomes better than chance. Interestingly, when the sound was on, predictions were at chance, suggesting that the useful information in terms of prediction was nonverbal and that inferring the party affiliation of the candidates and policy positions led to worse predictions.
* “Thin slices” of nonverbal behaviours can provide sufficient information for accurate social judgements (17-23)
* However, keep in mind, that appearance is not the only thing influencing the voters. Party, history, other candidates etc