

Male politicians have 'bigger heads' in more gender-equal cultures

October 17 2012

When it comes to analyzing gender stereotypes in the media, studies have shown that photographs of men focus on male faces while photographs of women are more focused on women's bodies. A recent study from *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, a SAGE journal, finds that this type of "face-ism" is even more extreme in cultures with less educational, professional, and political gender discrimination.

"Being in a relatively egalitarian [cultural context](#) does not shield politicians from this face-ism bias; in fact, it exacerbates it," wrote study authors Sara Konrath and Josephine Au.

The researchers examined the differences in face-ism by measuring the facial prominence of over 6, 500 male and female political figures in [photographs](#) from more than 25 different [cultures](#). Facial prominence was determined by measuring the length of the head in a photograph (from the chin to the top of the head) and comparing it to the length of the body shown in the photograph. The researchers then analyzed these face/body ratios by culture and found that women's bodies were more prominent in photographs from cultures in which women have more educational, professional, and political opportunities.

The authors wrote, "Understanding this double-bind is fundamental to understanding how societal pressures might shape the visual depictions of male and female leaders online, whether political or otherwise."

The authors claimed that stereotypes associated with each gender are

more divergent in richer and more institutionally gender-equal cultures overall, and that these photographs are simply a [visual representation](#) of a deeply-ingrained, cultural concept.

"The face-ism bias is likely due to unconscious influences, so simply making politicians and their support staff aware of this bias and its negative implications for female politicians could reduce this bias."

More information: "Cultural Differences in Face-ism: Male Politicians Have Bigger Heads in More Gender-Equal Cultures" in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, available free for a limited time at [pwq.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... 455317.full.pdf+html](http://pwq.sagepub.com/content/early/.../455317.full.pdf+html)

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: Male politicians have 'bigger heads' in more gender-equal cultures (2012, October 17) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-male-politicians-bigger-gender-equal-cultures.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.