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S. E. Asch's „Forming Impressions of Personality“ (1946) and S. Nauts' et al. a replication and review of Asch's study (2014): A comparison

The aim of the original study by S. E. Asch (1946) was to investigate the process of forming an impression of personalities. According to him, people form these impressions based on gestalt principles. He intended to prove this hypothesis by 10 different experiments. In each experiment, the same list of traits in different variations was presented to participants (N = 834, mostly women). Then, participants were tasked to write a description of a given person and to choose from a list of 18 trait-pairs (e.g. strong/weak) the one fitting better. Furthermore, they were asked to order the traits from the list from the most fitting to the least.

In conclusion, Asch (1946) found **but** that some traits are central, which influence the content and dynamics of other traits, and some **traits** are peripheral, which are dependent on central traits. Additionally, his experiments suggested that the current context may influence this distribution of traits on central and peripheral. These findings supported his hypothesis of gestalt principles influencing the process of forming impressions of personalities.

S. Nauts et al. (2014) aimed to verify the theory of primacy-of-warmth effect which was formed based on misinterpretations of Asch's study (1946). Nauts et al. (2014) designed their replication experiments primarily with either „warm“ or „cold“ trait in each condition with **comparable sized** sample (N = 1023, 53 % women). These traits were used to examine whether the argument of these two traits being more central than other traits is valid or not. It turned out not valid, **the hypothesis was not supported by the data**.

To compare these two studies in terms of methodology, Nauts' et al. (2014) experiments were, unsurprisingly, much more sophisticatedly analysed – using modern statistical and psychometrical methods. **Even the randomisation of participants was used in Nauts's et al. (2014) study.** Asch (1946) could use only qualitative procedures due to the fact that quantitative procedures were not developed yet when he conducted his study.

To conclude this, Asch's study (1946) is cited until now and has impacted many subsequent researches. Nauts' et al. study (2014) is an evidence that replications are needed, especially when studies were conducted without appropriate statistical tools.

References

- Asch, S. E. (1946). Forming Impressions of Personality. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 41(3), 258–290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0055756>
- Nauts, S., Langner, O., Huijismans, I., Vonk, R., & Wigboldus, D. H. J. (2014). Forming Impressions of Personality: A Replication and Review of Asch's (1946) evidence for a primacy-of-warmth effect in impression formation. *Social Psychology*, 45(3), 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000179>

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Ať se daří,

Adam Klocek

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