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for a fair narrative on migration

Consequences of the Halo effect on our research and how to limit them

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To share with you our experience on the halo effect, we are going to present interviews carried out in Senegal in 2005 and 2007 with migrants. These interviews confirm to us that migration is not a simple physical displacement because a set of moral values is often evoked: shame, modesty, honor, pride, heroization, etc.

The **first interview** is carried out in the northern region of Senegal where a migrant after several stays in Africa and Europe tells us:

“All migrants from Fouta (Senegal) are soldiers. We are soldiers because we participate in the development of our country, our villages, etc. We are real soldiers because we are constantly fighting against poverty. With migration, one of our roles is to provide assistance to our parents and to all Senegalese. This is why I wonder if we are not doing better than the soldiers. Despite all our efforts, we are abandoned by our own rulers who should be our guides ”(Cf. Aly Tandian, 2005,“ Autonomy strategies, developmentalist investments and collective needs. New figures of migrants from the Senegal river valley ” in Mohamed CHAREF and Patrick GONIN (dir.), "Émigrés - immigrants in local development", Agadir: Éditions Sud-Contact, 2005. - 361 p.).

The **second interview** is taken from an article on the disenchantment of families and candidates for migration. A repatriated migrant who lived in Spain told us:

“Before our repatriation, we attended that of our comrades. Handcuffed, they stood in single file and sang Senegal's national anthem aloud as they boarded the plane. All the Senegalese had cried that day, even a Spanish policeman cried with us. It was sad. We had great notoriety in the camps for migrants to be expelled. The Spaniards told us: "Your country needs you. You are serious and respectful ! These testimonies aroused great pride in us" (Cf. Aly Tandian, 2007, "Barça or Barsaax" (Go to Barcelona or die): the disenchantment of families and candidates for migration ”, DIASPORAS. Histoire et Sociétés, n ° 9, pp. 124-137).

These interviews with migrants show us that the halo effect can present itself in different ways.

We present four examples: the first impression, leading questions, thought traps, and feelings of heroism or social victimization.

1- Halo effect: First impression

The halo effect is a selective interpretation of information based on a first impression.

In this case, the halo effect is the tendency to make certain characteristics of a respondent positive or negative without any verification.

The halo effect occurs without the researcher being aware of it.

Example 1. The first time we meet someone, mentioning their profession, situation or status can elicit a positive or negative feeling. This feeling risks skewing our perception of all other facets because we will see the person through the prism of the first impression.

Example 2. The physiognomy or trajectory of a person can alter our perception of the other components of that person.

If the first impression on the person is favorable, this perceptual bias tends to interpret favorably what that person says or does. This is the positive halo effect.

Conversely, if the first impression is unfavorable, this perceptual bias tends to view the person through a negative lens. This is the negative halo effect.

Lesson learned: You have to trust your first impression

2 - Halo effect: leading questions

A leading question can distort the results of our research by a simple halo effect.

Example 1. Some questions that are not well formulated can lead our interlocutor to answer all the other questions provided for in the interview.

Example 2. When we ask our interlocutor at the beginning of the interview to tell us about the failure of his trip, we risk for the rest of the interview that our interlocutor only talks about his difficulties or related facts. with these.

We can say that leading questions can cause a contagion of answers.

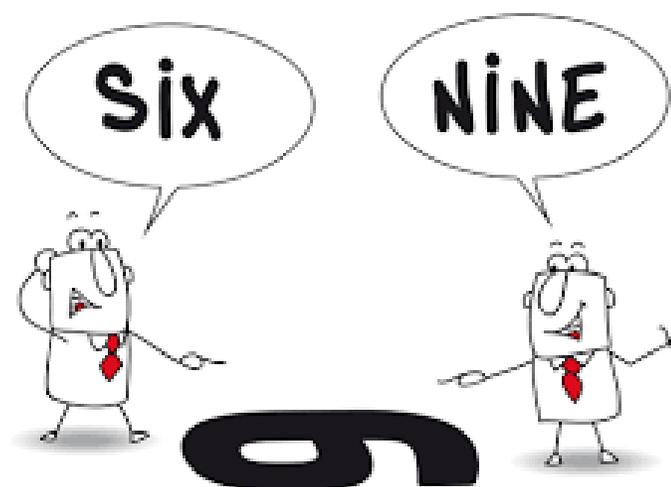
To avoid this situation, we recommend that the researcher space out the questions that are most likely to contaminate each other.

Contamination of responses can lead to a dimension of self-censorship or distortion of the truth on the part of our interlocutor in order not to contradict himself or to preserve his credibility.

□ Lesson learned: A poorly asked question affects the quality of research

3 - Halo effect: the traps of thought

The halo effect can be a cognitive bias that affects the understanding of our interlocutors. In this case, our interlocutors see only what they want to see.



□ **Lesson learned: Avoid drawing conclusions based on the perceptions of our interlocutors**

4 - Halo effect: the feeling of heroization or victimization

Our interlocutor tends to idealize or present himself as a victim:

- He presents reactions of prestige or pain.
- He projects an image that is either positive or empowering or negative or demeaning.
- He can exaggerate in his speech to conform to the social norm.

In these situations, our interlocutor adopts a facade behavior to "save face".

Lesson learned: Always trust your first impression

