# Personality based on their clothing

When forming first impressions of people, physical appearance will often play a very important role in making judgements about the other person's personality and characteristics. However, these judgements that are usually formed within the first few seconds may or may not be completely accurate. Alex Todorov (2006) tested 200 people and found that it only takes one hundred milliseconds for a potential employer, or a member of jury to form an opinion on someone. A tenth of a second is all it will take to make a first impression of a competent worker, or a friendly person. Could this judgement have anything to do with the way a person in dressed?

There has been lots of research trying to identify whether judgements of peoples personality based on appearance are accurate. Findings from these studies show that accuracy is often high, especially when judging people for extraversion. Hall et al. (2008) found the accuracy for judging traits, such as extraversion, were a lot more accurate than judging states, such as emotions. However, this study was done in an information-rich setting as it was done using face-to-face interactions or using short video clips. This implicates the results as it does not show how much accuracy was achieved using other sources of information and how much was achieved just based on the persons appearance. However, this was using other nonverbal cues such as facial positions and posture and not based on appearance such as clothing. If the person were to just look at clothing would this be the same accuracy and would they be able to judge any other aspects of a person's personality accurately?

In a study by Borkenau & Liebler (1992), they examined the different effects of physical appearance, verbal behaviour and nonverbal behaviour on

judgements of personalities. People were videotaped entering a room, sitting behind a desk and reading a weather forecast. Participants were given one of four stimuli: video with sound, video without sound, audio only and a still image taken from the video. Observers who saw the full video with sound judged four of the Big Five personality traits accurately, whereas those who saw the image judged only extraversion and conscientiousness accurately. These results suggest that physical appearance does give people some information on another's personality but the accuracy of these observations increase when other verbal and nonverbal cues are available. This would mean that appearance alone would not be enough to judge a person's personality completely accurately. However, the design of this study meant that it was hard to estimate the accuracy of judgments based on just physical appearance. This is because the targets in the still videos were sitting behind a desk, which would obstruct the participant's view of part of the clothing. This could have changes the results slightly resulting in both the accuracy levels and the range of traits being judged accurately based on just the physical appearance would have been affected. Also, by only using the Big Five personality traits as judging criteria, other important aspects of personality that can be judged on the basis of physical appearance may have been missed.

A person's appearance is made up of many factors and sources of information. It contains both static components related to physical grooming which would be the style of dress and hairstyle someone has and the dynamic aspects related to nonverbal expressive behaviour like posture and facial expression. Research has found that different parts of a person's

physical appearance relate to their different personality traits. For example, if the style of is dress formal attire it can be a valid indicator of conscientiousness. This was shown in research by Albright et al (1988) where it was found the highest correlations for conscientiousness were due to dress style. They tested formal versus informal and neat versus sloppy dressing. Formal and neat dressing was found to give the image of a more conscientious personality. This means that dress style determines target effects on judgments of conscientiousness. They also found that judgments of responsibility seem to have been determined in part by the targets' formality and neatness of dress style.

This pattern of evidence suggests that many elements of physical appearance may inform the process of accurate personality judgment. Appearance as a whole seems to play an important part on judgements of personality and people seem to be able to do this quite accurately. This means that clothing may not be able to tell you everything about someone's personality but it could help form a judgement on certain aspects of their personality like conscientiousness.

There has been little research examining the accuracy of personality impressions based on just appearance alone. This study by Naumann et al (2009) examined the accuracy of observers' impressions on 10 personality traits. This used full-body photographs and was measured using criterion based on self and peer reports. There was a standardised condition where the targets posture and expression were constrained resulting in the observers' judgments being accurate for extraversion, self-esteem, and religiosity. In the spontaneous condition targets were photographed with a

spontaneous facial expression and a spontaneous pose. For these pictures the observers' were able to make accurate judgments for nearly all of the personality traits examined. Both static cues like clothing and dynamic cues like facial expression offered information on personality. These results suggest that personality can be judged through both static and expressive cues and the observer can use both these factors to form accurate judgments for different personality traits. However, they found that observers could judge extraversion accurately even when they restricted the targets' facial expression. Cue analyses suggested that both static and dynamic appearance based cues reflected extraversion; they were also more likely to wear stylish clothes, have a neat appearance, and look healthier.

Gillath et al (2012) tested the ability to accurately judge a person's personality, attitudes, and demographics, based on just a picture of a person's shoes. They collected three pieces of data: the first was the shoe owners' self-report about their personality, attachment style and demographic information. The second was the perceptions of shoe owners based on shoe characteristics by independent judges. The third was characteristics of shoes. They tested whether observers would agree about the shoe owners' self report. Observers reached the highest level of agreement when making judgments of the shoe owners' gender. Consensus was positive and signi¬ cant for 4 of the 5 Big Five personality traits, as well as for attachment anxiety and political beliefs. They found relatively high consensus among observer's ratings of Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience and Extraversion. The data suggest that shoes present a unique source of information that allows a high level of

agreement among observers on judgments of Agreeableness. The relatively high consensus they found for Extraversion is inconsistent with previous research that suggests dynamic cues are needed to inform this judgment. This indicates that shoes provide information that allows observers to agree on the same judgment on a wide range of characteristics including a target's personality traits.

Previous research on thin slices of information has found that minimal cues are sufficient for perceivers to accurately judge another person's personal characteristics. They tested for accuracy in person perception based on the shoes the person wears, and found people do use shoes to judge others' characteristics, but these inferences are not always accurate. By correlating observer ratings with the shoe owners' self-ratings they found that observers agreed on many of the shoe owner characteristics and that they were reasonably accurate. Together these ¬findings suggest that shoe cues can be an accurate source of information on things such as politics, agreeableness, and openness. In making inferences based on shoe characteristics, there were three patterns: Some real personal characteristics were accurately perceived by others like the owners who wear masculine or high top shoes tend to be less agreeable. Some of the accurate information that shoes carry were not perceived by others for example people high in attachment anxiety were more likely to have dull shoes, but the participants didn't recognize this cue. Finally, some personal characteristics that were not true to the shoe owners were stereotypically identified by others, like participants assumed that people who wear more attractive and well-kept shoes tend to be more conscientious, but attractiveness and repair of shoes

were not related to observer ratings of Conscientiousness. By examining the three patterns, attractiveness and comfort of shoes are a particularly interpretable reflection of the owner's personal characteristics. Overall, People can make accurate judgments about others from their footwear.

However this research showed that people use shoes to infer others' characteristics. Owners wear shoes that present a public image but that image differs substantially from what they tell us with questionnaires. Observers generally pick up on the image the shoe wearer is conveying, but in doing so this might not give correct information. If a shoe owner purposefully generates a deceptive image then shoes nay not be a reliable source of information. The mismatch between self-other ratings is could be due to the lack of information in shoes, or because observers may know something else about the shoes owner's characteristics than the owner. People could buy and wear shoes strategically to portray an image, meaning the observers would detect the false image.

Hunt-Johnson, Nagasawa & Peters (1977) examined how differences in clothing style would affect how people judge the characteristic of sociability. They designed an experiment to measure the effect of four costumes on the impressions of sociability. They took photographs of a female college student wearing two in-fashion costumes and two out-of-fashion costumes. These were so that they could determine how people judged the characteristic of sociability and how it was attributed to her when she wore the different clothing styles. Participants evaluated the pictures and results showed that when she wore in-fashion clothing she was deemed as being more sociable than when she wore the out-of-fashion clothing. The effect of clothing style

on the judgement of sociability was found to be statistically significant. This is important to note as it proves that from clothing people will make judgements about characteristics. In this study, these results were expected to occur; therefore the judgments of the characteristics were accurate. However, further studies may need to be done using real people who would rate themselves as sociable or unsociable and dressed in their own clothes to see whether this judgement of sociability is accurate when applied in a real life setting.

In this study by they wanted to see whether you could tell who has a narcissistic personality just from what they were wearing. The results showed that when shown a full body photograph, participants could make snap judgments of narcissism as accurately as snap judgments of any of the big five personality traits. People with a narcissistic personality are more likely to wear expensive clothing and make sure that they appear organised and neat which requires time spent to make themselves appear attractive. The narcissistic females will also tend to wear makeup and show cleavage. The judgements made by the observers correlate with the presence of these cues. This means that they are using the correct information and cues, when making their judgments. Finally, observers' judgments are associated with three of the four facets of narcissism and capture the unique constellation of personality traits typical of narcissists which include high extraversion and low agreeableness. These findings suggest that physical appearance reflects a narcissistic personality, as they want to look good and have a desire to be the centre of attention. The whole idea of being able to choose how they look so they come across as smarter in appearance than other people, means

that observers will be able to judge their narcissistic personality accurately by picking up cues on the person's appearance alone.

People are believed to use clothing to define and communicate their social identities to other people around them. Feinberg, Mataro and Burroughs (1992) thought that if this was the case, observers should be able to read and show agreement about the social information present in clothing cues. They also believed that there should be substantial agreement between the perceived meaning of the cues to observers and the actual social identities of the individuals but only if the clothes were specifically selected by the individuals to represent themselves. In their study they found observers were able to perceive the social information presented in outfits selected by others to be representative of their personalities and that the perceptions were significantly correlated with the individuals' views of themselves. This would show that clothes can be an important tool to show social information which includes many characteristics of a person. People in this study were able to do this and pick up the cues from clothing to make the correct judgement of the social information that was meant to be portrayed.

Another reason why people may be able to judge others' personalities from what they wear may be to do with the conscious or subconscious way they pick the clothes they wear. Sharma (1980) tested whether extroversion and introversion means that you will pick certain types of clothing. 158 female undergraduates were administered the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values, the Contact Personality Factor Test, and a clothing questionnaire. It was found that personality traits positively correlated with decoration, comfort, interest, conformity and economy. It is concluded that Subjects who

are guided by decoration and interest considerations when buying clothing tend to have more characteristics of extraversion and contact orientation while Subjects guided by comfort, conformity, and economy considerations are more introverted. This may mean that it could be quite easy to guess this personality trait based just looking at these factors on peoples clothing.

Overall the research would indicate that some characteristics are more accurately judged through a person's choice of clothing than other characteristics. These are conscientiousness narcissism sociability introversion and extroversion. This would indicate that people can form judgements on others very quickly with some but not all of the judgements made accurately. However many of the big 5 personality traits may not be perceived or judged accurately from clothing alone and may rely on more dynamic cues. As shown clothing is an important factor when making a first impression on someone even if not all the judgements are accurate.