

## *Symposium S-A7*

### **When to Judge a Book by Its Cover: Timing, Context, and Individual Differences in First Impressions**

**Friday, February 14, 2014, 9:45 AM - 11:00 AM, Ballroom B/C**

**Chair:** Vivian Zayas, Cornell University

**Co-Chair:** Nicholas Rule, University of Toronto

People readily judge a book by its cover, forming impressions of others from minimal cues. Yet, how does this happen in the real-world? Four speakers showcase the latest research on impression-formation, examining accurate and inaccurate judgments, individual differences in judgments, and the persistence/malleability of these judgments over time and contexts.

#### **It's in the hands, not the face: Accurate and inaccurate impressions of the quality of professional players' poker hands**

Michael L. Slepian, Steven G. Young, Abraham M. Rutchick, Nalini Ambady  
*Stanford University; Fairleigh Dickinson University; California State University*

Research demonstrates that our first impressions can often be surprisingly accurate. But if someone has something to hide, can they prevent perceivers from forming accurate impressions? Ranging from the everyday (telling a white lie) to the extraordinary (hiding information of national security), people can be motivated to prevent accurate first impressions. We examined this question across four studies, examining untrained observers' perceptions of professional poker players. They indeed had inaccurate impressions of players' poker hand-quality when observing their facial-expressions. Yet from merely observing how they moved their arms to place a bet, observers accurately detected hand-quality and outcomes. Nonverbal sensitivity enhanced this accuracy, unless attention was directed toward diagnostic motor cues. Professional poker players can indeed prevent accurate impressions by their facial-expressions. Yet, even in the most restrictive of settings (highly-expert poker players placing bets worth millions of dollars) nonverbal behavior can provide revealing information to form accurate impressions.

#### **Do first impressions based on photographs predict impressions following live interactions?**

Vivian Zayas, Gül Günaydin, Emre Selcuk  
*Cornell University; Bilkent University; Middle East Technical University*

People routinely "judge a book by its cover". But, do these initial judgments hold even after having actually read the book? This work is the first to investigate how initial impressions made from a single photograph relate to impressions made 1-month later, after actually interacting with the target. Participants viewed photographs of women and judged their likeability and personality traits. Over 1-month later, participants interacted with one of the women (e.g., played trivia, chatted). Not only did participants' initial liking judgments based on photographs color their initial judgments of the target's personality (attributing positive traits to liked targets), but these initial impressions strongly predicted liking after an actual interaction that took place 1-month later, and continued to color personality judgments following the interaction. Thus, despite the well-known idiom to "not judge a book by its cover", such judgments are good proxies for judgments about the book - even after reading it.

### **Some people see what they want to see: Individual differences in snap judgments**

Erika N. Carlson, Simine Vazire

*University of Toronto, Mississauga; Washington University in St. Louis*

We try to make good first impressions on others, but recent work suggests those efforts might be too little or too late; those others may have already made up their minds about us. Who forms positive (or negative) first impressions, and who holds onto these impressions? In two studies, groups of undergraduates met weekly over the course of a semester and rated each member's personality several times. We also collected self- and informant-reports of each student's personality. Results revealed that different people see the social world in very different ways. For example, extraverted and agreeable people initially perceived others as compassionate, trustworthy, likable, and intelligent and maintained these impressions over time whereas narcissists initially perceived others as less likeable and more critical, and over time, perceived others as even less likeable and more defensive. We discuss how these differing perspectives of the social world likely have important interpersonal consequences.

### **The Siren Song of first impressions: Judging from the face even when you know better**

Nicholas Rule

*University of Toronto*

First impressions are ubiquitous, but how powerful and influential are these initial impressions? A series of studies demonstrates that individuals, despite their best intentions, are unable to escape the gravity of judging others based on how they look versus what they know about them. In one set of studies, I demonstrate that impressions of trustworthiness are influenced more by how other people look than how they behave. In another study, I demonstrate a similar persistence in judgments of sexual orientation. Even after learning that people were gay or straight, participants regressed back to their initial impressions when judgment time was limited. With additional time, however, participants were able to recover the information they had learned and instead made their judgments based on knowledge instead of appearance. These data provide important insights to the cognitive processes endemic to the pervasive, and even intrusive, nature of first impressions.