



PERCEIVED TRAIT ATTRIBUTES IN RELATION TO APPEARANCE COMMUNICATION

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The purpose of this study was to identify how individuals extend traits to others based on outer appearance. This research explored trait perception through the matching of 12 photographs to written descriptions extracted from the social pages of an unfamiliar newspaper. The newspaper chosen was from another state so that research participants would not know any of the people identified. Additionally, all photos were the same size and their descriptions were very basic, only covering the individual's name, occupation, and educational background. These characteristics were so that undue influence as per photo size and length of description would not be apparent. A comparison was made between the various aspects of those completing the matching exercise (grade level, major, gender, ethnic origin, geographic origin) to the number of correctly identified matches made.

Data analysis of the 95 usable questionnaires revealed that occupational descriptions were identified as the most influential factor (rather than name or educational information) in matching descriptions to the photographs. No significant difference (at the $p < .05$ level) was found when comparing the number of correct matches across gender only (male mean = 2.03; female mean = 2.02) but there were some identifiable differences when comparing class standing to number of correct matches. Also, ethnic origin did impact the overall outcomes. Asian males and females consistently had the highest number of matches in the study while Caucasian males had the lowest scores.