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Can you judge a book by its cover? Evidence of self-“stranger agreement on personality at zero acquaintance

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Abstract

Two studies were conducted to examine the accuracy of personality assessment at zero acquaintance. In Study 1, participants were asked to rate head and shoulder colour photographs of strangers in terms of the extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism dimensions. The stranger ratings were correlated with the targets’ self-report ratings on these dimensions using the EPQ-R. Significant self-“stranger agreement was found for psychoticism but not for extraversion or neuroticism. Study 2 used the same general design, but the amount of visual information in head and shoulder colour photographs was manipulated and presented to strangers. In condition 1 head and shoulder colour photographs with profiles were used, in condition 2 head and shoulder colour photographs with profiles removed were used, and in condition 3 the images were cropped so that only the internal features of the face were visible. In all three

conditions significant self-“stranger agreement was found for psychoticism but not for extraversion or neuroticism as measured by the EPP. These consistent cross-study findings were discussed and further research suggested.



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Keywords

Zero-acquaintance; Physiognomy; EPQ; Self-stranger agreement

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