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Making a good impression (formation model): a more complete account of processing

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Abstract: First impression formation is the process by which people make assumptions, regardless of objective accuracy, about someone they meet for the first time by integrating information including the person's appearance, verbal and non-verbal cues, and facts she might reveal about herself.

We propose a model of first impression formation that integrates this kind of information into a coherent representation taking into account the 1) potentially asymmetric nature of inferences people make from stereotypes, traits, and behaviors, 2) prior probabilities of inferred characteristics, 3) cognitive capacity limitations in processing of incoming information, and 4) the influence of positive and negative affect in the impression.

We think that our model not only compares favorably with Kunda & Thagard (1996) parallel constraint satisfaction model, but also accounts for additional phenomena such as asymmetrical inferences and affective coherence.