

Impression Formation: Painting Portraits of Personality
Wednesday, March 2, 2005

I. Initial Impressions: The Power of Physical Appearance

“Physical beauty is the sign of an interior beauty, a spiritual and moral beauty.”
—Johann Schiller (1882)

“What is beautiful is good.”
—Dion and colleagues (1972)

A. Laboratory Studies

1. Attractive people get hired (Kash & Kilcullen, 1985).
2. Attractiveness doesn't always work for women (Heilman & Stroeck, 1985).

B. Field Studies

1. Attractive people pay lower bail (Downs & Lyons, 1991)
2. Taller men get higher salaries (Knapp, 1978)

II. Implicit Personality Theories and Traits

A. Implicit Personality Theories (IPTs)

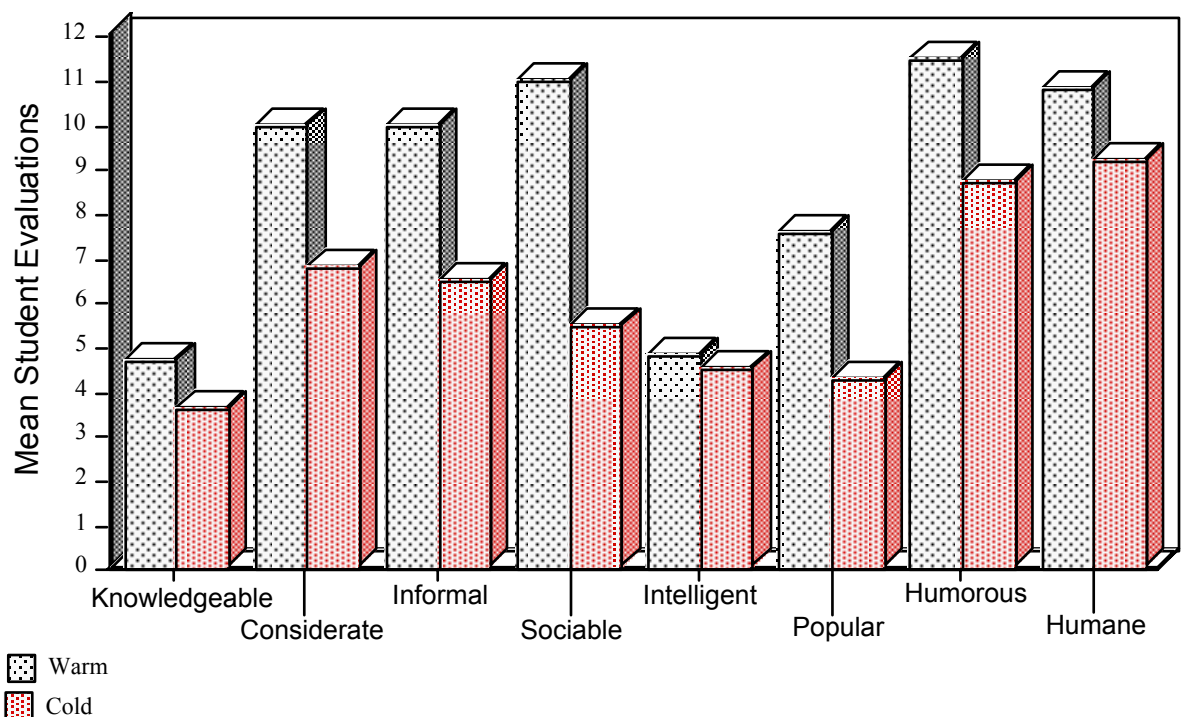
B. Traits that make up IPTs

1. Some traits are more *informative* than others: Central Traits

2. Some traits are more *evaluatively important* than others: Central Traits

C. The Power of Central Traits (Kelley, 1950)

“Mr. _____ is a graduate student in the Department of Economics and Social Science here at M.I.T. He has had three semesters of teaching experience in psychology at another college. This is his first semester teaching Ec70. He is 26 years old, a veteran, and married. People who know him well consider him to be a rather warm [cold] person, industrious, critical, practical, and determined.”



4. What often influences weight?
 - a. Order of Information
 - b. Negative versus Positive Valence of Information
5. New equation based on evaluation scores and weights: Note difference between simple averaging and weighted averaging.

B. Wholistic Impressions

1. Traits are evaluated in relation to one another (“change of meaning effect”).
2. Integrate, then evaluate.
3. Evaluate the whole person.

IV. Concluding Remarks

- A. What if there’s no “personality”?
- B. At Odds with Sense of Self.