

Topic/Titel	Spontaneous Person inferences: Traits vs. Identities (Adjectives vs. Nouns)
Project description	<p><u>Theoretical Background:</u> The present research proposal focuses on <i>spontaneous trait inferences</i> (STI; Winter & Uleman, 1984) in impression formation from behavior: the tendency of observers to spontaneously attribute dispositional characteristics to others based on behavioral observations (e.g., Bott et al., 2024). For instance, when hearing that <i>Oliver stepped in front of an old man in a waiting line</i>, people are likely to conclude that Oliver is rude, thus inferring a personal disposition from the behavior.</p> <p>In spontaneous impression formation, it has been repeatedly questioned, however, to what extent observed STI effects actually represent person inferences rather than mere behavioral categorizations. For example, if participants show preferential responses on the adjective ‘<i>rude</i>’ in an experimental paradigm, it remains unclear whether that corresponds to a categorization of the behavior as <i>rude</i> or to the actor being a <i>rude person</i>. The current project follows up on this question by relating STI research to linguistic theorizing and research documenting that the use of different linguistic categories – adjectives vs. nouns – carries different inferential potency for person perception (e.g. Carnaghi et al., 2008).</p> <p><u>Procedure:</u> The project includes an empirical study implementing a standard experimental paradigm from STI research (e.g. probe recognition, false recognition, lexical decision tasks) and varies whether STI effects are probed via the use of adjectives (e.g., aggressive, kind, impulsive) vs. noun labels (e.g., ‘bully’, ‘show-off’, “hothead”). The project includes conducting a comprehensive literature research on novel trends in linguistic theorizing and research.</p> <p><u>Specific Knowledge & Abilities:</u> We expect an interest in socio-cognitive research on person perception. It is additionally advantageous to have prior knowledge of the STI literature, for example from the HCP master’s module, and strong methodological skills.</p> <p><i>Please note the special instructions for working on research theses on the website of the Department of Social Psychology.</i></p>
Literature	<p>Bott, A., Brockmann, L., Denneberg, I., Henken, E., Kuper, N., Kruse, F., & Degner, J. (2024). Spontaneous trait inferences from behavior: A systematic meta-analysis. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 50, 78-102.</p> <p>Carnaghi, A., Maass, A., Gresta, S., Bianchi, M., Cadinu, M., & Arcuri, L. (2008). Nomina sunt omina: on the inductive potential of nouns and adjectives in person perception. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 94, 839.</p>
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Capacity	The project can be implemented by one or more MSc students.