According to Funder (1995, 1999), accuracy is defined as agreement between (1) knowledgeable informants, for instance, parents or peers, the observer and the person observed, or (2) between the observer or the person observed and measured behaviour. This correspondence can be measured in correlations. Hall & Andrzejewski (2008) propose that judgement perceived as accurate will only need to be significantly above chance level statistically, not 100% accurate.

Funder (2012) proposed a Realistic Accuracy Model (RAM). According to this model, in order to achieve accurate personality judgement, the observer must undergo four stages: (1) relevance, (2) availability, (3) detection, and (4) utilization. The first stage – relevance – refers to behaviour, exhibited by a person being judged, that is relevant to a certain trait. For example, if a person is judged on extraversion, they must behave in a corresponding way, i.e. act friendly or smile. The second stage – availability – indicates that this trait-relevant behaviour must be available to the observer. That means that even if a judged person exhibits relevant behaviour but the observer is not there to see it, an accurate judgement is not likely to happen. The third – detection – stage implies that trait-relevant, available behaviour must be detected. However, this stage may be disrupted by an uninterested or unconscious observer. The last stage – utilization – refers to a correct interpretation and utilization of a trait-relevant, available and detected behaviour. If the observed behaviour is not interpreted correctly, it not likely that the judgement obtained will be accurate.

Having the aforementioned criteria met, we can expect a judgement to be accurate. Then, we can evaluate this accuracy using three criteria: (1) self-other agreement, (2) other-other agreement, and (3) behavioural prediction (Funder, 2012). Funder also outlined that judgement accuracy can be mediated via the “goodness” of target, trait, information and judge. This means that accuracy will differ when changing the target, trait or information observed, as well as changing the person observing behaviour.

In response to older first impression accuracy models, Biesanz (2007, 2009, 2010) proposed a Social Accuracy Model of Interpersonal Perception (SAM). SAM integrates Cronbach’s (1955) componential approach with Kenny’s (1994) Social Relations Model. Cronbach (1955) noted four components of accuracy: elevation accuracy, differential accuracy, differential elevation accuracy, and stereotype accuracy. These components represent the agreement between validation measures and componential effects (Biesanz, 2010). Kenny’s (1994) Social Relations Model investigates observer by target data for a single measure (Biesanz, 2010). SRM is also a componential approach; the main components investigated are target, observer, and relationship effects. Biesanz’s (2007, 2009, 2010) Social Accuracy Model investigates the accuracy of an observer’s judgement of the target by integrating the two previously mentioned models.

Biesanz (2010) distinguished four types of accuracy: (1) perceptive accuracy, (2) expressive accuracy, (3) distinctive accuracy, and (4) normative accuracy. Perceptive accuracy refers to the degree to which observer’s judgements are more or less accurate than other observers’ averaged across targets. In other words, perceptive accuracy tells us if one is a good judge of others. Expressive accuracy refers to the degree to which a target is accurately perceived on average between different observers. Specifically, it tells us if a person observed is a “good” target, i.e. whether they are easy to read for an observer. Distinctive accuracy refers to the degree to which (a) the observer perceives distinct characteristics of others, or (b) the target exhibits distinct characteristics for others to perceive. Normative accuracy refers to the degree to which (a) the observer’s perceptions agree with that of the average person, or (b) the target is perceived to be similar to the average person (Biesanz, 2010).

The following year, Biesanz et al. (2011) introduced the term “accuracy awareness”. Accuracy awareness refers to the observer’s understanding of how accurate and trustworthy their impressions realistically are (Biesanz et al., 2011). (tell about the study, not only the results) Across two large round-robin design studies, researchers found that observers who believed they formed more accurate first impressions, actually performed better at distinguishing distinct characteristics of the targets. However, the effect size of current study was small, suggesting that accuracy awareness found by Biesanz and colleagues is not necessary a rule.

In contrast to Biesanz et al (2011) findings, Ames et al. (2010) showed that

*Do accuracy and confidence correlate with each other? Not necessary. Biesanz et al 2011: People are aware of when and for whom their first impressions are more realistically accurate.  
Ames et al 2010: Perceivers showed a limited ability to intuit which of their impressions were more accurate than others.*

What factors and conditions can diminish accuracy?

Accuracy of personality judgements can be diminished due to a variety of factors, ranging from mental health conditions to personal attributes. Chakrabarti & Baron Cohen (2008) argued that in order to form a clear impression of another, observer may need to infer emotional state of the target. It is easier done by empathizing, recognizing other’s thoughts and emotions and responding appropriately. People suffering from autistic spectrum disorders are known to have problem inferring what’s on another person’s mind, as well as empathizing, making it difficult for them to draw conclusions about personality traits (Boraston, Blakemore, Chilvers, & Skuse, 2007; Baron Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plumb, 2001; Hill & Frith, 2003). Those suffering from other clinically diagnosed disorders such as psychopathy, social anxiety, depression and schizophrenia may also be less able to form accurate judgements of others due to poor emotion recognition and social adjustment(e.g. Awards, Jackson, & Pattison, 2002; Lembke & Ketter, 2002; McGee & Morrier, 2003; Philippot, Kernreich, & Blairy, 2003; Montagne et al., 2006). In addition, accuracy of a judgement may be impaired by fundamental attribution error – attributing certain aspect of person’s behaviour to stable predispositions, rather than the situational forces, when the contrary is true (Jones & Harris, 1967; Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977). Furthermore, accuracy may be impaired when the conditions described in Funder’s (see above, 2012) Realistic Accuracy Model are not met.

What factors and conditions contribute to more accurate judgement making?

Judgement accuracy may depend on numerous aspects, such as perceiver’s gender, social status, professional training, information available to the observer, motivation, and the concept judged. Several pieces of research show that women tend to score better on Accurate First Impressions tests (McClure, 2000) and when judging emotions, while men tend to perform better on status between two people judgements (Hall & Andrzejewski, 2008). Another study suggests that a single dose of oxytocin can significantly improve inference of mental states and facial trait interpretation in men (Domes, Heinrichs, Michel, Berger, & Herpetz, 2007).

There is a line of research suggesting that those engaging in musical and theatrical activities perform better when reading others. For example, those who have had advanced theatrical training tend to score better on the Interpersonal Perception Task, suggesting that this could be due to their deeper knowledge of the meaning of particular gestures, facial displays, and vocal patterns (Bush & Marshall, 1999; Costanzo, 1992). Thompson, Schellenberg & Husain (2004) found that college students who performed better on Accurate First Impressions tests tended to have had a higher level of musical education.

Those who score higher on social skill and competence ratings also perform better on Interpersonal Perception Task, perhaps due to their motivation to understand others (e.g. Costanzo & Archer, 1989; Schroder, 1995). The same is true for individuals working in people-oriented occupations, perhaps due to natural proclivity towards other people or because of the experience and knowledge gained while working in such position (Trimboli & Walker, 1993).

Gray (2008) proposes that people who rely on their “gut reactions” when making judgement about others tend to show higher accuracy than those who try to draw inferences based on more diagnostic information. The author also argues that accuracy tends to increase with exposure and acquaintanceship, although even thin slices can reveal a lot of information when the behaviour is expressive (Gray, 2008).