

PSY 202 - Sample 1

Self-Knowledge vs. the Unknown

Discussion Section #11

February 11, 2016

Prompt: It is logical that others see us differently than we see ourselves, and there is research to back this up. Vazire and Carlson indicate that self- and other-ratings capture different aspects of an individual's personality. What does the acronym SOKA stand for, and what are the two trait dimensions in the SOKA model? As shown in Figure 1, what combination of traits produces the least difference between our own and a friend's ratings of our personality? Based on the figure, under what conditions are we most accurate about ourselves? Under what conditions are our friends most accurate about us? Of the three observability/evaluateness clusters in Figure 1, which represents the least accurate personality ratings overall? Recount an experience in which someone close to you offered a surprising description of yourself. Have you come to agree with that assessment or does it still surprise you?

Self-Knowledge vs. the Unknown

After weeks and weeks of preparation, Erin believes she is finally ready for the interview - the one thing that will determine whether or not she receives her dream job. She has taken all the necessary steps; she has researched the company in great depth, compiled and practiced possible questions and answers meticulously, and planned her appearance down to every last detail. One of her close friends will be the interviewer, and Erin is confident in herself both going into and exiting the interview when reflecting upon her answers and the impression she put forth. A few weeks later, her friend informs her that she did not get the position, and her reasoning is because she knows the type of person Erin is and doesn't believe she would be a good fit. Unfortunately, character and personality flaws that the employer knew of and recognized in the interview obstructed the employer from seeing the dedicated, hard-working prospects in Erin. In this case, we can clearly see that although Erin believed she was the perfect fit for the job, it took a close friend to recognize the character traits that would prevent Erin from excelling - those of which she could not see herself prior to the interview due to a lack of self-knowledge that only close others can interpret. This scenario parallels the information discussed in Vazire and Carlson's Washington University article, "Others Sometimes Know Us Better Than We Know Ourselves." It has been agreed upon that we inherently have a drive to "maintain and enhance our self-worth," which often serves as a motive of our blinded actions and thoughts. With our natural disability to see ourselves fully, we often end up in situations like this one where the results are unexpected and leave us feeling confused. As described in the article, there are certain areas of attributes that the self does not acknowledge - only an "other" is capable of seeing clearly.

In order for there to be a standard way to organize the range of personalities known solely to one's self versus to others, Simine Vazire proposed the SOKA model in 2010 - the self-other knowledge asymmetry model. Within the article featured, the two trait dimensions used for this personality model are Observability and Evaluativeness. Through SOKA, researchers have been able to conclude that the variances between self-awareness and other's awareness depends on our knowledge and how the environment drives us to perceive ourselves.

Based off of the SOKA model, researchers were able to find that close others are able to see very important things in ourselves that we are unable to. According to the model, High observability and Low evaluativeness made for the least difference between our own and a friend's rating of our personality, as there is the least numerical difference in quantity of the two categories.

Although, these two landed in the middle of the Accuracy axis, with a generally lower scoring than the other two averages. Based on the figure, we are most accurate about ourselves when there is Low observability and Low evaluativeness since these are inner forces that we can sense and are aware of, such as whether or not our anxiety levels are rising. In contrast, our friends are most accurate about us when there is Low observability and High evaluativeness; these traits are present when judging personality traits such as intelligence. Also according to the article, others do a better job predicting desirable or undesirable outcomes - those that are most important to us - as they are more objective and will not be biased by what we want the outcome to look like.

If you were to compare the three clusters based off of observability and evaluativeness, I would say that the middle cluster (with High observability and low evaluativeness) is the least accurate in personality ratings overall. I believe this because the two bars averaged together are lower than the other two averages, and the friends' accuracy is lower than the other three. With

the friends' knowledge of one's self being more accurate than one's own, I think that this being the least in friends' accuracy places it even further down the rankings in accuracy.

Although some of the concepts seemed confusing and counterintuitive when first reading this article, I soon began to reflect on my own self-knowledge and recall the times where I have been challenged by close friends and family. In my defense, it really hasn't happened too often as I do try to keep an objective mind on important matters, but there have been a couple eye-opening incidents since I have moved to San Luis Obispo. Over Thanksgiving break, I was able to go home a few days early due to fortunate scheduling, which meant I could catch up with my family and dedicate my time to them before getting distracted with reuniting with my high school friends - which is what was really on my mind anyways. Despite being very close with my family, I found it really hard to have casual conversation with them as I was slowly realizing that I wasn't as happy as I would have liked to be at this point in my college experience. I had been very disappointed with my housing placement in Poly Canyon Village as a first year, and seemed to blame everything and anything negative on the fact that it was holding me back. Once my friends got back, it was even more social comparison regarding new friends, food, location, etc. My parents finally confronted me, quite upset about how I wasn't opening up to them enough, which led into a very emotionally-driven argument from my side about the negative life I led in PCV. Whenever my parents would mention something positive about my apartment or my roommates, I would immediately shoot them down with a counterargument for how horribly I hated it. A big issue was that I blamed PCV for not having more friends than I did at that stage, when really it was because I wasn't getting myself involved enough. It took about a week after this argument for me to see what my parents were telling me - I could be as happy as I wanted in PCV, I just needed to get more involved on campus and broaden my network by joining more

clubs and talking to people in class. I irrationally countered this at the time, which was when they told me I was being irrational, stubborn, and refusing to admit that I was scared to reach out and scared of my future at Cal Poly. Upon returning to school from break, I joined Cal Poly's Hammock Club and CURE SLO within the first week, put myself on the waitlist to move out of PCV, and made greater efforts to get to know people in my classes. Similar to Erin in my first example, I was oblivious to my flaws until I was told that I needed to change by those who know me the best.

Vazire and Carlson's article, "Others Sometimes Know Us Better Than We Know Ourselves" really captures what it means to have a sense of self and expresses the value of taking time to understand our ways. In order to get the fullest self-understanding possible, we must consider our presence and image on others and intertwine our knowledge with what we interpret to be theirs. Inventions such as the SOKA model are continuously improving our ability to interpret, organize, and further our personality data, which therefore advances society as a whole since people are understanding themselves and others in a new light. This science can be applied to all aspects of life as interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships are both relevant in every interaction made among people. Despite our instinctual belief that we know ourselves best, we can now state that the single best way to get a full understanding of ourselves is to observe our impression on others in addition to what we know to be true of our personalities.