Accurate Personality Judgement

* Personality traits are patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour that are relatively consistent over time and across situations.
* According to the Realistic Accuracy Model (RAM), accuracy is personality judgements is achieved when relevant behavioural information is available to and detected by a judge who then utilizes that information correctly.
* The RAM identifies four principal moderators of accurate personality judgement, which are properties of the target of judgement, the trait that is judged, the information upon which the judgement is based (ie its quantity and quality), and the individual making the judgement.
* People usually manage to make personality judgements that are accurate enough for navigation of the complex social world; research on accuracy seeks to understand how and when this happens
* Numerous decisions about who to trust, befriend, hire, date and even marry are largely based on personality judgements, and the consequences of mistakes in these judgements can range from embarrassing to disastrous
* For the evaluation of accuracy in personality judgements, three criteria are central:
  + Self-other agreement. Many studies have evaluated accuracy in terms of the degree to which acquaintances’ judgements agree with a given target’s judgement of his or her personality
  + Other-other agreement. Also sometimes call consensus: the degree to which two (or more) people agree in their judgements of the same person
  + Behavioural prediction. If a judgement of personality can predict a behaviour or a life outcome related to behaviour, then it is probably accurate in some sense
* People might distort their self-judgements to protect their self-esteem or hide secrets, and multiple judges might share biases that make them all wrong.
* However, personality judgements derived from acquaintance in daily life can predict behaviour in laboratory contexts(see Fast & Funder, 2008), and an increasing body of evidence has shown that personality judgements predict important outcomes such as job performance and even longevity (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006)
* The Realistic Accuracy Model (RAM) describes the process that connects a person’s personality trait with a perceiver’s correct judgement of that trait. For this connection to be established – for accurate judgement to be achieved – four things must happen:
  + The person being judged must do something relevant to the trait
  + The trait-relevant behaviour must be available to the judge
  + The trait-relevant, available behaviour must be detected
  + The trait-relevant, available, and detected behaviour must be utilized correctly
* RAM does not describe what always happens in personality judgement, nor does it claim to describe what usually or even often happens. Rather, it describes what must happen for accurate personality judgement to be achieved
* RAM implies that accurate personality judgement is difficult. When relevance, availability, detection, or utilization is enhanced, accuracy becomes more likely; anything that undermines any of these four stages makes accuracy less likely
* Moderators of Accurate Personality Judgement
  + “Good target”. Everyday observation suggests that some people are easier to figure out then others, and research confirms that most people can tell whom among their acquaintances they can judge most accurately (Biesanz et al, 2011). Good targets of judgement are relatively extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable (Colvin, 1993).
  + “Good trait”. Traits such as extraversion, expressiveness, and talkativeness are more visible than traits such as introspection, fantasy proneness, moodiness, and deceptiveness. According to Vazire’s self-other knowledge asymmetry (SOKA) model, traits that are less visible should be judged more accurately by the self, but traits that are very high or very low in social desirability should be judged better by others (Vazire, 2010).
  + “Good information”. Information can be good in two ways. First, quantity: More is better. Longer observation makes more information available (Biesanz, West & Millevoi, 2007; Carey, Colvin & Hall, 2007). Also quality. Accurate judgements can be made on the basis of facial appearance (Rule & Ambady, 2008), musical taste (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006), and even the way one tells a story (Kufner, Back, Nestler & Egloff, 2010). Relevant information is easier to detect in person than via telephone conversation (Blackman, 2002), and unstructured situations that allow targets to express their individuality yield better information than do highly structured settings that allow less behavioural variation.
  + “Good judge”. More recent research has indicated that, on average, women might be better judges of personality than men, because they have a more accurate view of what the normative or typical person is like (Chan, Rogers, Parisotto & Biesanz, 2011). “Good judges” of personality are characterized by others as agreeable, consistent, and content with life, and not narcissistic, anxious, power-oriented, or hostile (Letzring, 2008; see also Human & Biesanz, 2011b; Wood, Harms & Vazire, 2010)