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Grade: 90

PSYC 350

Major Project 1

**Self-Other Agreement**

In an age where the “selfie” has become the most common form of social communication, it is safe to say that one’s self-image has been established as a major feature in one’s life. But, how accurate are these self-perceptions? And, upon any instance of deviation, would other peoples’ perceptions of someone ultimately affect the way they view themself?

In an attempt to find such answers, I organized a self-other survey made up of twenty-nine questions, each to measure a different trait of my personality in regards to the Big Five Personality Theory. To measure such attributes, I had all participants rate me using a Likert Scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1), to disagree (2), to agree (3), to strongly agree (4). Then, after taking the survey myself, I shared it with nine people of various relations to me – two unacquainted classmates, 4 close friends, and three family members. Ultimately, the results of these questionnaires were not at all what I expected.

That being said, I personally expected the results of my individual survey to depict my personality in a mostly positive light. Instead, I found that I am actually quite critical of myself. And not only did my personal predictions misalign, but so did my predictions for others’ responses. For one, I originally expected to find that the scores of my family would deviate the most from mine. Mainly because I tend to act much differently, and more appropriately, when I am around family. However, my sister was the only one that consistently responded to these attributes the same as I did. I also assumed that my family would be more critical of my personality than both my classmates and friends. But, my friends’ responses actually seemed more displeasing, because they were just so unrepresentative of me. Overall, a majority of the responses were not at all what I expected.

For instance, one of the questions asked participant’s to rate my “happiness; satisfaction with life”. In honestly scoring myself, I rated my happiness at a low 2, otherwise known as ‘disagree’. Looking back, I realize that this was probably the only question I really expected anyone to differentiate from me. Mainly because I try not to show every strain that is going on in my life, as unhealthy as that may be. With that said, the collected data proved that I was right in my estimate – every family member or friend ranked my happiness at a 3 or 4. What is interesting, though, was that the random classmates rated me at a 2. I am not sure why this occurred, to be honest. Maybe because I am tired in class, or they see that I am stressed out beyond belief. Still, the overall mean was relatively high at a 3.56, which varied greatly from my personally low 2 rating. Likewise, I rated myself at a 4 for having ‘low self-esteem’, and completely expected the other participants to disagree with this rating as well. I hide it as best as I can, but it is something I truly struggle with as I have an intense fear of disappointing anyone. Nonetheless, my predictions were accurate in that the overall mean of those surveyed was a relatively low 2.66.

Moreover, there were a few differences that I completely did not expect to occur. One clear example would be that I rated myself at a low 2 for athletics, when everyone else rated me at a high 3 or 4. In looking through these responses, I can understand why my family might have scored high in this area considering I used to be a three-sport athlete. But, now that I am extremely out of shape, I would have especially thought that the random classmates would have ranked this at a low ‘disagree’ as well. Nevertheless, I will not complain about getting a high mean ranking of 3.4 for looking athletic! As surprising as this was, it was even more surprising for me to see how differently people viewed my ‘spirituality’ and ‘creativity’. As I would rank myself high in both of these areas, these scores were surprisingly my lowest means at a 1.89 and 2.33, respectively. In explaining this to myself, I recognized that my family is not at all spiritual, so I have gotten used to always hiding my spirituality from others. However, I am both evidently musical and artistic, so I did not understand why my scores were so deviated in this particular area at first. Then, looking at the difference between both family and friends, I realized that my friends were giving me 1’s as a score for creativity, while my family was giving 4’s. This brought up a significant difference in the way I act around my family versus friendly environments. While my family may have seen the many works of art I have created and heard me play the flute, piano, and sing for 13 years, I eventually realized that my school friends have no idea about this side of me. I suppose I am too busy studying to ever show them the creative hobbies I used to entertain myself with. Finally, a major discrepancy in the measures was in my ‘self-focused’ attribute. I was pretty neutral in attempting to analyze this specific trait, as I have actually always wondered what people thought of me regarding this. What I found is that I see myself as pretty self-focused, ranking myself at a 3 in this area. However, every other participant disagreed with this statement, leaving me with a low mean of 2.44. To explain, I realistically believe that all college students are self-focused. They cannot help it. This is their time to explore themselves and their interests. And that is exactly how I see myself. But, I guess my work with others has paid off in that at least my narcissism does not completely outshine my genuine care for other people.

Now, there may have been a lot of disagreements in the self-other survey results, but this is not to say that they lacked any similarities whatsoever. In fact, there were many attributes that people did not even hesitate in answering about me. For example, I rated myself as a 4 for ‘leadership potential’, as did everyone else. This is just something I have always practiced and had a natural liking to. I was not expecting such a large agreement in this area, to be honest, but it was a nice assurance that I am accurately portraying something that is so important to me. Further, the mean for my ‘intelligence’ rating was a high 3.78. Again, I was not expecting such a high consensus on this matter (maybe due to my low self-esteem), but it was probably the most reassuring item to see from the survey. Similarly, I was ranked extremely high for being fashionable of all things. In fact, it was my highest mean, weighing in at exactly 4.0. While this may not be as important as measuring one’s intelligence, any sort of self-other similarity can provide greater confidence in your self-image and personality.

Besides the similarities and differences, though, the greatest lesson learned from the self-other survey comes with comparing the ratings in which all other participants agreed and you differed. For instance, my ‘happiness’ rating mentioned above or the relatively insignificant measure of my preference for ‘big cities’ in which I strongly agreed, but others might have assumed I disagreed considering I currently live in Champaign. In these measures, not only did the participants completely contrast from my personality perception, but they also agreed with one another against my belief. The most prominent example of this was seen in the difference of results for my level of being ‘extraverted’ or ‘reserved’. While I rated myself as a 3 for both, the other participants constantly ranked a 4 and a 2 correspondingly. It always shocks me that people think I am a completely outgoing person. Little do they know, I have a strong presence of introvert in me, as I like to be by myself and I even get nervous in new social situations. Nonetheless, with my personal degree of introversion and this common public opinion of my extraversion, I came to compromise by considering myself an “introverted extrovert”. Personally, this exact situation is why I think that this analysis is the most important. In trying to truly figure yourself out and better yourself as an individual, you need to take into account how others perceive you. Otherwise, you could lead your life in constant confusion and miscommunication.

Finally, as I briefly mentioned before, I believe the ultimate reason for any divergence in these scores was due to the difference of lifestyle I choose to live between my family and friends. Where I am very sarcastic and cold in my family life, I am kinder and more emotionally stable with my friends and at school. The results of certain areas proved this very idea. For example, my friends rated me with 3’s and 4’s for my ‘warmness’, but my family knew better than that. My sarcastic and self-focused nature led them to score this area with 2’s. Additionally, my friends claim that I am ‘facially inexpressive’ with their mean for my facial expressivity being a low 2.2. However, my family members and I each ranked this particular attribute as a 4, because we all know that I do not hide my emotions very well with them. All in all, Charlotte Bronte explains this discrepancy as holding “two lives – one of thought and one of reality”. Whether one is more accurate than the other I still have yet to know. But, at least I now know where my personal self-image stands with the people I deal with on a daily basis.