Do We Know If Others Like Us Or Not?
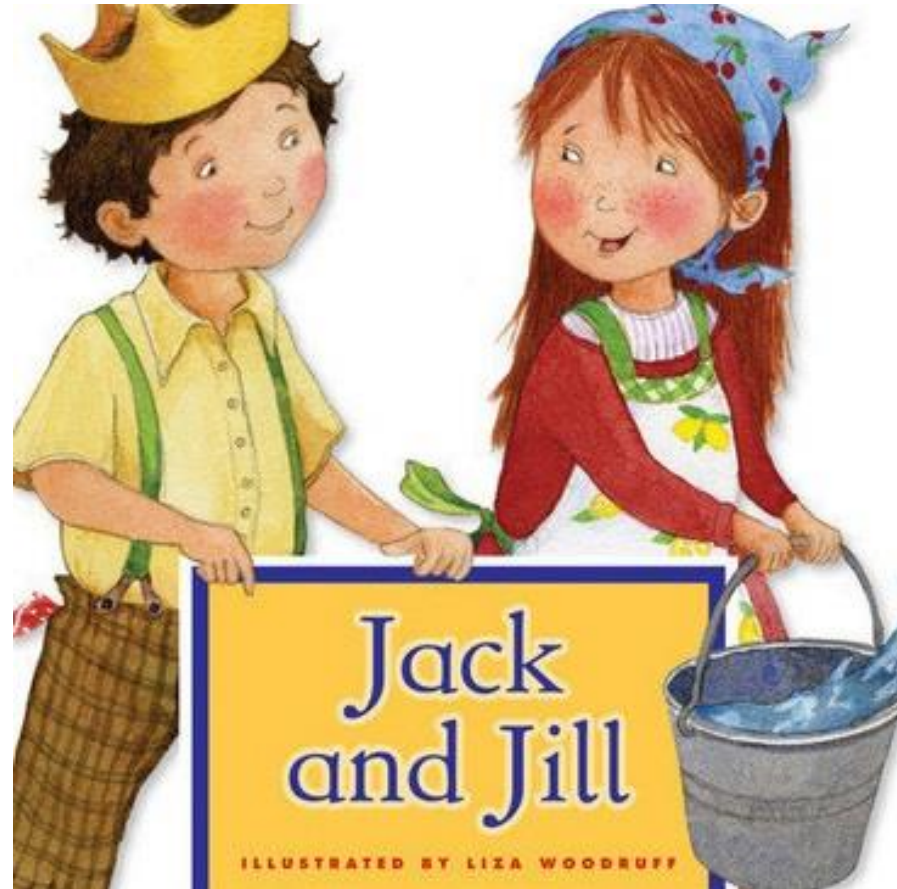
David A. Kenny

University of Connecticut

davidakenny.net/places/UVic/Meta-accuracy.pdf

Jack and Jill Have a Speed Date

- Jack meets Jill on a speed date.
- Jack really likes Jill.
- He needs to decide if he will ask her out on a real date.
- He wonders if Jill likes him?

What Is Jack's "Wondering" Called?
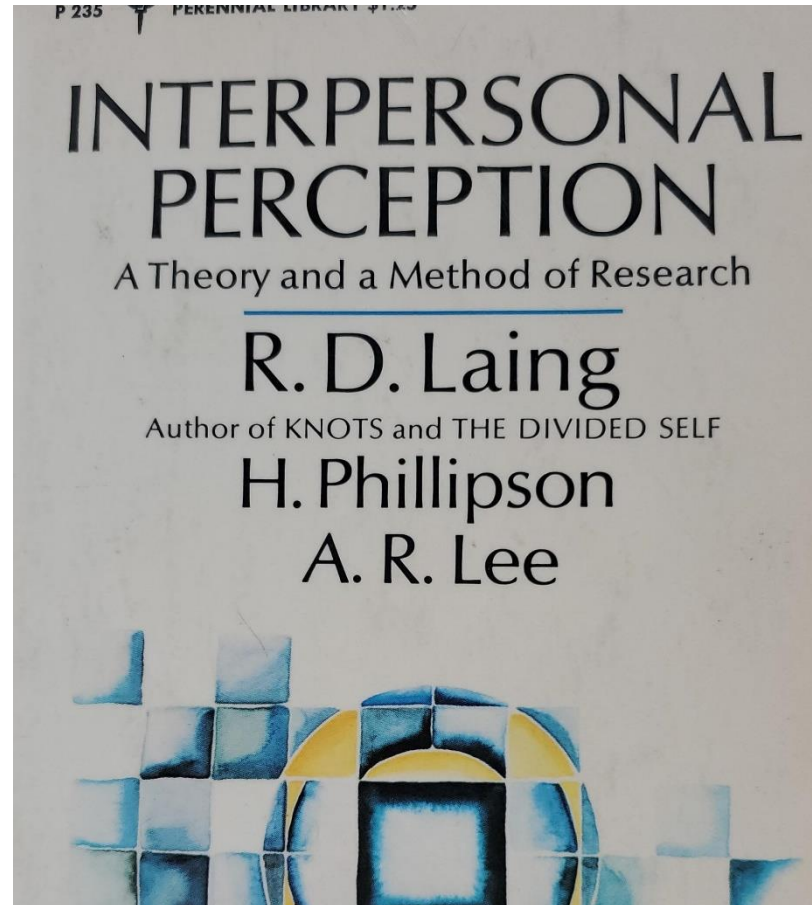
- Metaperception: A perception of another person's perception.
- Two sorts of metaperceptions
  - Two-person (Jack & Jill): Does Jack think that Jill likes him?
  - Three-person (Dame Dob, Jack, & Jill): Does Dame Dob think that Jack likes Jill?

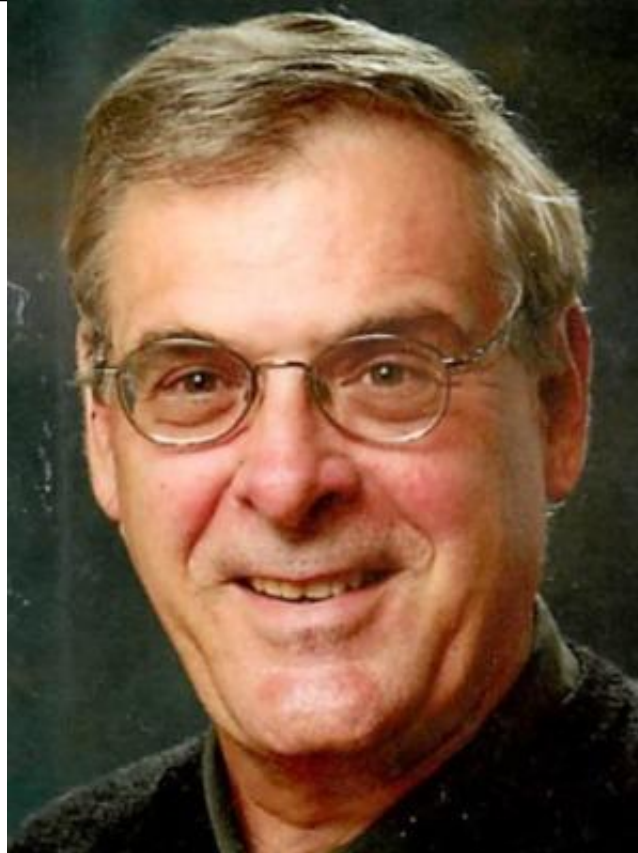# My Initial Interest
R. D. Laing

Laing et al.'s 1966 book

Are Metaperceptions Valid?

- If Jack thinks that Jill likes him, does Jill actually like him?
- The validity of a metaperceptions is called *meta-accuracy*.
- Today, we examine the meta-accuracy of metaperceptions of liking.
- This seemingly simple question has a very complex answer.

How might we study metaperception and meta-accuracy?

- Look at people in groups.
    - Speed Dating
    - Friendship Groups
    - Residential Groups
    - Work Groups
    - Laboratory Groups
- We ask each of them how they liked each of the others in the group and how much they think each other person liked them.

My First Metaperception Dataset: 1970

Tim Curry

Round-Robin Design

Target

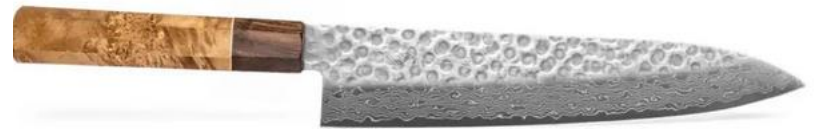|		1	2	3	4	5	6
P	**1**	-	8	9	6	7	8
e	**2**	3	-	5	4	4	3
r	**3**	6	4	-	7	4	5
c	**4**	6	6	5	-	5	6
e	**5**	4	3	2	4	-	2
i	**6**	7	8	7	6	6	-
v							
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Social Relations Model (SRM)

Rebecca Warner

Larry La Voie

What Is the SRM?

- ☐ A general statistical model for understanding dyadic measurements, as opposed to individual measurements.

- ☐ Take the measure and slices it into parts or components.

  - ■ Hopefully it refines the measurement and does not butcher it.

- ☐ These parts correspond to different levels of analysis.

SRM Metaperception Components for Liking

- Average: How much do people in general think others like them?

- Perceiver: Does a person think others generally like or dislike them?

- Target: Do people think that another person consistently likes or dislikes others?

- Relationship: Does a perceiver think that an other person particularly likes them?

Consider Pollyanna, Ove, and Carlton the Bear

Pollyanna

Ove

Carlton

Metaperceptions of Pollyanna and Ove

- Pollyanna thinks everyone likes her (a positive perceiver effect) and that people think Pollyanna likes them (a positive target effect).

- Ove thinks everyone dislikes him (a negative perceiver effect) and that people think Ove dislikes them (a negative target effect).

- Pollyanna thinks Carlton especially likes her (positive relationship effect), but she thinks that Ove especially dislikes her (negative relationship effect).

Metaperception Studies of Liking

- 19 in total, spanning 47 years
- Brief acquaintance
  - Laboratory studies
  - Speed dating studies
- Long-term acquaintance
  - Residential
  - Coworkers

davidakenny.net/ip/interp.htm

Findings for Metaperceptions: Perceiver

- The largest portion is perceiver: Pollyanna thinks others like her, and Ove think others dislike him.

- Much more true early on in relationships.

- Who thinks they are liked?
    - Low Social Anxiety
    - High Self-Esteem
    - Low Depression
    - High Narcissism

Findings for Metaperceptions: Target

- Typically very weak: Little or no consensus on who generally likes other people. People do not agree that Pollyanna likes others and that Ove does not.

- One key exception: In speed-dating studies, certain people are seen as generally liking others and others seen as disliking others.

- Who are seen as liking others?

- Physically attractive prople

Findings for Metaperceptions: Relationship

- A very strong component: People think some people like them more than other people.

- Much more true for long-term relationships. Initially, people think all others feel the same way about them. However, as people get to know others more, they think that others feel about them in very different ways, i.e., some people like them more than others.

Four Types of Meta-Accuracy for Attraction

- **Perceiver** – Are people who think that they are liked, actually liked?

- **Relationship** – If Pollyanna **especially** likes Carleton, does he know that she **especially** likes him?

- **Target** – Do people think that popular people like others?

- **Mean** – On average do people over-estimate or under-estimate how much they are liked?
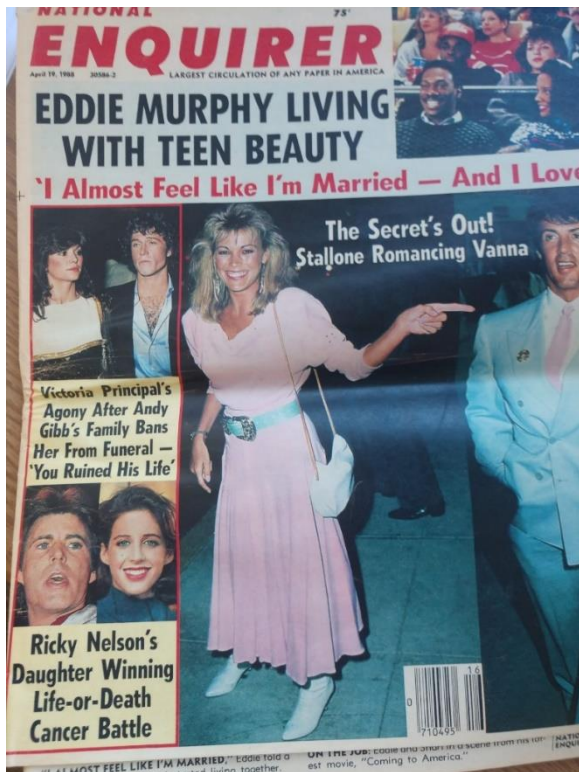
Bella DePaulo

Perceiver Meta-Accuracy

- Are people who think that they are liked, actually liked? So are Pollyanna and Ove right in how others see them?

- Yes, both for short-term and long-term interactions. But the level of accuracy is relatively modest.

More Complicated

Accurate But Still Biased

- Accurate: People who think others like them are liked and people who think others dislike them are disliked.

- Biased: Those who think others like them, over-estimate how much they are liked, and those who others dislike them underestimate how much they are liked.

  - Pollyanna thinks others like her more than they actually do, and Ove thinks others dislike him more than they actually do.

Relationship Meta-Accuracy

- If Carlton **especially** likes Pollyanna, does Pollyanna know that Carlton **especially** likes her?

- Yes, people show relationship accuracy, but mainly after they have gotten to know each other.

How do we form metaperceptions of liking?

- **They tell us.**
  - Verbally
  - Nonverbally
- **Self-observation: Did I behave in a likable way?**
- **An informed guess: Heuristic**
  - Heuristic used in the metaperception of liking: Assumed Reciprocity

Assumed Reciprocity

- People use the own feeling of liking to infer whether another person likes them, a process called *assumed reciprocity*.
  - If Pollyanna **especially** likes Carlton, she assumes that he **especially** likes her.

Reciprocity and Assumed Reciprocity Lead to Accuracy

- If Pollyanna assumes that Carlton feels the same way about her as she does toward him (Assumed Reciprocity) and Pollyanna and Carleton's feeling are the same (Reciprocity), then Pollyanna will be accurate.

- Is there reciprocity of liking?
  - Not much in short-term studies.
  - Very strong in long-term relationships.

Target Accuracy

- For romantic attraction, there is target variance in metaperceptions: People think some people like other people and other people dislike others.

- Those people who are thought to like others tend to be physically attractive.

- However, attractive people actually tend to dislike others and are "choosier," whereas unattractive people are less selective.

- The result is negative accuracy.

Erica Carlson

Mean Accuracy

- In 2012, Erica Carlson and I have shown that for liking, people underestimate how much others like them.

- For attraction, a 2018 paper by Boothby et al. shows consistent underestimation of how much others like us.

- Other people like you more than you think.

Review: Perceivers

- People think others feel about them the same way, especially when they first meet.

- These metaperception match how others actually feel about them.

- However, people who think they liked by others, overestimate how much they are liked, and those who think they disliked by others underestimate how much they are liked.

Review: Targets

- People typically do not agree about who generally likes and dislikes others.

- In speed-dating studies, they do agree, primarily because they assume physically attractive others like others.

- However, it is not the case that attractive others like others; rather they actually tend to dislike others.

Review: Relationships

- People typically think some people like them and other people dislike them, especially once they get to know them.

- These unique metaperceptions match how much they are actually liked, especially once they have gotten to know the person.

- Meta-accuracy is achieved through a combination of assume reciprocity and actual reciprocity.

Review: Means

- On average, people underestimate how well they are liked.

Charles Bond

Three-Person Metaperception of Liking

- Pollyanna thinks Ove likes Carlton.
- The three persons
  - Judge (Who is judging? Pollyanna)
  - Perceiver (Who is "doing" the liking? Ove)
  - Target (Who is being liked? Carlton)
- In a 1996 study with Charles Bond and others, we looked at accuracy and biases in three-person metaperception of liking.

Studies

- Company Study
- College Students
- Timothy Curry's Study of Roommates
- Matchmaker Study

Coauthors of the Matchmaker Study

Katherine LaFontana
VP of Academic Affairs
Ursuline College

Andrea Chapdelaine
President
Hood College

Judge Agreement in Metaperceptions

- Perceiver
    - Agreement that Ove dislikes everyone.
    - Hardly any.
- Target
    - Agreement that everyone dislikes Ove.
    - Some but only among acquainted college students.
- Relationship
    - Agreement that Ove especially likes Pollyanna.
    - Substantial in all studies.

Target Accuracy

- If people think that others generally dislike Ove, is Ove generally disliked?

- Yes and this effect is very strong. Assuming people agree, they are accurate about whom is liked and whom is disliked.

Relationship Accuracy

- If people generally think that Ove especially likes Carlton, does Ove especially like Carleton?

- Very strong in all of the studies where people well acquainted.

- Even if people have never seen Ove and Carlton together, they will accurately predict liking. Matching can be successful!

Bias in Triadic Metaperceptions

- Reciprocity: If Pollyanna thinks Ove likes Carlton, she thinks Carlton likes Ove.

  □ Very strong

- Agreement: If Pollyanna likes Carlton, she thinks others will like Carlton.

  □ Strong

- Balance: The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

  □ Quite weak.

Summary

- Much of social psychological research consists of people making judgments of artificial people not real persons or judgments of a confederate of the experimenter.

- The study of real people in real relationships is possible.

- It does require some complicated statistical models.

- Metaperception is a complicated mix of accuracy (see others as they really are) and bias (seeing others as we want them to be).

Thank you!

davidakenny.net/places/UVic/Meta-accuracy.pdf

Psychologists Interest in Mind Reading

- Developmental: Theory of mind – children begin to realize that others have minds too.

- Social: Self-presentation and symbolic interactionism

- Clinical psychology: Social anxiety and clinical success ("unconditional positive regard")

Results: Variance Partitioning[a]

Type	k[b]	Perceiver	Target	Relationship
Brief	9	.45	.05	.26
Long-term	7	.27	.05	.45

[a]percentages of total; remaining variance error

[b]number of studies

Round Robin

Metaperception of the
Liking by Others