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Do Psychologically Adjusted Individuals Know What Other People Really Think About Them? The Link Between Psychological Adjustment and Meta-Accuracy

Erika N. Carlson

Abstract
Do psychologically adjusted individuals know what other people think about them? Participants rated their own personality and levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal adjustment and also estimated how a new acquaintance and friends perceived them on core personality traits. These individuals rated the participant’s personality and friends described participants’ adjustment. Intrapersonally and interpersonally adjusted individuals were aware of the positive rather than the distinctive and potentially negative impressions they made, although people who were interpersonally adjusted (e.g., socially skilled) had insight into what made them distinctive in their friends’ eyes. Psychologically adjusted individuals also tended to overestimate their transparency, meaning they assumed others saw them as they saw themselves more so than others actually did. Interestingly, effects depended somewhat on who reported on adjustment, such that friend-reported adjustment was linked to accuracy, whereas self-reported adjustment was linked to transparency. Implications for the adaptiveness of accuracy are discussed.

Keywords
self-knowledge, interpersonal perception, well-being, personality

Our beliefs about how others perceive us are the implicit map we use to navigate our social world. These beliefs, called metaperceptions, powerfully shape how we feel about ourselves and affect how we relate to other people (Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998; Srivastava & Beer, 2005). Intuitively, knowing what people think about us is adaptive. Accurate metaperceptions, or meta-accuracy, allow us to enjoy our good reputation or take corrective actions when we make bad impressions (Leary, Tambor, Terald, & Downs, 1995). As such, meta-accuracy might be a hallmark of psychological functioning. Yet, the degree to which meta-accuracy is adaptive has not been empirically investigated, and there are reasons to predict that it is more adaptive to assume the best rather than know exactly what people think. Thus, the main goal of the current research is to test whether psychological adjustment, defined as intrapersonal adjustment (i.e., a subjective sense of well-being) and interpersonal adjustment (i.e., social functioning; Church et al., 2014; Kurt & Paulhus, 2008), is associated with meta-accuracy for core personality traits.

Individuals vary in their ability to detect how others see them (Carlson & Furr, 2009, 2013), but few studies have identified who is especially skilled at meta-accuracy. A plausible hypothesis is that relative to people who are less adjusted, people who are more psychologically adjusted are more aware of the impressions they make. Metaperceptions shape self-presentation and are used to monitor the status of social bonds (Leary et al., 1995; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). As such, meta-accuracy likely has a positive effect on relationships and consequently, psychological health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Given that meta-accuracy allows people to take corrective action, it should also be adaptive to detect undesirable impressions. Interestingly, people tend to enjoy individuals who are aware of their behavior and acknowledge their flaws (Tenney, Vazire, & Mehl, 2013; Ward & Brenner, 2006), suggesting that being aware of potentially negative impressions can foster social functioning. Thus, one prediction, called the accuracy hypothesis, is that adjusted individuals know what other people think about them, even if they do not make desirable impressions.

It is also possible that the hallmark of adjustment is expecting positive evaluations from others. Adjusted individuals tend to have positive personalities; specifically, their personality is...
similar to the average person’s personality, which is highly socially desirable (Edwards, 1957; Human & Biesanz, 2011; Wood & Furr, 2015). As such, adjusted individuals likely make and think they make positive impressions. Indeed, people who have higher self-esteem and who report higher relationship quality tend to expect positive evaluations from others, whereas people with more psychopathology symptoms tend to expect harsh evaluations (J. D. Campbell & Fehr, 1990; Carlson & Oltermann, 2015; Christensen, Stein, & Means-Christensen, 2003; Lemay & Dudley, 2009; Murray et al., 1998). Thus, one prediction, called the positivity hypothesis, is that adjusted individuals expect to be seen in positive ways, and expecting positive evaluations explains their meta-accuracy. Put another way, adjusted individuals think they are seen, and are actually seen, in desirable ways.

One factor that might bias adjusted individuals is the degree to which they think other people see them as they see themselves. Most people tend to overestimate the degree to which other people share their self-perceptions, yet this bias might be adaptive because feeling understood fosters connections with others and validates one’s self-views (Kenny & DePaulo, 2013). Thus, it is possible to observe evidence for the accuracy (meta-insight) and transparency hypotheses. Put another way, adjusted individuals think they are seen, and are actually seen, in desirable ways.

One factor that might bias adjusted individuals is the degree to which they think other people see them as they see themselves. Most people tend to overestimate the degree to which other people share their self-perceptions, yet this bias might be adaptive because feeling understood fosters connections with others and validates one’s self-views (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993; Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Gieser, 1992; Weger, 2005). As such, one prediction, called the transparency hypothesis, is that adjusted individuals assume they are more transparent to others than they really are. However, transparency can be independent from meta-accuracy. People tend to assume others see them as they see themselves, but at the same time, are able to make valid distinctions between how they see themselves and how others perceive them, an ability called meta-insight (Carlson, Vazire, & Furr, 2011; Gallrein, Carlson, Holstein, & Leising, 2013). Thus, it is possible to observe evidence for the accuracy (meta-insight) and transparency hypotheses.

Indexing Accuracy, Positivity, and Transparency

Meta-accuracy is indexed as the profile correlation between an individual’s metaperception for core personality traits and the actual impression he or she makes on another person (Carlson & Furr, 2013; Carlson, Furr, & Vazire, 2010). This index indicates whether, for example, Meg knows how Jon perceives her characteristic patterns of traits, or if she realizes that he sees her as more outgoing than defendable or anxious. A positive association between adjustment and meta-accuracy suggests that people who are more adjusted have more insight into how others perceive them but cannot reveal if adjusted individuals are aware of the negative or less self-verifying impressions they make, the degree to which they think they are seen in positive ways, or the degree to which they overestimate their transparency.

To test if adjusted individuals are aware of the potentially negative impressions they make and the degree to which they think they are seen in positive ways, impression profiles (Jon’s impression of Meg) are decomposed into a normative and distinctive component (Biesanz, 2010; Furr, 2008). In keeping with past work, the normative component is operationalized as the average profile of the sample, which is highly socially desirable and yields nearly identical results when replaced by a socially desirable profile (Biesanz, 2010; Wood & Furr, 2015). The distinctive component (distinctive impression) is the impression profile when the normative profile has been removed from the raw impression profile. Distinctive impressions represent, for example, the way Jon sees Meg as unique from the typical person. Given the positive nature of normativeness, distinctive impressions also represent fairly negative or neutral information (Wood & Furr, 2015). The normative and distinctive impression profiles are entered as predictors of metaperceptions to index of positivity, or the degree to which people think they make a normative impression, and distinctive meta-accuracy, or the degree to which people are aware of the distinctive and potentially negative impressions they make. Positivity indices test the positivity hypothesis, specifically the prediction that adjusted individuals expect to be seen in normative ways. Distinctive meta-accuracy indices test the accuracy hypothesis, or the prediction that adjusted individuals have insight into the potentially negative impressions they make.

To test if adjusted individuals are aware of the less self-verifying impressions they make and the degree to which they overestimate their transparency, impression and self-perception profiles (Meg’s self-perception) are entered as predictors of metaperceptions. This indexes meta-insight, which is the degree to which people make valid distinctions between their self-perceptions and others’ perceptions, and transparency, which is the degree to which people overestimate how much others see them as they see themselves. Meta-insight indices test the accuracy hypothesis, specifically the prediction that adjusted individuals are aware of less self-verifying impressions, whereas indices of transparency test the transparency hypothesis. A more conservative model tests all three hypotheses by controlling for normativeness. Specifically, distinctive impressions, the normative impression, and distinctive self-perceptions (i.e., self-perceptions when the normative profile has been removed) are entered as predictors of metaperceptions. This model yields (a) distinctive meta-insight, which is the degree to which people know how they are seen differently from the typical person and from how they see themselves and tests the accuracy hypothesis; (b) positivity, which tests the effects of expecting positive evaluations above and beyond transparency; and (c) distinctive transparency, which tests the effects of overestimating the degree to which others perceive one’s distinctive attributes, controlling for positivity.

Research Overview

To determine whether psychologically adjusted individuals know what other people think about them, the current research uses a multiple-perspective and multiple-context approach. With respect to multiple perspectives, there are reasons to predict that results might depend on who reports on adjustment, the self or acquaintances. For example, self-enhancement research shows that people who see themselves more positively than others do describe themselves as adjusted, but
self-enhancers are seen by peers as having more psychological problems (Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995; Kurt & Paulhus, 2008; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Thus, adjustment is measured as the aggregate of self-report and friend report and is also decomposed into self-report and friend report to explore the possibility that the adaptiveness of meta-accuracy is in the eye of the beholder.

With respect to multiple contexts, the adaptiveness of accuracy might depend on how long people have known each other. In romantic relationships, the link between positively biased evaluations about one’s relationship and relationship quality decreases over time (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010) while being understood becomes more important over time (L. Campbell, Lackenbauer, & Muise, 2006; Letzring & Nofle, 2010). Likewise, people who tend to self-enhance thrive in short-term contexts but lose social value over time, suggesting that accuracy becomes more important as people get to know each other (Carlson & Desjardins, 2015; Paulhus, 1998). Thus, accuracy, positivity, and bias might serve different functions over time and could be linked to adjustment at different points in time. Thus, the three hypotheses are tested among new acquaintances and friends, which provide an ecologically valid test of whether adjusted individuals understand how others perceive them.

**Method**

Participants (N = 156; 63.6% female; M_age = 19.44, standard deviation (SD) = 1.98; Caucasian 62.9%, Asian American 24.7%, African American 7.7%, Hispanic 4.1%, 0.5% Middle Eastern or did not report) were undergraduates at a Midwestern university. They came to the lab in unacquainted dyads and provided self-perceptions of their personality and adjustment in separate rooms. Next, a research assistant escorted participants to an interaction room where they were instructed to talk in separate rooms. Next, a research assistant escorted participants to separate rooms. After 5 min, participants returned to separate rooms. Participants did not rate a partner if they were already acquainted or if only one participant attended the session (first impression n = 146; 75 dyads, 62% female). Next, participants were asked to provide names and e-mail addresses of up to four friends who could describe their personality and provide metaperceptions of their partner’s personality. Participants did not rate a partner if they were already acquainted or if only one participant attended the session (first impression n = 146; 75 dyads, 62% female). Next, participants were asked to provide names and e-mail addresses of up to four friends who could describe their personality and provide metaperceptions of each friend. Friends were contacted via e-mail and asked to rate participants’ personalities and psychological adjustment online. Participants were rated, on average, by two friends (M = 2.00, SD = 1.05; N = 312) and knew their friends for about 5 years (M_months = 61.04, SD = 57.78). Friends were not compensated (Vazire, 2006), but participants were awarded course credit or US$20.

Profile correlations are generally strong effects (e.g., distinctive self-other agreement b = 0.16, d = .64; Human & Biesanz, 2011), suggesting the current sample was adequately powered to detect profile correlations (e.g., an 18-item profile for N = 40 yields power of .90 for a medium effect; Sherbaum & Ferreter, 2009). The sample size goal was approximately 70 dyads (N = 140) to achieve power of .80 (Ackerman, Ledermann, & Kenny, 2016). The sample size is also consistent with past work testing cross-level moderators of profile agreement (Human & Biesanz, 2011; N = 107; Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010; N = 73). Research exploring whether intrapersonal adjustment moderated profile self-other agreement revealed small effects for distinctive self-other agreement (bs = .00 to .01; ds = -.26 to .26) and small-to-medium effects for positivity (bs = -.01 to .07; ds = -.30 to .42; Human & Biesanz, 2011). Similar effects were expected in the current research.

**Measures**

Self-perceptions, impressions (“I believe that Person X is someone who . . .”), and metaperceptions (“Person X sees me as someone who . . .”) were completed for an 18-item subset of the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (agree strongly) scale.

Participants rated themselves and were rated by friends on three intrapersonal adjustment (“has high self-esteem,” “is happy,” and “is satisfied with life”; self-report M = 10.82, SD = 2.38, α = .79; friend report M = 11.74, SD = 2.06, α = .75) and interpersonal adjustment items (“is aware of his or her behavior,” “is aware of the impression he or she makes on other people,” and “socially perceptive of a wide range of interpersonal cues”; self-report M = 10.54, SD = 2.48, α = .77; friend report M = 10.84, SD = 2.36, α = .77). Self-report and friend report were aggregated (intrapersonal adjustment M = 11.28, SD = 1.86, α = .79; self-friend r = .39, p < .001; interpersonal adjustment M = 10.69, SD = 1.85, α = .69; self-friend r = .17, p = .04).

**Analyses**

Effects were indexed using multilevel modeling in R (lme4 package; Bates & Sarkar, 2007). To model meta-accuracy, each 18-item impression profile was entered as a predictor of a given metaperception profile at Level 1. The Level 2 slope indexed meta-accuracy for the typical person. Effects were nested within dyads for new acquaintances or within metaperceivers for friends.

Model 1 indexed distinctive meta-accuracy and positivity. Similar to the social accuracy model (Biesanz, 2010), impressions were decomposed into distinctive and normative components. The normative impression (i.e., sample average) profile was subtracted from each judge’s impression profile. This yielded a distinctive impression for each judge, or the way a judge perceived a metaperceiver as unique from the typical person. Distinctive impressions and the normative impression were entered as simultaneous predictors of metaperceptions, which yielded an index of distinctive meta-accuracy (distinctive impression slope) and positivity (normative slope). The normative profile was computed separately for first impression and friend analyses.

Model 2 indexed meta-insight and transparency. Impressions and self-perceptions were entered as simultaneous predictors of metaperception profiles, which yielded an index of
meta-insight (impression slope) and transparency (self-perception slope).

Model 3 included distinctive impressions, the normative impression, and distinctive self-perceptions (i.e., self-perceptions once the normative profile was removed) as simultaneous predictors of metaperceptions. This model yielded distinctive meta-insight (distinctive impression slope), distinctive transparency (distinctive self-perception slope), and positivity (normative impression slope).

Intrapersonal or interpersonal adjustment scores were grand mean centered and entered as a Level 2 predictor of slopes. Simple slopes are reported for significant cross-level interactions for 1 SD above (high b) and below (low b) the mean-level adjustment. These slopes reveal the magnitude of the relevant profile correlation when people were high or low on adjustment. People were aware of how their friends perceived their characteristic pattern of traits (meta-accuracy b = 0.480, p < .001; 95% confidence interval (CI) [.425, .535]). As shown in Table 1, people who were more adjusted tended to have higher meta-accuracy (intrapersonal b = 0.063, p < .001, low b = 0.399, high b = 0.622; interpersonal b = 0.034, p = .028, low b = 0.449, high b = 0.580).

People were able to detect what made them distinctive to their new acquaintance (distinctive meta-accuracy b = 0.107, p < .001; 95% CI [.051, .163]) and tended to assume they made a positive first impression (positivity b = 0.883, p < .001; 95% CI [.803, .964]). However, results for Model 1 revealed that adjustment was not linked to distinctive meta-accuracy but was associated with positivity (intrapersonal b = 0.088, p < .001, low b = 0.772, high b = 1.086; interpersonal b = 0.055, p = .013, low b = 0.829, high b = 1.05; Table 1). Thus, the link between meta-accuracy and adjustment may have been driven by adjusted individuals’ expectation that they were seen in positive ways. Table 1 also shows that, while effects were largely the same when adjustment was disaggregated into self- or friend-reported adjustment, self-reported but not friend-reported interpersonal adjustment was associated with positivity. Thus, people whose friends saw them as interpersonally adjusted did not necessarily assume they made a positive first impression.

People were aware of how their new acquaintance saw them differently from how they saw themselves (meta-insight b = 0.296, p < .001; 95% CI [.253, .339]) but also overestimated their transparency (b = 0.398, p < .001; 95% CI [.349, .447]). Model 2 revealed that, in contrast to the accuracy hypothesis, adjustment was not linked to meta-insight, but in line with the transparency hypothesis, adjusted individuals tended to assume a new acquaintance shared their self-perception more so than they really did (intrapersonal b = 0.047, p = .001, low b = 0.308, high b = 0.474; interpersonal: b = 0.031, p < .024, low b = 0.336, high b = 0.455; Table 1).

However, when adjustment ratings were disaggregated, Table 1 shows that only self-reported adjustment was linked to transparency, suggesting that people whose friends saw them as adjusted did not necessarily overestimate their transparency.

People were aware of how they were seen differently from the typical person and themselves (distinctive meta-insight b = 0.090, p < .01; 95% CI [.045, .134]), assumed they made a positive first impression (positivity b = 0.923, p < .001; 95% CI [.851, .995]), and overestimated the degree to which a new acquaintance perceived what they thought made them distinctive (distinctive transparency b = 0.267, p < .001; 95% CI [.221, .312]). Results for Model 3 provided the most support for the positivity hypothesis such that intrapersonal (but not interpersonal) adjustment was associated with positivity (b = 0.055, p = .008, low b = 0.867, high b = 1.062); however, neither form of adjustment was linked to distinctive meta-insight or distinctive transparency. Disaggregated adjustment ratings revealed a different pattern for self- and friend-reported adjustment such that self-reported adjustment was linked to positivity and distinctive transparency while friend-reported adjustment was not. Thus, people who saw themselves as adjusted tend to feel valued and understood by their new acquaintance, but people seen as adjusted did not necessarily feel this way.

Results

Accuracy, Positivity, and Transparency for a New Acquaintance

People were able to detect how their new acquaintance perceived their characteristic pattern of traits (meta-accuracy b = 0.480, p < .001; 95% CI [.425, .535]). As shown in Table 1, people who were more adjusted tended to have higher meta-accuracy (intrapersonal b = 0.063, p < .001, low b = 0.399, high b = 0.622; interpersonal b = 0.034, p = .028, low b = 0.449, high b = 0.580).

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People were aware of how they were seen differently from the typical person and themselves (distinctive meta-insight b = 0.090, p < .01; 95% CI [.045, .134]), assumed they made a positive first impression (positivity b = 0.923, p < .001; 95% CI [.851, .995]), and overestimated the degree to which a new acquaintance perceived what they thought made them distinctive (distinctive transparency b = 0.267, p < .001; 95% CI [.221, .312]). Results for Model 3 provided the most support for the positivity hypothesis such that intrapersonal (but not interpersonal) adjustment was associated with positivity (b = 0.055, p = .008, low b = 0.867, high b = 1.062); however, neither form of adjustment was linked to distinctive meta-insight or distinctive transparency. Disaggregated adjustment ratings revealed a different pattern for self- and friend-reported adjustment such that self-reported adjustment was linked to positivity and distinctive transparency while friend-reported adjustment was not. Thus, people who saw themselves as adjusted tend to feel valued and understood by their new acquaintance, but people seen as adjusted did not necessarily feel this way.

Accuracy, Positivity, and Transparency for Friends

People were able to detect how their friends perceived their characteristic pattern of traits (meta-accuracy b = 0.527, p < .001; 95% CI [.483, .572]), and as shown in Table 2, adjustment was positively associated with meta-accuracy (intrapersonal b = 0.064, p < .001, low b = 0.405, high b = 0.640; interpersonal b = 0.065, p < .001, low b = 0.404, high b = 0.643).

People were able to detect what made them distinctive in their friends’ eyes (distinctive meta-accuracy b = 0.240, p < .001; 95% CI [.199, .281]) and tended to assume their friends saw them in positive ways (b = 0.907, p < .001; 95% CI [.834, .980]). Model 1 revealed that interpersonal adjustment was positively associated with distinctive meta-accuracy (b = 0.023, p = .040, low b = 0.194, high b = 0.280; Table 2), providing some support for the accuracy hypothesis. In support of the positivity hypothesis, people who were more adjusted tended to assume their friends saw them in positive ways (intrapersonally b = 0.092, p < .001, low b = 0.737, high b = 1.075; interpersonal b = 0.090, p < .001, low b = 0.739, high b = 1.072). When adjustment ratings were disaggregated (see Table 2), friend-reported but not self-reported interpersonal adjustment was linked to distinctive meta-accuracy, suggesting people who saw themselves as interpersonally adjusted were not necessarily aware of the distinctive impressions they made.

People were aware of how their friends saw them differently from how they saw themselves (meta-insight b = 0.274,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Adjustment</th>
<th>Meta-Accuracy</th>
<th>Distinctive Meta-Accuracy</th>
<th>Positivity</th>
<th>Meta-Insight</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Distinctive Meta-Insight</th>
<th>Positivity</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Distinctive Meta-Insight</th>
<th>Positivity</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(\hat{b})</td>
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<td>(\hat{b})</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. DV = metaperception profile; meta-accuracy \(\hat{b}\) = impression profile. Model 1: Distinctive meta-accuracy \(\hat{b}\) = distinctive impression profile; positivity \(\hat{b}\) = normative impression profile. Model 2: Meta-insight \(\hat{b}\) = impression profile; transparency \(\hat{b}\) = self-perception profile. Model 3: Distinctive meta-accuracy \(\hat{b}\) = distinctive impression profile; positivity \(\hat{b}\) = normative impression profile; distinctive transparency \(\hat{b}\) = distinctive self-perception profile. Intrapersonal and interpersonal adjustment were the aggregates of self- and friend-reported adjustment. Disaggregated ratings were self-report = self-reported adjustment as moderator of slopes and friend report = friend-reported adjustment as moderators of slopes.

*\(p < .05\).
Table 2. Psychological Adjustment as a Moderator of Accuracy, Positivity, and Transparency for Friends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Adjustment</th>
<th>Meta-Accuracy</th>
<th>Distinctive Meta-Accuracy</th>
<th>Positivity</th>
<th>Meta-Insight</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Distinctive Meta-Insight</th>
<th>Positivity</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal adjustment</td>
<td>0.064* [0.042, 0.086]</td>
<td>0.014 [-0.008, 0.036]</td>
<td>0.092* [0.054, 0.129]</td>
<td>0.009 [-0.011, 0.029]</td>
<td>0.040* [0.013, 0.067]</td>
<td>0.001 [-0.018, 0.019]</td>
<td>0.044* [0.012, 0.077]</td>
<td>0.030* [0.004, 0.056]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>0.045* [0.028, 0.062]</td>
<td>0.006 [-0.011, 0.023]</td>
<td>0.075* [0.047, 0.103]</td>
<td>-0.005 [-0.020, 0.010]</td>
<td>0.043* [0.023, 0.062]</td>
<td>-0.003 [-0.015, 0.010]</td>
<td>0.029* [0.004, 0.054]</td>
<td>0.028* [0.009, 0.048]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend-report</td>
<td>0.046* [0.024, 0.068]</td>
<td>0.016 [-0.004, 0.037]</td>
<td>0.049* [0.012, 0.086]</td>
<td>-0.004 [-0.025, 0.017]</td>
<td>0.019 [-0.006, 0.045]</td>
<td>0.007 [-0.010, 0.023]</td>
<td>0.032* [0.001, 0.062]</td>
<td>0.008 [-0.017, 0.034]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal adjustment</td>
<td>0.065* [0.042, 0.087]</td>
<td>0.023* [0.001, 0.045]</td>
<td>0.090* [0.053, 0.128]</td>
<td>0.018 [-0.002, 0.038]</td>
<td>0.041* [0.013, 0.068]</td>
<td>0.007 [-0.010, 0.024]</td>
<td>0.060* [0.028, 0.092]</td>
<td>0.034* [0.007, 0.061]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>0.037* [0.020, 0.054]</td>
<td>0.009 [-0.007, 0.025]</td>
<td>0.067* [0.040, 0.095]</td>
<td>-0.003 [-0.017, 0.012]</td>
<td>0.040* [0.021, 0.059]</td>
<td>0.000 [-0.013, 0.013]</td>
<td>0.037* [0.013, 0.061]</td>
<td>0.029* [0.011, 0.048]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend report</td>
<td>0.039* [0.021, 0.058]</td>
<td>0.019* [0.001, 0.037]</td>
<td>0.034* [0.002, 0.066]</td>
<td>0.028* [0.013, 0.044]</td>
<td>0.001 [-0.022, 0.024]</td>
<td>0.010 [-0.005, 0.025]</td>
<td>0.033* [0.006, 0.059]</td>
<td>0.006 [-0.017, 0.028]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. DV = metaperception profile, meta-accuracy b = impression profile. Model 1: Distinctive meta-accuracy b = distinctive impression profile; positivity b = normative impression profile. Model 2: Meta-insight b = impression profile; transparency b = self-perception profile. Model 3: Distinctive meta-accuracy b = distinctive impression profile; positivity b = normative impression profile; distinctive transparency b = distinctive self-perception profile. Intrapersonal and interpersonal adjustment were the aggregates of self- and friend-reported adjustment. Disaggregated ratings were: Self-report = self-reported adjustment as moderator of slopes and Friend-report = friend-reported adjustment as moderators of slopes. *p < .05.
p < .001; 95% CI [.238, .310]) but tended to overestimate their transparency (b = 0.567, p < .001; 95% CI [.516, .618]). Model 2 revealed that, in contrast to the accuracy hypothesis, adjustment was not associated with meta-insight. Rather, in line with the transparency hypothesis, adjustment was associated with transparency (intrapersonal b = 0.040, p = .003, low b = 0.489, high b = 0.636; interpersonal b = 0.041, p = .004, low b = 0.486, high b = 0.637). Interestingly, Table 2 shows that only self-reported adjustment was associated with transparency while friend-reported interpersonal adjustment was linked to meta-insight. Thus, people who saw themselves as adjusted overestimated the degree to which they were understood by friends while people whose friends saw them as interpersonally adjusted were able to make valid distinctions between how they saw themselves and how friends saw them.

Similar to effects for first impressions, Model 3 revealed significant distinctive meta-insight (b = 0.133, p < .001; 95% CI [.099, .167]), positivity (b = 1.042, p < .001; 95% CI [.983, 1.102]), and distinctive transparency (b = 0.464, p < .001; 95% CI [.414, .513]). Results showed strongest support for the positivity and transparency hypotheses. Specifically, adjustment was not linked to distinctive meta-insight but was positively associated with distinctive transparency (intrapersonal b = 0.030, p = .025; interpersonal b = 0.034, p = .014) and positivity (intrapersonal b = 0.040, p = .008; interpersonal b = 0.060, p < .001). Thus, adjusted individuals believed that they were seen in positive ways and tended to overestimate the degree to which their friends saw what they thought made them distinctive. As shown in Table 2, self-report and friend report were linked to positivity, but only self-reported adjustment was associated with distinctive transparency.

Discussion

Relative to people who were less psychologically adjusted, people who were more adjusted tended to have greater meta-accuracy, or insight into how a new acquaintance and friends perceived their characteristic pattern of traits. This effect was observed for both self-report and friend report of intrapersonal or interpersonal adjustment, suggesting effects of meta-accuracy were not limited to a single perspective, domain of adjustment, or context. However, results provided limited support for the accuracy hypothesis, which predicted that adjusted individuals are aware of how they are seen regardless of whether impressions are undesirable or less self-verifying. While people who were more interpersonally adjusted tended to have greater distinctive meta-accuracy for friends, this effect was not observed for intrapersonal adjustment or among new acquaintances. Furthermore, adjusted individuals were not necessarily able to detect how they were seen differently from how they saw themselves (meta-insight). Instead, results largely supported the positivity and transparency hypotheses. In line with the positivity hypothesis, adjusted individuals tended to assume they made positive impressions on a new acquaintance and friends. Given that adjusted individuals tend to make normative impressions, this expectation might have reflected genuine insight into their positive reputation. In line with the transparency hypothesis, adjusted individuals tended to overestimate the degree to which a new acquaintance and friends saw them as they saw themselves as well as what they thought made them distinctive.

Why were adjusted individuals not especially aware of the distinctive or less self-verifying impressions they made? Adjusted individuals tend to make normative impressions (Edwards, 1957; Human & Biesanz, 2011; Wood & Furr, 2015) and tend to be seen similarly to how they see themselves (Mosterman & Hendriks, 2011), which leaves little distinctive information or differentiation between self and others’ views to detect. Thus, distinctive meta-accuracy and meta-insight likely remove much of the valid information adjusted individuals used to infer their reputation.

The multiple-perspective approach revealed that the adaptiveness of knowing what others think about the self depended on who reported on adjustment. For example, self-reported adjustment was linked to overestimating one’s transparency. However, when adjustment was friend reported, adjusted individuals did not necessarily assume they were transparent to others, and instead, interpersonally adjusted individuals were aware of what made them distinctive in their friends’ eyes (distinctive meta-accuracy) and knew how they were seen differently from how they saw themselves (meta-insight). These discrepancies highlight the importance of obtaining self-perspective and other perspective of adjustment but also raise the question of whose perceptions are more valid. Some work suggests that self-reports of intrapersonal adjustment are more accurate than are peers’ perceptions (Vazire, 2010) whereas peers’ perceptions of interpersonal adjustment are more accurate than are self-reports (Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2013). If so, results suggest that assuming others see the best in us and understand us more than they really do is interpersonally adaptive whereas knowing the potentially negative and less self-verifying impressions one makes is interpersonally adaptive. However, the degree to which one perspective of adjustment is more or less valid is an empirical question. For example, self-reported intrapersonal adjustment can be biased by self-enhancement (Wojcik & Ditto, 2014).

The multiple-context approach revealed that the pattern of findings also differed somewhat across contexts. Specifically, evidence for the accuracy and transparency hypotheses was stronger for friends than for new acquaintances, a pattern that might reflect the fact that, as people become close, they feel transparent and develop a deeper understanding of how others experience them (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993). Hopefully future research will explore these effects in different relationships (e.g., coworkers), situations (e.g., competitive or cooperative), or contexts where people do not necessarily like metaperceivers. People tend to perceive individuals they like in normative ways; thus, contexts where judges do not especially like metaperceivers will provide a better test of the accuracy hypothesis by increasing the distinctiveness of impressions (Leising, Erbs, & Fritz, 2010). Likewise, future work might explore for which traits and in which contexts adjusted individuals have more or
less insight into their reputation (e.g., conscientiousness among coworkers; agreeableness for a romantic partner).

While the current research assessed self-report and other report of adjustment across levels of acquaintanceship, the cross-sectional approach cannot tease apart the directionality of the relationship between psychological adjustment and accuracy, positivity, or transparency. Adjusted individuals tend to feel valued and understood by other people, which might foster their feelings of self-worth and a positive interpersonal style. Yet, adjustment might foster accuracy if people provide more feedback to socially skilled people, or might foster positivity if people are especially kind to adjusted individuals. Future work that takes an experimental or longitudinal approach might shed light on the mechanisms underlying the observed associations.

In conclusion, adjusted individuals have some insight into the impressions they make but not necessarily when impressions are undesirable. Instead, they tend to assume others see the best in them and understand them more than they really do. This pattern largely depends on who reports on adjustment, the self or friends. People who think they are adjusted feel valued and understood, but people whose friends think they are adjusted have a keen sense of the impressions they make, even when the impressions they make are not especially desirable.

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Notes
1. Acquaintanceship was rated on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) scale. Participants were told to rate people they had seen before but not spoken to as lower than 3. Ten people were excluded for ratings higher than 3.
2. There was no association between length of acquaintanceship and meta-accuracy ($b = -0.001, p = .172$), distinctive meta-accuracy ($b = 0.000, p = .777$), meta-insight ($b = -0.001, p = .110$), or transparency ($b = 0.001, p = .410$), but there was a negative association between positivity and length of acquaintanceship ($b = -0.002, p = .040$). Results did not differ when acquaintanceship was entered as a covariate.
3. Participants completed measures unrelated to the current study.

Supplemental Material
The online data supplements are available at http://spps.sagepub.com/supplemental.

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