Personality Evaluated: What Do People Most Like and Dislike About Themselves and Their
Friends?

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Author Note

Author contributions: Simine Vazire acquired funding, designed, and supervised data collection for the Sample 1 data. Jessie Sun designed the data collection for Samples 2 and 3. Jessie Sun and Becky Neufeld collected the data for Samples 2 and 3. Jessie Sun and Simine Vazire conceptualized this project and coded the broad trait domains. Jessie Sun, Becky Neufeld, and Paige Snelgrove curated and analyzed the data. Jessie Sun collected the trait rating data and conducted all supplemental analyses. Jessie Sun and Becky Neufeld drafted the method and results. Jessie Sun drafted the introduction, discussion, and supplemental material. Simine Vazire provided extensive feedback and critical revisions. All authors interpreted the results, edited the manuscript, and approved the final version for submission.

Data collection for Sample 1 was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation to Simine Vazire (BCS-1125553). The study materials and the data and code required to reproduce the analyses reported in this article are available at <https://osf.io/jce7k>.

We are grateful to collaborators and research assistants who contributed to the design and data collection for Sample 1; to Geoff Goodwin for contributing to the design of the data collection for Samples 2 and 3; to the research assistants who coded the specific trait data; to Sophie Faircloth for her assistance with collecting the trait rating data; to Kun Zhao and Luke Smillie for feedback on the coding scheme for Samples 2 and 3; to Joe Simmons for an insightful interpretation of the randomization test results; and to Joshua Wilt, Damien Crone, and Luke Smillie for comments on a draft of this article.

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Postprint, 30 June 2021 (in press, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*)

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Abstract

What do people think their best and worst personality traits are? Do their friends agree? Across three samples, 463 college students (“targets”) and their friends freely described two traits they most liked and two traits they most disliked about the target. Coders categorized these open-ended trait descriptors into high or low poles of six trait domains (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, and honesty-humility) and judged whether targets and friends reported the same specific best and worst traits. Best traits almost exclusively reflected high levels of the major trait domains (especially high agreeableness and extraversion). In contrast, although worst traits typically reflected low levels of these traits (especially low emotional stability), they sometimes also revealed the downsides of having high levels of these traits (e.g., high extraversion: “loud”; high agreeableness: “people-pleaser”). Overall, targets and friends mentioned similar kinds of best traits; however, targets emphasized low emotional stability worst traits more than friends did, whereas friends emphasized low prosociality worst traits more than targets did. Targets and friends also showed a moderate amount of self–other agreement on what the targets’ best and worst traits were. These results (a) shed light on the traits that people consider to be most important in themselves and their friends, (b) suggest that the desirability of some traits may be in the eye of the beholder, (c) reveals the mixed blessings of different traits, and, ultimately, (d) provide a nuanced perspective on what it means for a trait to be “good” or “bad.”

Keywords: trait desirability, personality judgment, self–other agreement, evaluative judgments, person perception

Personality Evaluated: What Do People Most Like and Dislike About Themselves and Their Friends?

Personality psychology has traditionally focused more on *describing* what people are like than on *evaluating* whether their personalities are good or bad. Indeed, lexical studies from which the Big Five were derived systematically excluded highly evaluative person descriptors (e.g., “annoying,” “charming,” “strange,” “moral”) from the domain of personality (Allport & Odbert, 1936; Cattell, 1943; Norman, 1967). However, many personality psychologists believe that personality judgment is a fundamentally evaluative endeavor (Borkenau, 1990; Hogan, 1996; McAdams & Pals, 2006). In recent years, there has also been increased interest in understanding evaluative phenomena such as the structure of highly evaluative descriptors (Benet-Martínez & Waller, 2002), moral character and “dark” traits (Cawley et al., 2000; Fleenor et al., 2014; Furnham et al., 2013; Goodwin, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), traits that characterize a person who is psychologically healthy (Bleidorn et al., 2020) and liked by others (Wortman & Wood, 2011), and how people want to improve their personalities (Baranski et al., 2017; Hudson & Roberts, 2014; Sun & Goodwin, 2020). In other words, people not only have different *levels* of various personality traits but also judge some traits to be more *desirable* than others.

Evaluative self- and other-judgments have clear practical relevance in real-world contexts. For example, “What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?” is one of the most common job interview questions. Here, we examine how people would answer this question when considering what their best and worst traits are in general, and whether the answer would be different if we asked their friends. We believe that there are at least three reasons to investigate self- and other-perceptions of best and worst traits. First, best and worst traits may

shed light on the traits that people consider to be most personally or socially important. Second, mapping best and worst traits onto existing trait taxonomies can provide nuanced insights about the desirability of high or low levels of major trait domains. Third, self–other agreement and asymmetries on best and worst traits can reveal the extent to which the desirability of a trait is in the eye of the beholder. We expand on each of these potential contributions below.

The Importance of Evaluative Traits

Which traits do people most care about in themselves and most want to know about others? A fundamental assumption that underlies the development of modern trait taxonomies such as the Big Five (John et al., 2021) and HEXACO (Ashton & Lee, 2007) is that socially important personality characteristics become encoded in natural language (i.e., the lexical hypothesis; for reviews, see John et al., 1988; Saucier & Goldberg, 2001). Indeed, these trait taxonomies may be better conceptualized as taxonomies of social perception, rather than personality itself (Srivastava, 2010). Thus, the lexical approach can be used to uncover personality characteristics and social perceptions that are worth studying and explaining (Saucier & Goldberg, 2001). Considering that people judge highly desirable or undesirable traits to be especially important (Leising et al., 2014), asking people about the most desirable and undesirable traits that characterize them or their friends may provide an especially promising path to highlighting the personality characteristics that people most care about.

Three types of studies have addressed related questions about the desirability of different traits. In the first type of study, people have rated the likability or desirability of hundreds of trait descriptors (e.g., Anderson, 1968; Chandler, 2018; Hampson et al., 1987; Leising et al., 2014; Wood, 2015). However, many extremely desirable and undesirable traits may be rare. Extremely undesirable traits (e.g., “malicious,” “inhumane,” “phony”) may be especially uncommon, given

that desirable traits are more frequently used to describe others (Leising et al., 2014). Thus, the traits that are rated as being most desirable or undesirable in the abstract may not be the traits that people most like and dislike about actual people. However, the finding that the desirability of a trait is almost perfectly correlated (.98) with its relational impact (operationalized as the extent to which perceiving a person as having a given trait would increase or decrease their likelihood of entering into various relationships with them; Wood, 2015) suggests that socially important traits may be especially strongly represented among best and worst traits.

In the second type of study, people described either the traits of people they like or dislike or the positive or negative traits of people they know (Alves et al., 2016, 2017a; Leising et al., 2012). Existing studies focused on the *quantitative* properties of these descriptors, showing, for example, that people have a more differentiated vocabulary for describing disliked persons compared to liked persons (Leising et al., 2012), they tend to use more of the same descriptors to describe liked persons compared to disliked persons (Alves et al., 2016), and positive descriptors are more likely than negative descriptors to be shared across people (Alves et al., 2017a). These studies, however, did not describe the *content* (e.g., trait domain) of liked and disliked traits.

The third type of study examines the traits that are associated with positive impressions of others. For example, Wortman and Wood (2011) examined the personality traits that were correlated with being liked by peers. They found that people who were higher on communal traits that promote others' interests (e.g., "warm," "cooperative," "truthful/honest," "kind-hearted/caring") tended to be liked more by others. Goodwin and colleagues (2014) further demonstrated that warmth traits can be separated into warmth and morality dimensions and that moral character information (e.g., "humble," "kind," "helpful," "empathetic," "responsible,"

“honest,” “trustworthy,” “loyal”) most strongly determines the overall positivity of the impressions that people form of others (compared to warmth and competence information). Although the question of which traits are associated with being liked by others is distinct from the question of which traits are liked or disliked by others, these studies imply that other-perceptions of best and worst traits might emphasize traits related to warmth and morality.

Revisiting the Desirability of Trait Domains

Mapping peoples’ best and worst traits onto existing trait taxonomies such as the Big Five (John et al., 2021) and HEXACO (Ashton & Lee, 2007) models serves two purposes. First, trait taxonomies can be used to parsimoniously summarize the hundreds of different best and worst traits that people might report. Doing so allows inferences to be drawn about which types of traits—broadly speaking—are more or less frequently considered to be a person’s best and worst traits. Second, learning where in these taxonomies the most loaded (i.e., liked and disliked) personality traits can be found can provide nuanced insights into the desirability of having high or low levels of different trait domains.

Considering that the Big Five and HEXACO taxonomies were derived from a set of person descriptors that excluded highly evaluative descriptors (Allport & Odbert, 1936; Ashton et al., 2004; Cattell, 1943; Norman, 1967), one might wonder whether they can adequately capture self- and other-judgments of best and worst traits. We believe that they can. Very few trait descriptors are evaluatively neutral; instead, most descriptors are rated as being positive or negative to some extent (Anderson, 1962; Chandler, 2018; Leising, 2012). Thus, even though the development of modern trait taxonomies excluded highly evaluative terms, this does not imply that the resulting domains are evaluatively neutral. Instead, each of the Big Five and HEXACO domains has a socially desirable or “positive” pole, such that people judge high levels of

extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, and honesty-humility to be more desirable than low levels of these traits (Dunlop et al., 2012; John & Robins, 1993; Kim et al., 2019).

People also tend to prefer to use descriptors that are abstract enough to be descriptive of several behaviors (e.g., “kind”) compared to descriptors that only describe specific behaviors (e.g., “charitable”) or that are so abstract that they are devoid of descriptive meaning (e.g., “good”, John et al., 1991). This implies that when describing a person’s best and worst traits, people would be naturally inclined to use descriptors that are concrete enough to be mapped onto a broad trait domain. Finally, when highly evaluative descriptors were included in factor analyses, Tellegen and Waller (1987, as cited in Benet-Martinez & Waller, 2002) found that evaluative terms denoting extreme openness (e.g., “peculiar,” “odd,” “unusual”) emerged as indicators of low conventionality (i.e., high openness). This implies that even though highly evaluative descriptors were traditionally excluded because they were considered to be too ambiguous and empty of descriptive content to be behaviorally informative, many evaluative descriptors in fact contain enough descriptive content that they can be mapped onto major trait domains.

Because each trait domain has a socially desirable pole, we might expect that best traits are more likely to reflect their socially desirable poles, whereas worst traits are more likely to reflect their socially undesirable poles. At the same time, a growing body of research considers the evolutionary (Nettle, 2006), cybernetic (DeYoung, 2015), and practical costs (e.g., for job performance, income, happiness; Grant, 2013; Judge et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2018; Wiese et al., 2018) of having “too much” of the desirable end of various traits. The Aristotelian perspective that virtue is the golden mean implies that both deficient and excessive expressions of traits

(relative to what is best for a given situation) can be suboptimal (Grant & Schwartz, 2011; Ng & Tay, 2020). Similarly, people perceive both extremely high and extremely low levels of personality traits as being suboptimal (Bleidorn et al., 2020; Borkenau et al., 2009; Kuncel & Tellegen, 2009). Indeed, one view of personality dysfunction posits that maladaptive traits reflect the extreme tails of general personality dimensions (e.g., Suzuki et al., 2015; Widiger & Mullins-Sweatt, 2009; cf. Morey et al., 2020). This might explain why a minority of people express desires to be less extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable, open, and honest (Hudson & Roberts, 2014; Sun & Goodwin, 2020). Finally, Peabody's (1967) "sets of four" approach to separating the descriptive and evaluative aspects of personality judgments suggests that the same "facts" about a person may be interpreted in either a positive or negative light (for a formalized model, see Leising et al., 2015). For example, a person could be described as either "modest" or "self-disparaging" (high honesty-humility), or as either "confident" or "conceited" (low honesty-humility). For these reasons, traits that reflect the socially desirable poles of broad trait domains may sometimes be considered to be a person's worst traits.

Which of these broad trait domains are likely to be the most "loaded"? One possibility is that the domains that have previously been found to be particularly evaluative (i.e., especially socially desirable or undesirable) would also be the domains that best and worst traits most frequently reflect. However, different methods of operationalizing evaluativeness have produced dramatically different results. For example, John and Robins (1993) operationalized evaluativeness as the distance between the mean desirability levels of the high pole and low pole of each domain based on undergraduates' ratings of 76 traits. They found that openness was most evaluatively polarized, followed by agreeableness and conscientiousness, then emotional stability. Extraversion was the least evaluative domain. Kim and colleagues (2019)

operationalized evaluativeness as the difference between the midpoint of the scale and the mean desirability rating by experts (who rated 25 facet labels, e.g., “Curiosity,” “Anxiety,” “Sociability”). They found that conscientiousness was the most evaluative domain, followed by agreeableness, emotional stability, and extraversion. Openness was the least evaluative domain (i.e., the complete opposite to what John and Robins found).

These mixed findings show that the “evaluativeness” of a domain depends on which items are used to assess that domain. Because both studies relied on a limited set of items or facets, the evaluativeness of the domains based on these specific operationalizations may not generalize to the true evaluativeness of the domains based on the larger universe of person descriptors (including highly evaluative descriptors). This problem is exacerbated to the extent that the evaluativeness of excluded descriptors differs between trait domains. Moreover, as mentioned above, the traits that are rated to be most desirable or undesirable in the abstract may not be the same traits that people consider to be their own and others’ actual best and worst traits. Mapping best and worst traits onto the high and low poles of major trait domains can provide insight into which of these domains most frequently feature evaluative judgments *in practice*.

Self–Other Perspectives on Best and Worst Traits

Finally, abstract ratings of the extent to which a trait is desirable do not answer the question of *for whom* a trait is desirable. Research on the links between personality and consequential life outcomes has typically focused on the *personal* benefits of having certain personality traits (e.g., extraverts tend to be happier, Anglim et al., 2020; conscientious people tend to live longer; Jokela et al., 2020). Less research has examined how a person’s personality traits affect *other people* (for a review, see Back & Vazire, 2015). In some cases, the social consequences of personality traits may mirror their personal consequences. For example, the

spouses of conscientious people tend to live longer (Roberts et al., 2009) and enjoy greater occupational success (Solomon & Jackson, 2014), over and above the effects of their own levels of conscientiousness. However, it is also possible that some traits have positive consequences for the self but negative consequences for others, or vice versa. For example, interpersonal theory's principle of complementarity posits that dominant behaviors elicit submissive responses in one's interaction partners (Leary, 1957; Orford, 1986). This implies that people who have higher levels of agentic traits such as extraversion may be better at asserting their needs and preferences, but perhaps at the expense of accommodating others' needs and preferences.

Comparing self- and friend-perspectives on best and worst traits can shed light on this issue. We do so by examining 1) whether friends tend to emphasize similar or different best and worst traits compared to the self (i.e., self–other asymmetries) and 2) the extent to which friends agree with targets on what their best and worst traits are (i.e., self–other agreement). To the extent that friends name similar best and worst traits as the self (e.g., if friends and the self both focus equally on high agreeableness best traits), this would imply that these traits have similarly positive or negative consequences for the self and for others. In contrast, to the extent that friends emphasize some best or worst traits more than the self does, or vice versa, this would imply that the personal and social consequences of these traits may diverge, such that a) the trait affects the self more than it does friends (or vice versa), or b) the trait is good for the self but bad for friends (or vice versa). Thus, examining the extent to which friends typically report similar kinds of best and worst traits as the self can shed light on the extent to which traits' desirability is in the eye of the beholder.

We can also examine whether there is self–other agreement on a specific person's best and worst traits. In other words, to what extent do individual targets and friends agree on what

the targets' best and traits are? Most research on self–other agreement has focused on statistical correlations between self- and informant-reports on scale-based measures (for a review, see Connelly & Ones, 2010). The lay concept of agreement is much more straightforward—most people might simply want to know whether the self and their friends use similar terms when describing that person's personality. For example, if Natalie says that her best trait is that she is “kind,” does her friend also say that her best trait is “kind” (or use a similar descriptor, such as “caring”)? In other words, are the qualities that we most value and despise in ourselves the same qualities that our friends value and despise in us? If some traits are good for the self but bad for others, we may even see some cases in which a friend thinks that one of the target's self-reported best traits is actually their worst trait (or vice versa).

The Present Study

Our primary goal is to provide a rich description and systematic categorization of the traits that people most like and dislike about themselves and their friends. Typically, when people describe themselves and others in real life, they use whichever person descriptors spontaneously come to mind instead of filling out personality questionnaires or selecting descriptors from a constrained set of options. Thus, to maximize ecological validity, we used a free-response design to ask target participants (“targets”) to state, in their own words, their own best (or most liked) and worst (or most disliked) traits. We also asked their friends to tell us which traits they most liked and disliked in the target. These friend-reports allowed us to investigate self–other asymmetries (do friends emphasize different best and worst traits compared to the self?) and self–other agreement (to what extent do friends agree with their targets on what their best and worst traits are?). We examine self–other agreement at the level of (a) broad traits (e.g., whether a target and their friend both name a high agreeableness best trait)

and (b) specific traits (e.g., whether a target and their friend name very similar best traits, such as “kind” and “caring”). Grounded in a tradition that values comprehensive descriptions of naturally-occurring phenomena (Asch, 1952/1987; Rozin, 2001), we took an exploratory approach, rather than seeking to test specific hypotheses.

Method

Ethics and Open Practices Statement

We used data from three of our existing datasets. Data collection and coding procedures for Sample 1 were approved by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at Washington University in St. Louis (IRB ID: 201206090; Study Title: Personality and Intimate Relationships Study) and the University of California, Davis (IRB ID: 669518–15; Study Title: Personality and Interpersonal Roles Study). Data collection procedures for Samples 2 and 3 were approved by the IRBs at the University of Pennsylvania (Sample 2; IRB ID: 831767; Study Title: Moral Change Goals) and the University of California, Davis (Sample 3; IRB ID: 1328211-2). Data collection procedures for trait ratings (which we use for supplemental analyses; see Supplemental Material, Sections 6–7) were approved by the IRB at University of Pennsylvania (IRB ID: 844999; Study Title: Best and Worst Trait Ratings).

For Sample 1, we used data from the first wave of the longitudinal Personality and Interpersonal Roles Study (PAIRS). Other published articles have used the PAIRS dataset (for a full list of citations, see <https://osf.io/3uag4/wiki/home/>). A few articles used the self- and informant-reports of personality traits that we use in supplemental analyses, but none have used the best and worst trait measures included in this study. For Samples 2 and 3, we used data from a study on personality change goals. The previously published article using these samples (Sun & Goodwin, 2020) used the self- and informant-reports of personality traits that we use in

supplemental analyses, but did not use the best and worst trait measures. Codebooks for all measures in these datasets are available at <https://osf.io/jce7k/>. Below, we describe the measures and procedures relevant to the current article.

The codebook, data (posted in a way that prevents targets from finding out what their friends said about them), and R scripts required to reproduce the analyses reported in this paper are available at <https://osf.io/jce7k/>. We did not preregister these analyses as we were already familiar with the datasets when we conceptualized this project. Instead, to limit the risk of overinterpreting potentially spurious effects, we highlight the findings that replicate across at least two samples (at a conventional $p < .05$ threshold) and are therefore more likely to be robust. The effects reported in the results section that met this replication threshold also met an alternative standard of evidence for claims of new discoveries—whether the effects are significant at a $p < .005$ threshold (Benjamin et al., 2018)—in at least one sample. Note that we coded and analyzed a few additional variables in the Sample 1 data for an undergraduate research project (see Supplemental Material, Section 1). We later refined the scope of the current paper to the variables that are presented in this paper and coded only these variables in the Sample 2 and 3 data. Apart from the additional variables coded in Sample 1, we report all coded variables.

Participants and Procedure

We restricted our investigation to college students in the U.S., based on convenience and resources available to us. However, we obtained data from students at three different universities across different regions of the U.S. (West, Midwest, and Northeast) and across public and private universities, thus providing some data regarding the generalizability of our results at least to the broader population of U.S. college students. Sample sizes were determined based on time and

budgetary constraints, as well as whether targets and friends provided complete data on the best and worst trait questions. The resulting sample sizes range from 121 to 184 target–friend pairs per sample. Given that participants each reported two best and two worst traits, these sample sizes ensure a minimum of 242 responses per trait type (e.g., self-reported best traits).

Sample 1

Sample 1 comprised 434 students at Washington University in St. Louis, who were recruited in 2012 and 2013 via flyers and classroom announcements. Targets completed a battery of questionnaires during an initial laboratory-based assessment (\$20 compensation), in which they reported their best and worst traits (using the measures described below). Targets also nominated several types of informants, who reported on the targets' best and worst traits. We chose to only use (and only coded) informant data from the target's best friend in St. Louis, to keep the type and number of informants consistent across targets. Because these measures were added a few months after the study began, a subset of targets ($n = 28$ after exclusions) and their informants did not complete these measures at the first wave. Instead, these targets and their informants completed these "catch-up measures" at the second wave (four months after the first wave). Thus, we used data from the second wave for 28 participants, and data from the first wave for the remaining participants.

We ended data collection when we reached the end of a semester and had recruited at least 400 participants. We excluded targets who did not have a best friend informant, and only retained targets who had two best and two worst traits for both the self- and friend-reports (i.e., no missing data). After these exclusions, the final subset of 184 targets (132 women, 50 men, 2 not reported) used in the Sample 1 analyses ranged in age from 18 to 29 years ($M = 19.46$, $SD = 1.99$) and identified as White ($n = 107$), Asian ($n = 40$), Black ($n = 13$), American Indian or

Alaska Native ($n = 2$), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander ($n = 1$), or other or multiple ($n = 21$). The final subset of 184 friends (135 women, 48 men, 1 not reported) used in the Sample 1 analyses ranged in age from 18 to 43 years ($M = 19.83$, $SD = 2.73$) and reported having known their targets for an average of 3.27 years ($SD = 3.22$).

Samples 2 and 3

Because the data collection procedures for Samples 2 and 3 were almost identical to each other, we report the methods for these two samples together. Targets for Samples 2 and 3 comprised undergraduate students from the University of Pennsylvania ($N = 300$) and the University of California, Davis ($N = 500$) who were compensated with course credit. Stopping rules were determined based on preregistered criteria (for details, see Sun & Goodwin, 2020). Targets completed a survey in which they reported their best and worst traits and nominated up to four informants. Of the 1,023 (Sample 2) and 1,464 (Sample 3) nominated informants, 417 (Sample 2) and 541 (Sample 3) informants responded to a survey in which they reported the targets' best and worst traits. Informants were entered into a prize drawing for a 1 in 10 chance of winning a \$20 Amazon.com gift card. To maximize comparability with Sample 1, we selected the first friend informant (i.e., excluded any other informant types, such as romantic partners or family members) who had complete data on the best and worst trait questions. As for Sample 1, we only retained targets who had complete data on the best and worst trait questions for both the self- and friend-reports.

After these exclusions, the final subset of 121 targets (92 women, 28 men, 1 not reported) used in the Sample 2 analyses ranged in age from 18 to 22 years ($M = 19.41$, $SD = 1.12$) and identified as White/Caucasian ($n = 47$), Asian ($n = 44$), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 13$), Black ($n = 7$), Pacific Islander ($n = 1$), other or multiple ($n = 8$), or did not disclose their ethnicity ($n = 1$). The

final subset of 121 friends (93 women, 27 men, 1 other) used in the Sample 2 analyses ranged in age from 18 to 27 years ($M = 19.4$, $SD = 1.38$) and reported having known their targets for an average of 4.24 years ($SD = 4.02$).

The final subset of 159 targets (135 women, 24 men) used in the Sample 3 analyses ranged in age from 18 to 47 years ($M = 19.69$, $SD = 2.78$) and identified as White/Caucasian ($n = 29$), Asian ($n = 81$), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 28$), Black ($n = 1$), Pacific Islander ($n = 1$), or other or multiple ($n = 19$). The final subset of 159 friends (121 women, 37 men, 1 not reported) used in the Sample 3 analyses ranged in age from 18 to 63 years ($M = 20.02$, $SD = 4.15$) and reported having known their targets for an average of 4.85 years ($SD = 4.57$).

Measures

Open-Ended Responses

Targets described their two best traits and their two worst traits (Sample 1: “My two [best/worst] qualities/traits are...”; Samples 2–3: “What do you [like/dislike] most about your personality?”). Targets’ friends described the target’s two best traits and two worst traits (Sample 1: “[target’s name]’s two [best/worst] qualities/traits are...”; Samples 2–3: “What do you [like/dislike] most about [target’s name’s] personality?”). We converted the open-ended responses into lowercase, corrected spelling errors, and removed identifying information, but otherwise retained the full context of the text responses for the two coding tasks described below.

Broad Trait Categories

Two experts (JS and SV) coded the responses into broad trait categories.

Big Five Domains. For Sample 1, we coded the trait descriptors into one of twelve mutually-exclusive categories: high or low levels of each of the Big Five domains (extraversion,

agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness), not a Big Five trait, or not a personality trait.

Big Six Domains. The HEXACO model is a six-factor alternative to the Big Five model (Ashton & Lee, 2007). The sixth factor, honesty-humility, describes tendencies towards interpersonal sincerity (i.e., being unwilling to manipulate others), fairness, greed avoidance, and modesty. This factor has sometimes been labeled “morality” or “integrity” and has been interpreted as reflecting individual differences in selfishness (Diebels et al., 2018). To draw a more fine-grained distinction between two aspects of prosociality—kindness and politeness-related traits (agreeableness) vs. integrity-related traits such as honesty, fairness, loyalty, sincerity, selfishness, and morality (honesty-humility)—we decided to additionally code high or low levels of HEXACO honesty-humility in Samples 2 and 3 (for which responses were pooled and coded together).

In other words, we coded the trait descriptors into one of fourteen mutually-exclusive categories: high or low levels of each of the “Big Six” domains (Big Five plus honesty-humility), not a Big Six trait, or not a personality trait. As a result, some descriptors that were coded into the agreeableness domain (or not a Big Five trait) in Sample 1 were coded into the honesty-humility domain in Samples 2 and 3. Apart from this modification, to maximize comparability of the Big Five results with Sample 1, we generally retained the Big Five definitions of the agreeableness and emotional stability dimensions (rather than adopting the HEXACO rotational variants of these traits; see Ashton et al., 2014). Thus, the Big Six categories we coded should be thought of as the Big Five domains plus honesty-humility rather than codings based on the HEXACO model (see Supplemental Material, Section 2 for the definitions we used for the Big Six codings).

Coding Procedure. The expert coders coded all of the best traits first, and then all of the worst traits (pooled across self- and friend-reports). Duplicate responses within each set of traits (best traits or worst traits) were only coded once; the coded categories were then applied to all other instances of that response. If more than one descriptor was mentioned in a given response, we coded for the trait category that seemed most salient, central, or able to capture the multiple descriptors. If multiple descriptors seemed to be weighted equally, we coded the trait category that was mentioned first. If a response seemed to reflect blends of different trait domains, we coded that response into the best-fitting Big Five or Six category. We aimed to use the *not a Big Five/Six trait* category only in cases where the descriptor could not plausibly fit into any of the Big Five or Six categories. As a result, only a small percentage of responses could not be coded into a broad trait category: 1.36% (Sample 1), 1.03% (Sample 2), and 0.79% (Sample 3) of responses were coded as *not a Big Five/Six trait* (e.g., “annoying,” “religious,” “family-oriented”) and 0.68% (Sample 1), 1.03% (Sample 2), and 0.79% (Sample 3) were coded as *not a personality trait* (e.g., “always hungry,” “athletic,” “cute”).

Inter-rater agreement (Cohen’s κ) was substantial for Sample 1 ($\kappa = .70$) and the combined Samples 2 and 3 ($\kappa = .74$). Coders resolved disagreements through discussion and, for Samples 2 and 3, by defaulting to the decisions we made for Sample 1 (except for traits categorized into the honesty-humility dimension). When discussion did not lead to a resolution, we crowdsourced judgments via Twitter polls (Vazire, April 20, 2020). Tables S3–S5 show the most frequent descriptors that were coded into each of the trait categories. People tended to report descriptors that were from two different trait categories (approximately 70% of the time; e.g., reporting two best traits that reflected high extraversion and high agreeableness,

respectively), rather than the same trait category (e.g., reporting two best traits that both reflected high agreeableness; see Table S6).

Agreement on Specific Traits

We used the broad trait codings to examine self–other agreement on broad traits. However, we were also interested in whether friends agreed with targets on what their best and worst traits specifically were. Research assistants provided these judgments in a separate coding task.

Checking for Distinct Traits. For this coding task, we required that targets and friends each reported two distinct best traits and two distinct worst traits, otherwise we excluded them completely. For example, if a friend reported that the target’s two worst traits were “stressed” and “stressed out,” their responses were not included in this coding task. This was to ensure that self–other agreement would not be inflated due to the target or the friend reporting the same trait twice. Thus, before the agreement coding task, the authors (Sample 1: BN and PS; Samples 2–3: JS and BN) checked whether each pair of best or worst traits for the self-reports and friend-reports were synonyms or near-synonyms. BN and PS agreed in 97.92% of the cases for Sample 1 (JS resolved disagreements), and JS and BN agreed in 96.07% and 97.33% of the cases for Samples 2 and 3, respectively (SV resolved disagreements). After these exclusions, these analyses involved 182 (Sample 1), 109 (Sample 2), and 146 (Sample 3) targets and their friends.

Agreement Coding Task. To code agreement, six research assistants completed coding “trials” to indicate whether targets and friends mentioned the same or very similar best traits or worst traits. In the “best trait” coding trials, coders were presented with one of the two descriptors that a target reported as their best traits, along with both of the descriptors that their friend used to describe their best traits. In the “worst trait” coding trials, coders were presented

with one of the two descriptors that a target reported as their worst traits, along with both of the descriptors that their friend used to describe their worst traits. In each trial, the research assistants coded whether or not the self-reported descriptor was the exact same descriptor or a near-synonym of either of the two friend-reported descriptors. For example, for the trial, “Is “KIND” equal to either “CARING” or “CHEERFUL”?” (No or Yes), the correct answer would be Yes, because “kind” (self-reported) is a synonym of “caring” (friend-reported). These trials were repeated until coders made a judgment for each of the targets’ self-reported descriptors. Best trait and worst trait trials were interspersed and presented in a randomized order. Although the trials were not explicitly labeled as being about best or worst traits, this would have been obvious based on the content of the descriptors listed in each trial.

Before starting this task, the research assistants attended a training session in which they saw examples of descriptor sets and were given guidance on which ones would be considered matches. The task was split up into six blocks for Sample 1 and two blocks each for Samples 2 and 3. For Sample 1, all research assistants started with a training block. Then, we staggered which of the remaining blocks each research assistant continued with. For Samples 2 and 3, research assistants completed a training survey that contained descriptors from Sample 1. Then, we staggered which of the four blocks they started on.

For each trial, if at least half of the coders said the descriptors matched, we coded it as matching; otherwise, we coded it as not matching. We chose to use this dichotomized metric (instead of the continuous percentage of coders who said that the descriptors matched) for ease of interpretation and comparability with self–other agreement at the level of broad trait categories. However, supplemental analyses (see Supplemental Material, Table S7) showed that the results were similar regardless of whether the continuous or dichotomous metric was used.

Due to a merging error, the descriptors included in the initial coding trials for Sample 1 were incorrect for 22 participants. Because this error was discovered after these research assistants had left the lab, the four authors repeated the coding trials for these participants and also coded 14 additional participants who had previously been excluded from this coding task due to exclusion criteria for the undergraduate research project (see Supplemental Material, Section 1 for details). Inter-rater agreement (Fleiss' κ) was substantial for Sample 1 ($\kappa = .66$ for the research assistant codings, excluding the incorrect data; $\kappa = .75$ for the author codings) and moderate for Samples 2 ($\kappa = .52$) and 3 ($\kappa = .51$).

Data Analyses

All analyses were conducted using the R statistical computing environment (version 3.5.2; R Core Team, 2018). We conducted some additional text cleaning for our analyses and visualizations. Specifically, we (a) removed qualifiers (e.g., “sometimes,” “a bit,” “too”), (b) changed different forms of the same descriptor into the adjective form (e.g., “sarcasm” was changed into “sarcastic”) or a noun or short phrase if an adjective was not possible (e.g., “good listener,” “easily influenced”), (c) kept only the first descriptor if two descriptors were mentioned (e.g., “can be inconsiderate/self-centered” was summarized as “inconsiderate”), and (d) summarized long-winded responses as an adjective, noun, or short phrase (e.g., “easily gets down on self after failure” was summarized as “easily discouraged”). These cleaned responses were used to quantify and visualize the frequency of best and worst trait descriptors. None of these procedures altered what coders saw in the tasks described above (i.e., coders always saw participants' spellchecked, lowercase, and deidentified but otherwise original responses).

Results

Size of Vocabulary and Most Frequent Trait Descriptors

As shown in Table 1, people had a larger vocabulary for worst traits, compared to best traits. Pooling across the three samples and self- and friend-reports, the number of unique worst trait descriptors ($n = 442$) was 1.69 times greater than the number of best trait descriptors ($n = 261$). This is consistent with past work which has shown that there are a greater number of negative than positive person descriptors (Chandler, 2018) and supports the principle that “good is more alike than bad” (Alves et al., 2017b). Interestingly, friends (compared to targets) also used 1.33 times as many unique descriptors to describe the targets’ worst traits ($n = 342$ vs. $n = 258$, pooling across the three samples). Consistent with Zipf’s law (Zipf, 1936; for a review, see Piantadosi, 2014), a small number of descriptors were used extremely often (relative to other descriptors), whereas most descriptors were rarely used (see Figure S1).

Table 1
Number of Unique Best and Worst Trait Descriptors

	Sample size	Best Traits	Worst Traits	Maximum Possible
Sample 1	368	160	239	736
Self	184	121	142	368
Friend	184	103	171	368
Sample 2	242	135	224	484
Self	121	85	115	242
Friend	121	100	158	242
Sample 3	318	150	251	636
Self	159	98	125	318
Friend	159	111	183	318

Note. Values in **boldface** represent the total number of unique best or worst trait descriptors across self- and friend-reports. Sample size = number of participants. Maximum possible = maximum possible number of best or worst trait descriptors if all participants had each reported two unique descriptors for the respective trait type.

Figure 1 provides an at-a-glance impression of the most common best and worst trait descriptors that targets and their friends reported, pooled across all three samples. Table S2 provides a more detailed breakdown for each sample, as well as an initial exploration of self–

other differences in the trait descriptors that were reported. These show that there were several consistencies across self- and friend-reports (see Figure 1 and Table S2) and across the samples (see Table S2) in the most frequent best trait descriptors. For example, targets and friends both frequently mentioned “caring,” “kind,” “friendly,” “funny,” “hardworking,” “loyal,” “outgoing,” and “honest” as best traits. There were fewer self–other consistencies on worst trait descriptors, but targets and friends both frequently mentioned “lazy,” “stubborn,” and “insecure.”

Figure 1 and Table S2 also highlights the largest differences in the frequencies with which a descriptor was considered to be a best or worst trait by the self or by a friend. Several of these self–other differences replicated across at least two samples. For example, targets (compared to friends) more frequently mentioned “empathetic,” “honest,” “compassionate,” “optimistic,” and “friendly,” whereas friends (compared to targets) more frequently mentioned “supportive,” “funny,” “trustworthy,” “loyal,” and “kind” as best traits. For worst traits, targets (compared to friends) more frequently mentioned “shy,” “sensitive,” “lazy,” “anxious,” “indecisive,” “insecure,” and “emotional,” whereas friends (compared to targets) more frequently mentioned “loud,” “inconsiderate,” “stubborn,” and “competitive.”

Figure 1. Scatterplots of the top 50 most frequent best (Panel A) and worst trait descriptors (Panel B) reported by the self and by friends, pooled across all three samples. x and y axes represent the number of times each descriptor was mentioned by the self or by friends, respectively. Larger and darker words correspond to more frequently-mentioned descriptors. Descriptors below the diagonal were more frequently mentioned by the self than by friends; descriptors above the diagonal were more frequently mentioned by friends than by the self. Please zoom in to read less frequently mentioned descriptors.

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Which Broad Trait Categories Do Best and Worst Traits Reflect?

Our first goal was to examine how frequently people mentioned best and worst traits that reflected the high or low poles of each of the Big Five or Six personality trait domains. As shown in Figure 2, best traits most frequently reflected high agreeableness and extraversion, whereas worst traits most frequently reflected low emotional stability—especially for targets’ self-reports.

Notably, whereas best traits almost exclusively reflected the socially desirable poles of the Big Five or Six, worst traits typically reflected their socially undesirable poles but also occasionally reflected the socially desirable poles of these traits. As shown in Tables S3 to S5, these describe the potential downsides of having high levels of extraversion (e.g., “loud,” “overpowering,” “attention-seeker”; Samples 1–3: 3.8/5.37/3.46%), conscientiousness (e.g., “busy,” “perfectionist,” “over-committed”; Samples 1–3: 1.63/6.4/4.09%), agreeableness (e.g., “conflict-avoidant,” “pushover,” “people-pleasing”; Samples 1–3: 1.22/4.75/5.19%), openness (e.g., “overanalytical,” “eccentric,” “escapist”; Samples 1–3: 0.82/1.24/0.63%), emotional stability (e.g., “unemotional,” “nonchalant,” “robotic”; Samples 1–3: 0.14/0.62/0.63%), and honesty-humility (e.g., “self-righteous,” “honest,” “truthful”; Samples 2–3: 0.41/0.63%).

Self–Other Asymmetries in Best and Worst Traits’ Broad Trait Categories

Next, we explored whether targets and their friends differed in their relative emphasis on each of the broad trait categories. We used the McNemar test (with continuity correction)—which accounts for the dependency between the self- and friend-reports—to compare the difference in proportions between self- and friend-reports for each Big Five or Six trait category. As shown in Figure 2, there were relatively few self–other asymmetries in which broad traits were mentioned as best traits, and none of these asymmetries replicated across samples.

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Figure 2. The percentage of self- or friend-reported best or worst traits that reflected the high (+) or low (–) poles of each of the Big Five (Sample 1, Panel S1) or Big Six traits (Sample 2–3, Panels S2–S3). Sample sizes were 183 for Sample 1, 121 for Sample 2, and 159 for Sample 3. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ for the differences between self- and friend-reports. Asterisks are on the side with a larger percentage. The percentages were computed separately for self- and friend-reports, and the denominator included all responses for each perspective (including those that could not be coded as being a Big Five or Six trait). Error bars depict 95% confidence intervals.

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There were a greater number of self–other asymmetries in which broad traits were mentioned as worst traits. The most replicable effect was that targets were significantly more likely than friends to mention low emotional stability worst traits across all samples. There was also some replicable evidence that friends were significantly more likely than targets to mention low honesty-humility (Samples 2 and 3) and high extraversion worst traits (Samples 1 and 3). In other words, friends seemed to be more focused on traits that are observable in the context of social interactions and that are more likely to have consequences for them.

Self–Other Agreement on Best and Worst Traits

In the section above, we examined whether, on average, the content of best and worst traits (i.e., which Big Five or Six domain best and worst traits reflected) tended to be similar across self- and friend-reports of best and worst traits (i.e., self–other asymmetries). Here, we turn our attention to pairs of targets and friends and examine how often targets and their friends agreed on each target’s best and worst traits. We examine agreement on the broad trait (i.e., Big Five or Six) categories the traits reflected, as well as the specific traits that were described by targets and friends. We also examine agreement separately for best traits and worst traits. Thus, each participant had four self–other agreement scores. Each of these scores had possible values of 0 (targets and friends agreed on neither of the two traits), 0.5 (targets and friends agreed on one of the two traits), and 1 (targets and friends agreed on both of the two traits). We report these results in a percentage metric for ease of interpretation.

As shown in Figure 3, targets and their friends agreed on the Big Five or Six category of targets’ best traits about 40% of the time and worst traits about 30% of the time. This could be considered high or low depending on one’s expectations; 50% agreement on best (worst) traits would imply that on average, friends listed one best (worst) trait that was in the same broad trait

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category as one of the two best (worst) traits that the target listed. Unsurprisingly, self–other agreement was descriptively lower for specific traits. Here, targets and their friend described the same (or a very similar) trait for 20% of best traits and 10% of worst traits. We think that 20% self–other agreement on specific best traits is quite impressive considering that targets and their friends were each given two blank boxes.

Figure 3. Self–other agreement for best and worst traits, separately for broad trait categories and specific traits. Error bars depict 95% confidence intervals. Horizontal lines indicate the extent of agreement by chance estimated using randomization tests (only conducted for the broad trait categories). *** $p < .001$ for the difference in self–other agreement between best and worst traits.

To provide a statistical test of these patterns, we ran a linear mixed effect model predicting self–other agreement from the breadth (broad vs. specific) and valence (best vs. worst) of the trait, with random intercepts for the target. Across all three samples, self–other agreement was significantly and substantially higher for broad traits compared to specific traits (Sample 1: $b = 26.18\%$, 95% CI [22.03%, 30.32%]; Sample 2: $b = 17.93\%$, 95% CI [12.93%, 22.92%]; Sample 3: $b = 19.03\%$, 95% CI [14.6%, 23.45%]; all $ps < .001$). Self–other agreement was also significantly higher for best traits compared to worst traits, and these differences were small-to-

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medium in magnitude (Sample 1: $b = 10.66\%$, 95% CI [6.52%, 14.79%]; Sample 2: $b = 17.17\%$, 95% CI [12.22%, 22.13%]; Sample 3: $b = 7.87\%$, 95% CI [3.47%, 12.27%]; all $ps < .001$).

Next, we conducted paired-samples t -tests to examine differences in self–other agreement between best and worst traits, separately for broad traits or specific traits. As shown in Figure 3, for broad traits, self–other agreement was significantly higher for best traits than worst traits in Samples 1 and 2 (Sample 1: $M_{\text{dif}} = 12.77\%$, 95% CI [6.17%, 19.38%]; Sample 2: $M_{\text{dif}} = 16.12\%$, 95% CI [7.96%, 24.27%]; both $ps < .001$), but the difference was smaller and not statistically significant in Sample 3 ($M_{\text{dif}} = 5.35\%$, 95% CI [–2.11%, 12.8%], $p = .159$). For specific traits, self–other agreement was significantly higher for best traits than worst traits across all three samples (Sample 1: $M_{\text{dif}} = 8.52\%$, 95% CI [2.57%, 14.46%]; Sample 2: $M_{\text{dif}} = 18.35\%$, 95% CI [11.55%, 25.14%]; Sample 3: $M_{\text{dif}} = 10.62\%$, 95% CI [4.68%, 16.55%]; all $ps < .001$).

Randomization Tests for Broad Traits

One possibility is that the relatively high level of self–other agreement on the broad trait categories is driven not by friends uniquely agreeing with targets on what their best and worst traits are, but rather by base rates (i.e., normativeness effects; see Furr, 2008). For example, agreement could be high by chance because both targets and friends more frequently mention high agreeableness best traits than high openness best traits. To examine the magnitude of such normativeness effects, we conducted randomization tests (Block, 1960; Sherman & Serfass, 2015). We created 1,000 pseudo-samples in which we matched each target with the friend of a *different* randomly-selected target. Then, we computed the self–other agreement on best and worst traits from each of the 1,000 pseudo-samples. The proportion of self–other agreement estimates that exceed the level of self–other agreement observed in the real data can be

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interpreted as a p -value (i.e., the probability of observing, in random data, a level of agreement that was at least as strong as was observed in the real data).

As shown in Figure 3, the average level of self–other agreement observed across 1,000 pseudo-samples (i.e., agreement driven purely by normativeness) was substantial; however, in all cases, the extent of self–other agreement observed in the real data was significantly greater than that observed by chance. Specifically, for best traits, the average self–other agreement observed by chance was 40.01% for Sample 1 (vs. 51.09% in the real data, $p < .001$), 31.61% for Sample 2 (vs. 40.08% in the real data, $p < .001$), and 31.82% for Sample 3 (vs. 37.42% in the real data, $p = .005$). For worst traits, the average self–other agreement observed by chance was 29.96% for Sample 1 (vs. 38.32% in the real data, $p < .001$), 19.99% for Sample 1 (vs. 23.97% in the real data, $p = .021$), and 25.42% for Sample 3 (vs. 32.08% in the real data, $p < .001$). In other words, even though agreement due to normativeness was quite substantial, the observed self–other agreement was still 6–11% greater for best traits and 4–8% greater for worst traits compared to what we would expect from base rates alone.

These results also explain the higher levels of self–other agreement on best traits compared to worst traits. Because best traits almost exclusively reflected the socially desirable poles of the broad trait domains, there were essentially only five or six possible types of answers (with some types of answers being more likely than others). In contrast, worst traits were far more diverse; because worst traits reflected both poles of each trait domain, this essentially doubles the number of possible types of answers and substantially reduces the likelihood of agreement due to chance. This raises the possibility that the greater self–other agreement on best traits vs. worst traits may simply be explained by the greater diversity of worst traits. Indeed, after taking normativeness effects into account, the differences in self–other agreement on best

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vs. worst traits (for the broad trait categories) were only 2.72%, 95% CI [−2.99%, 8.15%] (Sample 1), 4.49%, 95% CI [−2.07%, 10.33%] (Sample 2), and −1.06%, 95% CI [−7.23%, 4.41%] (Sample 3), and none of these differences were detectable. Thus, these results suggest that the higher levels of self–other agreement on best traits’ broad trait categories can be entirely explained by the fact that worst traits were less predictable from base rates.

We did not conduct randomization tests for self–other agreement on the specific traits because we used human coders to judge agreement for each pairwise comparison for the specific traits. Conducting the same randomization tests would require repeating the coding task 1,000 times. Because people reported a large number of trait descriptors (see Table 1), it is unlikely that self–other agreement on the specific traits can be completely explained by base rate effects. However, because people used a greater number of unique descriptors to describe worst traits than best traits (see Table 1), it is likely that as for the broad traits, the differences in self–other agreement between best vs. worst traits for specific traits are at least in part due to differences in base rates. Indeed, supplemental analyses showed that the relative frequency of the descriptor explained 20–37% of the greater self–other agreement on specific best traits in Samples 1 and 3 (see Table S13); however, even after accounting for these base rate effects, there was still greater self–other agreement on best traits than worst traits. One limitation of this analysis is that the relative frequency of a specific descriptor is a noisy estimate of the relative frequency of the underlying trait (e.g., someone who is humorous can be described as either “funny” or “hilarious,” among other possibilities). However, this provides some evidence to suggest that the greater self–other agreement on specific best traits cannot be entirely explained by differences in base rates.

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We also collected trait rating data to examine whether the greater self–other agreement on best traits than worst traits could be explained by differences in relative personal importance, breadth, observability, or perceived base rates, and found little evidence for these possibilities (see Table S13).

Discussion

What do people think their best and worst personality traits are? Do their friends agree? To answer these questions, we asked U.S. college student targets and their friends to tell us, in their own words, what the targets’ best and worst traits are. The key findings, along with their replicability across three samples, are summarized in Table 2. Targets and friends most frequently reported agreeableness- and extraversion-related best traits. People had more variable concepts of worst traits, which spanned both the socially undesirable and socially desirable poles of the Big Five or Six traits—especially low emotional stability. Overall, the kinds of traits that people most liked in themselves were similar to those traits that their friends most liked in them, but there were some notable self–other asymmetries in perceptions of worst traits. These results complement existing studies of trait desirability in three ways. First, they clarify which broad trait domains tend to be most evaluatively polarized in practice (i.e., when considering the best and worst traits of actual people), rather than in the abstract. Second, by examining both self- and friend-perspectives, these results clarify *for whom* a given trait is more desirable. Finally, we show that even the “desirable” pole of each domain has some downsides, such that these generally desirable poles are not “purely” positive. We discuss each of these implications in turn.

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Table 2
Summary and Replicability of Key Findings

Finding	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3
Descriptively most prevalent broad trait category			
Best traits	+A	+A	+A
Worst traits	–ES	–ES	–ES
Self–other asymmetries			
Best traits			
+A: Friends > Self	✓	?	?
+H: Friends > Self		?	✓
+O: Self > Friends	?	?	✓
Worst traits			
–ES: Self > Friends	✓	✓	✓
–H: Friends > Self		✓	✓
+E: Friends > Self	✓	?	✓
–E: Self > Friends	?	✓	?
–A: Friends > Self	?	✓	?
–C: Friends > Self	?	✓	?
Self–other agreement			
Broad trait categories > specific traits	✓	✓	✓
Best traits > worst traits			
For broad trait categories			
Overall agreement	✓	✓	?
Above chance agreement	?	?	?
For specific traits			
Overall agreement	✓	✓	✓
Agreement controlling for relative frequency	✓	✓	✓

Notes. Effects are ordered from most to least replicable, within each group of effects. ✓ indicates that the effect was detectable at $p < .05$ in the respective sample. ? indicates that there was no detectable evidence for the effect in the respective sample. Blank cells indicate effects that are not applicable (specifically, honesty-humility was not coded in Sample 1).

Evaluativeness in the Real World

Previous studies of the evaluativeness of major trait domains have asked raters to judge the desirability of a predefined set of traits in the abstract, and have produced conflicting conclusions about which of the Big Five domains are particularly evaluative (John & Robins, 1993; Kim et al., 2019). However, the traits that are judged to be highly evaluative in the abstract may not be the same traits that people like or dislike the most about themselves or their friends.

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This could be because the traits rated as most evaluative in the abstract are rarely present in typical populations, or because their manifestation is so rare that they do not spontaneously come to mind when describing oneself or one's friends. Moreover, predefined sets of researcher-selected descriptors may exclude many descriptors that people would naturally use to describe their own and their friends' best and worst traits. By soliciting open-ended self- and friend-perceptions of best and worst traits and mapping them onto the high and low poles of the Big Six, our results reveal which of these major trait domains most frequently capture the descriptors that are used to evaluate real people. Of course, by only including self-reports and reports by close friends, we are likely missing some of the most undesirable characteristics that might only be mentioned by enemies (for example). Thus, these findings complement rather than overrule the findings based on abstract ratings of traits by showing how evaluativeness plays out in two important real-world contexts: self-perceptions and close friendships.

To explore this issue, we conducted supplemental analyses to summarize which of the Big Six domains best capture the open-ended evaluative descriptions of best and worst traits in college students and their friends. We operationalized the evaluativeness of a domain as the overall percentage of desirable traits (i.e., the percentage of best traits minus the percentage of worst traits) that fell within the high pole of that domain plus the overall percentage of undesirable traits (i.e., the percentage of worst traits minus the percentage of best traits) that fell within the low pole of that domain. As shown in Figure 4, agreeableness captured the most evaluatively polarized content in our participants' responses (consistent with John and Robins, 1993), whereas openness was the least evaluative domain (consistent with Kim et al., 2019, but very different from John and Robins, 1993). Extraversion and emotional stability were the next two most evaluative domains after agreeableness. This was in contrast to previous studies, which

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tended to find that extraversion and emotional stability were less evaluative than other trait domains (John & Robins, 1993; Kim et al., 2019). Finally, conscientiousness and honesty-humility were less-frequently mentioned as best and worst traits.

Figure 4. Evaluativeness of the Big Five (Sample 1) or Big Six (Samples 2–3) domains based on which trait categories most frequently captured people’s best or worst traits (top row) and the mean general desirability ratings of traits in each category (bottom row). Top row: “High pole” denotes the overall percentage of desirable traits (i.e., the percentage of best traits minus the percentage of worst traits) that fell within the high pole of each domain; “Low pole” denotes the overall percentage of undesirable traits (i.e., the percentage of worst traits minus the percentage of best traits) that fell within the low pole of each domain. Traits were pooled across self- and friend-reports. Bottom row: “High pole” and “Low pole” denote the mean general desirability ratings of traits that fell within the high or low pole of each domain, respectively. Traits were pooled across best and worst traits and self- and friend-reports. Both rows: Trait domains that have a greater distance along the y-axis between the high and low poles (see overlaid numbers) are more evaluative.

Interestingly, however, when evaluativeness is conceptualized in line with previous research as the difference in desirability *ratings* between the high and low poles of each domain (see Supplemental Material, Section 7, for details of the trait rating study), different conclusions emerge that are more consistent with results from previous research. As shown in Figure 4,

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extraversion and emotional stability are the least evaluative domains (in line with John and Robins, 1993). The prosocial traits of agreeableness and especially honesty-humility (Samples 2 and 3) were the most evaluative domains, followed by openness. In other words, although openness and honesty-humility were the two domains that were least represented among the best and worst traits, when such traits were mentioned, they tended to be more evaluatively extreme (as rated by a separate group of raters) than traits within more frequently-represented domains (e.g., extraversion and emotional stability). This points to the disconnect between the trait domains that are most desirable or undesirable in the abstract and the trait domains that best capture peoples' real-world evaluations of their own and their friends' best and worst qualities.

Sources of Self-Other Agreement on Best and Worst Traits

The current findings also provide insight into the extent to which the desirability of a trait is in the eye of the beholder. Targets and their friends agreed about which broad trait categories targets' best and worst traits reflected about one third of the time, but much (though not all) of this agreement was driven by base rates (both targets and friends tended to mention best or worst traits in some Big Six categories more often than others). Agreement about which specific traits were the targets' best or worst traits was naturally lower, at around 20% for best traits and 10% for worst traits. Given that targets and their friends had free rein to describe the target's best and worst traits however they wanted, we find this level of agreement at the specific trait level quite impressive, particularly for best traits. Overall, targets and friends tended to report similar kinds of best traits. However, targets consistently focused more on low emotional stability worst traits than did friends, whereas friends focused more on low prosociality worst traits than did targets (in Samples 2 and 3).

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Why might your friends agree or disagree with you about what your best and worst traits are? Conceptually, best and worst traits involve both (a) a *descriptive* judgment that the person has that trait and (b) an *evaluative* judgment of whether the trait can be considered a “best” or “worst” trait. Thus, self–other agreement vs. asymmetries occur to the extent that the self and others agree vs. disagree on (a) whether the target has a given trait or (b) whether that trait can be considered to be a best or worst trait.

The self–other knowledge asymmetry (SOKA) model (Vazire, 2010) provides a framework for understanding self–other asymmetries in descriptive judgments. This model posits that the self has more knowledge about less observable traits (e.g., emotional stability), whereas well-acquainted others have more knowledge about highly evaluative traits (e.g., prosocial traits) because other-ratings are less susceptible to ego-protective biases. These differences in perspectives may explain why people are more likely to describe themselves as having low emotional stability worst traits (which tend to be less observable to others), whereas friends are more likely to describe others as having prosocial best traits or antisocial worst traits (which tend to be more evaluative but also fairly observable). These findings parallel the lower levels of self–other agreement on emotional stability and agreeableness observed in other studies (Connelly & Ones, 2010; John & Robins, 1993; Sun & Vazire, 2019).

What makes a trait stand out as being a “best” or “worst” trait, out of the many traits that a person has? We suspect that the answers may be somewhat different for best traits and worst traits. One initial possibility is that people simply consider which traits the target has especially high or low levels of, compared to other people. Supplemental analyses predicting best and worst traits from questionnaire measures of the Big Five or Six suggest that this is only part of the picture (see Supplemental Material, Section 8). For example, although people who reported

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having higher levels of extraversion were more likely to report a high extraversion best trait (e.g., “outgoing”), many extreme extraverts did not mention a high extraversion best trait. Similarly, although friends who judged their target as having lower levels of extraversion were more likely to report a low extraversion worst trait (e.g., “quiet”), many extreme introverts’ friends did not mention a low extraversion worst trait. This suggests that best and worst traits do not merely capture trait standings.

Relatedly, friends might be somewhat more likely to report best and worst traits that reflect their own traits. For example, if friends are high in agreeableness, they may be especially likely to report a high agreeableness best trait or low agreeableness worst trait in their target. If so, to the extent that best friends (Sample 1) or first-listed friends (Samples 2 and 3) have systematically higher levels of agreeableness or honesty-humility than their targets, this could help to explain the self–other asymmetries on prosociality-related traits.

Beyond trait standings, we suspect that when people are judging a person’s best traits, they likely consider the qualities that they most value in themselves or admire in others. For example, even if a person is exceptionally creative, they (or their friends) may still say that their best trait is kindness because they value kindness more than creativity. In many cases, people may specifically be thinking about the traits that make themselves or their friends “good people.” Supporting this interpretation, many of the most frequently-mentioned best traits—“caring,” “compassionate,” “honest,” “kind,” “loyal,” “trustworthy” (see Table S2)—are clear indicators of moral character (Goodwin et al., 2014). Thus, the self–other similarities in best traits, which heavily emphasize sociability and prosociality, are consistent with the well-established finding that communal or moral traits are more valued than agentic traits for both the self and for others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Goodwin et al., 2014; Wortman & Wood, 2011). The reverse may

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also be true to some extent—that worst traits capture the ways in which people most feel like they are failing to live up to their deepest values or are “bad people.”

A further possibility is that targets and friends may both be evaluating which of the targets’ traits are instrumentally best or worst for *themselves* (i.e., the judge). That is, targets may focus more on which of their traits are beneficial or detrimental for their own well-being, whereas friends may focus more on which of the targets’ traits are most helpful/endearing or harmful/annoying in the context of their relationship with the target. Supporting this possibility, supplemental analyses showed that on average, the traits that were mentioned by targets (vs. friends) were rated as being more desirable or undesirable for the self than for a friend (see Table S11).

Such a perspective-dependent evaluative standard may explain both the self–other similarities on best traits and the self–asymmetries on worst traits. That is, the emphasis by both the self and friends on sociable and prosocial best traits may reflect the fact that these traits are beneficial for both personal well-being and friendships (Anglim et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2015). Partially supporting this idea, supplemental analyses (see Figure S2 and Table S14) showed that high extraversion and agreeableness traits were generally rated as being similarly desirable for the self and for a friend. Consistent with the finding that friends more frequently mentioned high honesty-humility traits than did the self (in Sample 3), high honesty-humility traits were also rated as being more desirable for a friend than for the self (in both Samples 2 and 3).

Likewise, the various self–other asymmetries in worst traits might arise from these traits’ divergent consequences for the self compared to others. For example, low emotional stability has a bigger impact on one’s well-being than on one’s friendships, whereas low prosociality might

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have more negative consequences for others than for the self. Supporting this view, supplemental analyses (see Figure S2 and Table S14) showed that low agreeableness (Samples 1 and 2) and low honesty-humility (Samples 2 and 3) traits were rated as being less desirable for a friend than were low emotional stability traits, whereas low emotional stability traits were rated as being less desirable for the self than were low agreeableness traits (Samples 1 and 3). These self–friend asymmetries in the relative undesirability of low emotional stability and low prosociality traits may help explain targets’ and friends’ respective emphases on worst traits that reflected these domains. More generally, these results also suggest that the desirability of a trait is at least partly in the eye of the beholder; thus, instead of asking whether a trait is desirable or undesirable in the abstract, we may want to ask, for *whom* is this trait desirable or undesirable?

Mixed Blessings of Best and Worst Traits

Our results also contribute to a deeper understanding of the mixed personal and social consequences of each of the Big Six traits. On the one hand, our results continue to show that each of the Big Six has a generally desirable pole. Across all samples, best traits almost exclusively reflected high levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, and honesty-humility. Although people occasionally mentioned worst traits that reflected high levels of the Big Six, they much more frequently mentioned worst traits that reflected insufficient levels of these trait domains. For example, being disagreeable seems to be a much more common problem than being too agreeable.

However, our finding that a non-trivial percentage of worst traits also reflected the desirable poles of these traits supports the views that (a) having too little *or* too much of a good thing can both be seen as weaknesses (Grant & Schwartz, 2011; Kuncel & Tellegen, 2009) and (b) the same underlying trait can be interpreted in either a favorable or problematic light

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(Peabody, 1967). To further explore the mixed blessings that students and their friends spontaneously express about various personality traits, we conducted supplemental analyses of cases in which a broad trait is expressed as both a best trait and a worst trait within the same person (see Table S6). Approximately 8% of targets self-reported a worst trait that was in the same broad trait category as one of their best traits. For example, one target said that they were “perseverant” (best trait) but also “unspontaneous” (worst trait), which are both manifestations of high conscientiousness; another target said that they were “kind” (best trait) but also a “pushover” (worst trait), which are both manifestations of high agreeableness. This suggests that people recognize that their own best traits can be double-edged swords.

These mixed blessings were also expressed *between* self- vs. other-perspectives. Approximately 10% of friends reported a worst trait that was in the same broad trait category as a best trait that the target reported, and approximately 5% of friends reported a best trait that was in the same broad trait category as a worst trait that the target reported. For example, one target reported that they were “spunky” (best trait) and their friend said they were “loud” (worst trait), which are both manifestations of high extraversion; another target said that they were an “overachiever” (worst trait) and their friend said they were “driven” (best trait), which are both manifestations of high conscientiousness. These represent extreme cases of self–other disagreement, in which the self and friends disagree on whether the same broad trait is good or bad *in the same person*. By using a free-response format instead of focusing on a predefined set of traits, these results generate new hypotheses about how the same broad trait can be expressed in ways that are simultaneously good and bad.

Limitations and Future Directions

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The main limitation of this study is that we cannot be sure that participants were being completely honest when reporting on their own or their friends' best and worst traits. Because of self-presentational and humility concerns, people may not be willing to admit to having especially negative worst traits or especially positive best traits. Despite assurances of confidentiality, friends might also refrain from reporting overly-negative traits because they feel that it would be mean or disloyal. Indeed, we noticed that friends would frequently preface their descriptions of the targets' worst traits with qualifiers (e.g., "sometimes," "occasionally," "can be"). Although friends were willing to attribute rather negative qualities to their targets (e.g., "selfish," "arrogant," "judgmental"), we cannot know whether they might have reported even more negative traits if they were completely candid. This is an inherent limitation of studying self- and other-perceptions, which can only be measured using self- and informant-reports.

Our findings also raise several open questions that future research might address. Just as narrower traits within broad trait domains (e.g., facets and aspects; DeYoung et al., 2007; Soto & John, 2017) have divergent consequences across a range of life domains (e.g., Kaufman et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2017), best and worst traits may more frequently reflect some facets or aspects than others. For example, considering that the sociability and positive emotions facets of extraversion tend to be rated as more desirable than the dominance facet (Kim et al., 2019), it might be the case that high extraversion best traits more frequently reflect sociability and positive emotion traits, whereas high extraversion worst traits more frequently reflect dominance-related traits. Future research could shed light on this matter by coding best and worst traits into facets or aspects. Because this would involve a larger number of categories (e.g., 10 aspects or 30 facets), larger sample sizes would be needed to achieve precise estimates of the percentages of traits within each category and to detect self–other asymmetries.

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Future research should also examine the real-world social consequences of disclosing and being judged as having various best and worst traits. In many job interviews, people are asked to describe their greatest strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, in dating contexts, people are often on the lookout for green flags and red flags in their potential partners. Perceptions of best and worst traits may also inform decisions to become friends with a new acquaintance. Thus, future research should examine what kinds of best traits are associated with reputational benefits (e.g., being liked and respected) and consequential decisions in different social domains (e.g., work, romance, friendship). Such research should also explore which kinds of worst traits are most likely to be deal-breakers (e.g., predict future relationship dissolution) in different types of relationships.

Constraints on Generality

The following findings seem likely to be broadly generalizable: 1) people have more variable concepts of worst traits compared to best traits, 2) people themselves (compared to informants) are more likely to mention low emotional stability worst traits, and 3) well-acquainted others agree with targets to some extent on the targets' best and worst traits. In contrast, our use of U.S. college student samples and friend informants, both of which were disproportionately female, represent a constraint on generality for conclusions about relative emphases on different broad traits and self–other asymmetries represented in Figure 2. Indeed, supplemental analyses (see Figure S6) revealed that although men and women's best traits were practically identical, men and women's worst traits featured different relative emphases on various broad trait categories and different self–other asymmetries. For example, women appeared to place greater emphasis on low emotional stability worst traits in themselves than did men, whereas men placed greater emphasis on low extraversion worst traits in themselves than

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did women. However, both men and women more frequently mentioned low emotional stability worst traits in themselves than did their friends, providing support for the generalizability of this particular self–other asymmetry.

The content of best and worst traits may also depend on the age and culture of the targets. For example, considering that midlife adults place greater emphasis on goals to become more energetic than to become less anxious or depressed (compared to college students; Sun & Goodwin, 2020), midlife adults might also place greater emphasis on low extraversion and less emphasis on low emotional stability worst traits (compared to college students). High extraversion best traits might also be less frequently mentioned in cultures in which extraversion is less valued. Finally, the kinds of best and worst traits reported by others may especially depend on who the “other” is. For example, co-workers might place greater emphasis on conscientiousness-related traits. Perhaps most importantly, we are missing the perspective of someone who knows the target well but does not especially like them (except in cases of targets with low self-esteem). Thus, the picture that our results paint of worst traits, in particular, is incomplete; a different picture would likely emerge if we had ratings from others who dislike or are no longer close with the target (e.g., ex-friends, ex-romantic partners; see Leising et al., 2010, for a nomination method for obtaining informant reports from those who dislike a target).

Conclusion

What are your best and worst traits? Would your friends agree? Building on the lexical hypothesis that natural person descriptors provide a path to discovering important personality characteristics, we gave college students free rein to describe their best and worst traits in their own words and compared their responses to what their friends said about them. Across three samples, friends agreed with targets to a surprising extent on what their specific best traits were.

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At the same time, targets and friends also showed theoretically notable self–other asymmetries in which worst traits they emphasized (low emotional stability vs. low prosociality, respectively).

More broadly, our results show that the desirability of a trait may be partially in the eye of the beholder and that people intuitively recognize the mixed blessings of many traits.

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1. Details of Additional Variables

We coded additional variables in Sample 1 for an undergraduate research project. In Sample 1, targets provided meta-perceptions of what their best friends thought their two best and worst traits were (“My best friend [best friend’s name] would say my two best/qualities traits are...”). As these were very similar to the self-perceptions, for the sake of concision, we chose to focus on comparing self- and friend-perceptions in this paper. In Sample 1, we also coded whether each of these responses reflected high or low morality, but we chose not to use these codings as we decided that our idiosyncratic opinions were unlikely to be a valid measure of moral relevance (see Meindl & Graham, 2014). Instead, we coded honesty-humility in the Sample 2 and 3 data to better capture traits relating to fairness, loyalty, and honesty.

For the undergraduate research project, we only coded agreement on specific traits for participants who had complete data on self-reports, meta-perceptions, and friend-reports for best and worst traits. Because we dropped the meta-perceptions for this paper, we only required complete data on self-reports and friend-reports. Thus, to make use of all eligible data for this research question, we later coded 14 additional participants who met the inclusion criteria for this paper.

2. Definitions for Big Six Coding (Samples 2 and 3)

Table S1

Definitions for Big Six Coding (Samples 2 and 3)

Trait Domain	Definition	Example descriptors
Extraversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sociability: Desire to socially approach and engage with others •Assertiveness: Willingness to express personal opinions and goals in social situations •Energy Level: Positive affect and activity level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High: talkative, outgoing, sociable, dominant, assertive, enthusiastic, energetic, active •Low: shy, introverted, quiet, reserved
Agreeableness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Compassion: Care/concern for others' well-being •Respectfulness: Treating others with regard for their personal preferences and rights, while inhibiting antagonistic and aggressive impulses •Trust: Positive generalized beliefs about others; assuming the best of others/giving them the benefit of the doubt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High: caring, helpful, sympathetic, polite, cooperative, respectful, forgiving, patient •Low: cold, rude, argumentative, suspicious, critical
Conscientiousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Productiveness: Work ethic and persistence while pursuing goals •Responsibility: Commitment to meeting duties and obligations •Organization: Preference for order and structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High: hard-working, efficient, persistent, dependable, reliable, organized, neat •Low: lazy, careless, irresponsible, messy
Neuroticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Depression: Tendencies towards depression, sadness, insecurity, pessimism •Anxiety: Tendency to experience anxiety, fear, and stress •Emotional Volatility: Irritability and tendency to experience volatile mood swings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High: sad, depressed, blue, insecure, angry hostility, pessimistic, anxious, stressed, moody, temperamental •Low: relaxed, secure
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Creative Imagination: Creativity and originality •Aesthetic Sensitivity: Being interested in and valuing art, music, literature, and beauty •Intellectual Curiosity: Intellectual interests and enjoyment of thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High: creative, original, inventive, imaginative, artistic, curious, philosophical •Low: conventional, unimaginative, unintellectual
Honesty-Humility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sincerity: being genuine in interpersonal relations and unwilling to manipulate others •Fairness: avoiding fraud and corruption; not willing to take advantage of others by cheating or stealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High: sincere, honest, faithful, fair, loyal, modest/unassuming, unentitled •Low: sly, deceitful, greedy,

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- Greed Avoidance: uninterested in possessing lavish wealth, luxury goods, and signs of high social status
 - Modesty: being modest and unassuming; not seeing oneself as superior/entitled to privileges that others do not have
- pretentious, hypocritical, boastful, pompous, manipulative
-

3. Frequency of Best and Worst Trait Descriptors

Figure S1. Frequencies of best and worst trait descriptors (pooled across the three samples). A small number of descriptors were used extremely often (relative to other descriptors), whereas most descriptors were rarely used.

4. Most Frequently-Mentioned Best and Worst Trait Descriptors

Table S2

Most Frequent Self- and Friend-Reported Best and Worst Trait Descriptors and Largest Self–Other Differences Across All Traits

	Most Frequent 10 Descriptors		Top 10 Self–Other Differences	
	Self-Reports	Friend-Reports	Self > Other	Other > Self
Best Traits				
Sample 1	<u>caring</u> (24), <u>kind</u> (16), intelligent (15), <u>loyal</u> (14), <u>compassionate</u> (13), <u>friendly</u> (12), <u>humorous</u> (12), <u>honest</u> (11), <u>funny</u> (10), <u>hardworking</u> (10), <u>optimistic</u> (10)	<u>caring</u> (25), <u>funny</u> (22), compassionate (18), <u>friendly</u> (18), <u>kind</u> (17), <u>loyal</u> (16), intelligent (15), thoughtful (12), <u>hardworking</u> (11), <u>outgoing</u> (10)	ambitious (7), <u>honest</u> (7), <u>optimistic</u> (7), dedicated (5), enthusiastic (5), passionate (5), <u>positive</u> (5), <u>empathetic</u> (4), clever (3), <u>open-minded</u> (3)	<u>funny</u> (12), smart (8), friendly (6), compassionate (5), outgoing (5), considerate (4), reliable (4), sociable (4), <u>supportive</u> (4), thoughtful (4)
Sample 2	empathetic (15), <u>caring</u> (13), <u>hardworking</u> (13), <u>compassionate</u> (10), <u>honest</u> (10), <u>humorous</u> (8), <u>kind</u> (8), <u>friendly</u> (7), <u>funny</u> (7), <u>loyal</u> (7), <u>optimistic</u> (7), <u>outgoing</u> (7)	<u>caring</u> (17), humorous (12), <u>kind</u> (12), <u>loyal</u> (12), <u>hardworking</u> (8), <u>funny</u> (7), <u>honest</u> (7), <u>outgoing</u> (7), passionate (6), <u>trustworthy</u> (6)	<u>empathetic</u> (14), <u>compassionate</u> (9), <u>hardworking</u> (5), <u>determined</u> (4), <u>friendly</u> (4), motivated (4), <u>optimistic</u> (4), <u>positive</u> (4), <u>honest</u> (3), <u>nice</u> (3)	good listener (6), <u>supportive</u> (6), <u>loyal</u> (5), <u>trustworthy</u> (5), caring (4), dedicated (4), humorous (4), <u>kind</u> (4), fun (3), enthusiastic (3)
Sample 3	<u>friendly</u> (20), <u>caring</u> (17), <u>humorous</u> (16), <u>kind</u> (16), <u>funny</u> (15), <u>outgoing</u> (15), open-minded (13), easygoing (11), <u>compassionate</u> (8), understanding (8)	<u>funny</u> (23), <u>kind</u> (20), <u>caring</u> (17), <u>honest</u> (16), humorous (16), <u>loyal</u> (10), <u>friendly</u> (9), <u>hardworking</u> (9), positive (6), <u>trustworthy</u> (6)	<u>open-minded</u> (13), <u>friendly</u> (11), outgoing (10), easygoing (6), patient (5), <u>compassionate</u> (3), considerate (3), <u>determined</u> (3), <u>empathetic</u> (3), <u>nice</u> (3)	<u>honest</u> (9), <u>funny</u> (8), <u>trustworthy</u> (6), <u>supportive</u> (5), approachable (4), <u>kind</u> (4), <u>loyal</u> (4), driven (3), energetic (3), intelligent (3)

(table continues)

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Table S2 (*continued*)

	Most Frequent 10 Descriptors		Top 10 Self–Other Differences	
	Self-Reports	Friend-Reports	Self > Other	Other > Self
Worst Traits				
Sample 1	lazy (27), shy (18), judgmental (14), selfish (11), impulsive (9), indecisive (9), self-deprecating (9), worrier (9), emotional (8), insecure (8)	lazy (19), stubborn (13), judgmental (11), moody (10), worrier (10), arrogant (9), selfish (9), stressed (9), loud (7), self-deprecating (7)	shy (12), lazy (8), indecisive (7), sensitive (6), insecure (6), emotional (5), impatient (5), depressed (4), impulsive (4), nervous (4)	stubborn (8), moody (7), stressed (7), loud (6), distractible (6), talkative (4), complainer (4), argumentative (4), ignorant (4), inconsiderate (4)
Sample 2	anxious (14), sensitive (12), shy (10), insecure (9), perfectionist (8), stubborn (7), indecisive (7), unconfident (7), awkward (6), overthinker (6)	stubborn (9), insecure (5), nice (4), competitive (4), hides emotions (4), lazy (4), impulsive (3), judgmental (3), stressed (3), loud (3)	anxious (13), sensitive (9), perfectionist (8), shy (8), awkward (6), unconfident (6), indecisive (5), introverted (5), insecure (4), overthinker (4)	nice (4), competitive (3), inconsiderate (3), insensitive (3), loud (3), narrow-minded (3), tunnel vision (3), stubborn (2), close-minded (2), closed-off (2), distractible (2), flaky (2), ignorant (2), moody (2)
Sample 3	shy (24), anxious (16), lazy (15), stubborn (15), overthinker (14), sensitive (8), emotional (8), indecisive (8), quiet (8), worrier (7)	indecisive (8), shy (8), judgmental (8), stubborn (7), insecure (6), lazy (6), quiet (6), blunt (5), reserved (5), impulsive (4)	shy (16), anxious (14), overthinker (12), lazy (9), stubborn (8), emotional (6), sensitive (5), awkward (5), impatient (5), worrier (5)	judgmental (8), closed-off (4), distant (4), flaky (4), secretive (4), competitive (3), negative (3), close-minded (3), doesn't take advice (3), self-righteous (3)

Note. Frequencies are shown in parentheses. For each column and trait type (i.e., best or worst), descriptors in **boldface** were frequently listed across two samples, and descriptors in **underlined boldface** were frequently listed across all three samples. Some descriptors beyond the 10th row were tied in frequency with the descriptor in the 10th row. In these cases, we prioritized the presentation of descriptors that were among the top 10 across multiple samples (which sometimes meant that more than 10 descriptors were listed).

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Table S3

Most Frequently-Mentioned Best and Worst Trait Descriptors Within Each of the Coded Categories in Sample 1

	Best Traits	Worst Traits
High extraversion	funny (32), friendly (30), humorous (21), outgoing (15), optimistic (13), positive (11), confident (9), enthusiastic (7), happy (7), passionate (7)	loud (8), talkative (4), assertive (2), dominant (2), attention seeker (1), commanding (1), energetic (1), enthusiastic (1), filterless (1), flirtatious (1)
Low extraversion	quiet (1)	shy (24), reserved (11), quiet (8), unassertive (6), passive (4), unsociable (4), aloof (3), apathetic (3), introverted (3), awkward (2)
High agreeableness	caring (49), kind (33), compassionate (31), loyal (30), thoughtful (20), honest (15), helpful (12), empathetic (10), good listener (9), nice (9)	conflict-avoidant (2), non-confrontational (2), empathetic (1), humble (1), naive (1), people-pleaser (1), trusting (1)
Low agreeableness	blunt (1)	judgmental (25), selfish (20), stubborn (18), arrogant (15), holds grudges (7), rude (7), complainer (6), self-centered (6), critical (5), argumentative (4)
High conscientiousness	hardworking (21), reliable (10), ambitious (7), organized (7), dedicated (5), dependable (5), determined (5), responsible (5), work ethic (4), motivated (3)	busy (3), overcommitted (2), perfectionist (2), cautious (1), controlling (1), efficient (1), firm (1), serious (1)
Low conscientiousness		lazy (46), impulsive (14), procrastinator (11), disorganized (10), distractible (6), careless (5), absent-minded (3), clumsy (3), distracting (3), irresponsible (3)

(table continues)

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Table S3 (*continued*)

	Best Traits	Worst Traits
High emotional stability	calm (4), patient (4), easygoing (3), adaptable (2), content (2), grounded (2), relaxed (2), composed (1), decisive (1), down-to-earth (1)	unemotional (1)
Low emotional stability		worrier (19), self-deprecating (16), moody (13), emotional (11), indecisive (11), stressed (11), unconfident (11), anxious (10), insecure (10), pessimistic (8)
High openness	intelligent (30), creative (16), smart (10), adventurous (4), independent (4), openness (4), clever (3), curious (3), open-minded (3), open (2)	eccentric (2), analytical (1), escapist (1), loses sight of reality (1), overanalytical (1)
Low openness		ignorant (3), close-minded (1), clueless (1), incognizant (1), intolerant (1), predictable (1), simple (1), stupid (1), unimaginative (1)
Not a Big Five trait	moral (3), authentic (2), self-aware (2), conscious thought (1), intuitive (1)	hypocritical (2), annoying (1), avoids serious conversations (1), clingy (1), hoarder (1), in-your-face-feminism (1), intense (1), obnoxious (1), overthinker (1), unaware (1)

Note. Parentheses contain the number of times each descriptor was mentioned, pooled across self- and friend-reports. Up to ten descriptors are listed for each category.

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Table S4

Most Frequently-Mentioned Best and Worst Trait Descriptors Within Each of the Coded Categories in Sample 2

	Best Traits	Worst Traits
High extraversion	humorous (19), funny (14), outgoing (14), friendly (10), optimistic (10), passionate (9), confident (6), positive (6), fun (5), happy (4)	bossy (3), loud (3), talkative (3), gossipy (2), intense (2), optimistic (2), overbearing (2), brash (1), dramatic (1), easily bored (1)
Low extraversion	reserved (1)	shy (12), awkward (6), hides emotions (5), introverted (5), quiet (5), socially awkward (4), unconfident (4), apathetic (2), closed-off (2), passive (2)
High agreeableness	caring (30), kind (20), empathetic (16), compassionate (11), thoughtful (8), understanding (8), good listener (6), supportive (6), nice (5), patient (4)	nice (4), pushover (3), gullible (2), non-confrontational (2), people-pleaser (2), selfless (2), agreeable (1), considerate (1), forgiving (1), generous (1)
Low agreeableness	firm (1)	stubborn (16), judgmental (5), competitive (4), inconsiderate (3), insensitive (3), bad listener (2), cheap (2), nosy (2), unempathetic (2), unsympathetic (2)
High conscientiousness	hardworking (21), driven (10), determined (8), ambitious (6), dedicated (6), motivated (6), reliable (6), perseverant (4), conscientious (3), diligent (3)	perfectionist (8), academically-oriented (3), detail-oriented (2), tunnel vision (2), cautious (1), conscientious (1), focused (1), guilt-prone (1), high expectations (1), inflexible (1)
Low conscientiousness		impulsive (6), lazy (6), procrastinator (5), forgetful (3), distractible (2), flaky (2), messy (2), unambitious (2), undisciplined (2), unmotivated (2)

(table continues)

Supplemental Material for “Personality Evaluated”

Table S4 (*continued*)

	Best Traits	Worst Traits
High emotional stability	easygoing (4), calm (3), adaptable (2), resilient (2), chill (1), comfortable (1), emotionally strong (1), flexible (1), good-humored (1), humorous (1)	emotionless (1), mellow (1), nonchalant (1),
Low emotional stability	sensitive (1)	anxious (15), sensitive (15), insecure (14), indecisive (9), overthinker (8), stressed (7), impatient (6), self-conscious (6), pessimistic (5), short-tempered (5)
High openness	independent (6), open-minded (6), creative (3), intelligent (2), logical (2), open (2), adventurous (1), analytical (1), cultured (1), curious (1)	overanalytical (2), curious (1), idealistic (1), independent (1), liberal (1)
Low openness		narrow-minded (3), close-minded (2), ignorant (2), confused (1), conservative (1), incurious (1), inflexible (1), superficial (1), unadventurous (1)
High honesty-humility	loyal (19), honest (17), trustworthy (7), genuine (4), humble (2), moral (2), advocate (1), candid (1), fair (1), morale (1)	honest (1), truthful (1)
Low honesty-humility		self-absorbed (4), selfish (4), arrogant (3), self-centered (3), cocky (2), condescending (2), manipulative (2), self-serving (2), back-stabber (1), competitive (1)
Not a Big Six trait	childlike (1), relationship beliefs (1), religious (1), wants happiness (1)	dislikes exercise (1), eats late night snacks (1), lacks self-insight (1), sheltered (1), spoiled (1), tunnel vision (1)

Note. Parentheses contain the number of times each descriptor was mentioned, pooled across self- and friend-reports. Up to ten descriptors are listed for each category.

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Table S5

Most Frequently-Mentioned Best and Worst Trait Descriptors Within Each of the Coded Categories in Sample 3

	Best Traits	Worst Traits
High extraversion	funny (38), humorous (31), friendly (28), outgoing (20), positive (10), confident (5), happy (5), passionate (5), bubbly (4), fun (4)	loud (6), bossy (2), talkative (2), animated (1), bubbly (1), dramatic (1), excitable (1), extraverted (1), forward (1), friendly (1)
Low extraversion		shy (32), quiet (14), reserved (10), introverted (8), passive (6), awkward (4), closed-off (4), distant (4), secretive (4), unassertive (4)
High agreeableness	kind (36), caring (34), compassionate (13), empathetic (11), understanding (11), considerate (7), nice (7), patient (7), good listener (6), approachable (5)	pushover (7), easily influenced (4), trusting (4), nice (3), agreeable (2), forgiving (2), naive (2), accommodating (1), innocent (1), kind (1)
Low agreeableness	competitive (2), sarcastic (2), cynical (1), not a pushover (1), skeptical (1), unapologetic (1)	stubborn (22), blunt (9), judgmental (8), rude (4), competitive (3), critical (3), doesn't take advice (3), insensitive (3), argumentative (2), cold (2)
High conscientiousness	hardworking (16), responsible (8), motivated (7), ambitious (5), determined (5), dependable (4), conscientious (3), dedicated (3), driven (3), perseverant (3)	clean freak (2), detail-oriented (2), particular (2), perfectionist (2), picky (2), serious (2), strict (2), buzzkill (1), cautious (1), demanding (1)
Low conscientiousness		lazy (21), impulsive (9), disorganized (5), flaky (4), unmotivated (4), forgetful (3), irresolute (2), slow (2), spontaneous (2), unaware (2)

(table continues)

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Table S5 (*continued*)

	Best Traits	Worst Traits
High emotional stability	easygoing (13), calm (7), adaptable (3), laid-back (3), carefree (2), chill (2), decisive (2), collected (1), emotional awareness (1), humorous (1)	independent (2), calm (1), robotic (1)
Low emotional stability	sensitive (3),	anxious (18), overthinker (16), indecisive (15), insecure (11), sensitive (11), emotional (10), worrier (9), impatient (8), easily annoyed (6), moody (5)
High openness	open-minded (13), independent (9), creative (5), curious (4), adventurous (3), intelligent (3), smart (3), introspective (2), open (2), perspective (2)	delusional (1), independent (1), overanalytical (1), rational (1)
Low openness		close-minded (3), boring (2), airhead (1), conservative (1), ignorant (1), inflexible (1), narrow-minded (1), superficial (1), traditional (1)
High honesty-humility	honest (23), loyal (16), trustworthy (6), humble (3), genuine (2), principled (2), straightforward (2), advocate (1), confident (1), fair (1)	self-righteous (2), honest (1), truthful (1)
Low honesty-humility		biased (2), cocky (2), arrogant (1), calculating (1), condescending (1), egotistical (1), fickle (1), inauthentic (1), indiscreet (1), know-it-all (1)
Not a Big Six trait	family-oriented (2), childlike (1), intuitive (1), spiritual (1), strong through god (1)	extreme (1), habits (1), sheltered (1), tease (1)

Note. Parentheses contain the number of times each descriptor was mentioned, pooled across self- and friend-reports. Up to ten descriptors are listed for each category.

5. Traitedness and Mixed Blessings

In Table S6, we report two additional features of the best and worst traits people reported: traitedness and mixed blessings. *Traitedness* refers to the percentage of participants who report two best traits or two worst traits that both reflect the same trait category (e.g., two high agreeableness best traits), rather than two different trait categories (e.g., high agreeableness and high extraversion best traits). *Mixed blessings* describe situations in which participants have at least one best trait that reflects the same broad trait category as one of their worst traits. For example, a participant may be both “kind” (best trait) and a “pushover” (worst trait), which are both manifestations of high agreeableness. This phenomenon can be described at an *overall* level (the percentage of participants who had a self- or friend-reported best trait that reflected the same broad trait category as one of their self- or friend-reported worst traits), *within perspectives* (the percentage of targets or the percentage of friends who report a best trait and a worst trait that both reflect the same category), and *between perspectives* (the percentage of participants for which a self-reported best trait reflects the same broad trait category as one of their friend-reported worst traits, or for which a friend-reported best trait reflects the same broad trait category as one of their self-reported worst traits). We uploaded a password-protected spreadsheet containing all examples of mixed blessings to <https://osf.io/jce7k/>. The password is available upon request.

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Table S6

Percentage of Participants Who Showed Each of these Characteristics

	Traitedness		Mixed Blessings		
	Best Traits	Worst Traits	Overall	Within Perspectives	Between Perspectives
Sample 1			8.7		
Self	28.26	34.24		3.26	5.98
Friend	26.09	33.15		5.98	2.72
Sample 2			20.66		
Self	28.93	23.97		8.26	11.57
Friend	23.14	27.27		14.88	4.13
Sample 3			20.13		
Self	25.79	33.33		11.32	13.84
Friend	27.04	24.53		10.06	6.92

6. Dichotomized vs. Continuous Metrics of Self–Other Agreement on Specific Traits

Table S7

Comparison of Results Using Dichotomized vs. Continuous Metrics of Self–Other Agreement on Specific Traits

Predictor	Dichotomized			Continuous		
	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Linear mixed-effects models						
Sample 1						
Broad trait	26.18%	[22.03%, 30.32%]	< .001	26.07%	[22.17%, 29.98%]	< .001
Best trait	10.66%	[6.52%, 14.79%]	< .001	10.37%	[6.47%, 14.27%]	< .001
Sample 2						
Broad trait	17.93%	[12.93%, 22.92%]	< .001	16.46%	[11.89%, 21.02%]	< .001
Best trait	17.17%	[12.22%, 22.13%]	< .001	15.83%	[11.31%, 20.36%]	< .001
Sample 3						
Broad trait	19.03%	[14.6%, 23.45%]	< .001	18.70%	[14.62%, 22.78%]	< .001
Best trait	7.87%	[3.47%, 12.27%]	.001	5.93%	[1.88%, 9.98%]	.004
<i>t</i> -tests for specific traits						
Sample 1	8.52%	[2.57%, 14.46%]	.005	7.94%	[2.76%, 13.13%]	.003
Sample 2	18.35%	[11.55%, 25.14%]	< .001	15.52%	[10.09%, 20.95%]	< .001
Sample 3	10.62%	[4.68%, 16.55%]	.001	6.56%	[2.05%, 11.08%]	.005

Note. Linear mixed-effects models = models predicting self–other agreement from the breadth (broad vs. specific) and the valence of the trait (best vs. worst); *t*-tests for specific traits = difference in self–other agreement between best and worst specific traits. For the dichotomized metric (reported in the main text), we operationalized self–other agreement as occurring if at least half of the coders said that the self- and friend-reported traits matched. The continuous metric was the percentage of coders who said that the self- and friend-reported traits matched.

7. Trait Property Analyses

To shed further explanatory light on our findings, we collected ratings of several properties of the best and worst traits (described below). Our main goal was to explore whether the greater self–other agreement on specific best traits (vs. specific worst traits) could be explained by differences in relative personal importance, observability, breadth, and perceived base rates (as well as actual relative frequency). By separately rating traits’ desirability for the self or for a friend, we also address the issue of the extent to which the desirability of a trait is in the eye of a beholder. Finally, these ratings provided an opportunity to replicate past findings on the relations among different trait properties (Leising et al., 2012; 2014).

Method

Participants

We recruited 131 trait raters from the undergraduate psychology subject pool at the University of Pennsylvania, who participated in exchange for course credit. Trait raters (93 women, 33 men, 3 who preferred to self-describe as non-binary or trans, 2 not reported) were between the ages of 18 and 38 ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.88$, $SD = 2.35$) and identified as White ($n = 52$), Asian ($n = 35$), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 10$), Black ($n = 14$), Other or multiple ($n = 13$), or did not disclose their ethnicity ($n = 7$).

Measures

Trait raters rated the trait descriptors on six properties. We also examined objectively-computed relative frequency (described below).

We used the following item to measure the general desirability of the trait, the desirability of the trait for the self, and the desirability of the trait for a friend, respectively: “For the following traits, please indicate how desirable it would be for [a person/you/a friend] to have

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this characteristic” (1 = *extremely undesirable*, 5 = *neither desirable nor undesirable*, 9 = *extremely desirable*). To aid interpretability, before analyses, we centered these scores around their midpoint (i.e., -4 = *extremely undesirable*, 0 = *neither desirable nor undesirable*, 4 = *extremely desirable*).

We computed a *self-relevance* index using the following steps. First, we computed the evaluative extremity of the desirability (self) and desirability (friend) properties by taking the absolute values of the midpoint-centered scores (which represent the evaluative distance from the midpoint). Second, we subtracted the evaluative extremity (friend) from evaluative extremity (self) scores. In other words, positive scores correspond to terms that are more evaluatively extreme (i.e., more positive or more negative) for the self than for friends, 0 corresponds to terms that are equally positive or negative for the self and friends, and negative scores correspond to terms that are more evaluatively extreme for friends than for the self.

To measure the *perceived observability* of the trait, we asked: “How easy would it be for an observer to tell whether a person has each of the following characteristics?” (1 = *extremely difficult*, 9 = *extremely easy*). To measure the *perceived breadth* of the trait, we asked: “How narrow (specific, concrete) or broad (general, abstract) are each of the following descriptors?” (1 = *extremely narrow*, 9 = *extremely broad*).

Finally, we examined two separate measures of frequency. First, we computed the *relative frequency* of each term by dividing the number of times that term was mentioned by the total number of terms. We then multiplied the resulting scores by 100 to rescale them into a percentage metric. However, because different descriptors (e.g., “smart,” “intelligent”; “funny,” “humorous”) may be used to describe the same underlying trait, the relative frequency of descriptors is a noisy proxy for the frequency of the underlying traits. Thus, to complement this

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objectively computed measure, we also obtained ratings of the *perceived base rate* of the trait:

“How many people do you think could be described as having each of the following characteristics?” (1 = *almost no one*, 5 = *about 50%*, 9 = *almost everyone*).

Trait Preparation and Exclusions

For feasibility and efficiency, we chose to obtain ratings of the cleaned, simplified descriptors, rather than the larger set of raw text responses (which often contained different variants of the same trait, e.g., “sarcasm” and “sarcastic”). We pooled these simplified descriptors across the three samples and best and worst traits. This resulted in 640 unique descriptors. However, based on our previous reading of the descriptors, we knew that some descriptors were nonsensical or would need additional context to be able to be rated and that such descriptors were mostly among those that had been coded as “Other Trait” or “Not a Trait.” To deal with this issue, the first author and a research assistant read the list of terms that had been coded as “Other Trait” or “Not a Trait.” Within these categories, we slightly edited seven terms to improve clarity or add necessary context based on the raw text responses (e.g., “meal planning” → “meal planning skills”; “tease” → “leads people on”; “test-taking” → “test-taking skills”). We also excluded 9 terms that were nonsensical and did not include enough context in the raw responses to be salvaged (e.g., “b emoji,” “memes,” “unconference,” “chewing”). Thus, participants initially rated a set of 631 descriptors.

During data collection, we noticed that “mind” was also quite vague, so we removed it early in the data collection process. A participant also commented that “attitude” was not really a characteristic, so we excluded this term. Thus, the final analyses involved 629 descriptors. Due to a programming error, we accidentally omitted “careful” and “hilarious” from the trait rating

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task. To use as much data as possible, we substituted ratings of the two closest synonyms—“cautious” and “funny”—in their place.

Trait Rating Procedure

We aimed for 20 ratings of each descriptor, on each of the six dimensions. Based on piloting, we estimated that it would take approximately 35–45 minutes to rate all of the descriptors on a single property. Thus, it seemed reasonable to ask subject pool participants to rate the full set of descriptors on one property. However, to make the task more engaging (compared to rating all descriptors on a single property), we randomly split up the descriptors into two sets. Trait raters rated one set of descriptors on one property, then rated the other set of descriptors on a different property.

At the start of the task, trait raters were informed that they would be rating traits that were generated by previous participants and that they would be rating different properties of these traits (rather than rating how much these traits applied to them). They were required to pass a comprehension check to proceed. Before each set of ratings, trait raters also read a brief description of the property that they would be rating (see <https://osf.io/jce7k/> for full materials) and completed a comprehension check to confirm that they understood which property they would be rating.

Trait raters were initially randomly assigned to one of six conditions: (a) Set 1: Desirability (general), Set 2: Observability ($n = 20$); (b) Set 1: Observability; Set 2: Desirability (general) ($n = 20$); (c) Set 1: Desirability (self), Set 2: Base rate ($n = 20$); (d) Set 1: Base rate, Set 2: Desirability (self) ($n = 19$); (e) Set 1: Desirability (friend), Set 2: Breadth ($n = 15$); and (f) Set 1: Breadth, Set 2: Desirability (friend) ($n = 18$).

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During data collection, we discovered that we incorrectly programmed the response scale for the observability measure in the unintuitive direction (i.e., 1 = *extremely easy*, 9 = *extremely difficult*). Because we were concerned that participants would be confused by this response scale (given that the question asked “How easy it would be...”), we immediately corrected the response scale. We also decided to discard these data (without looking at them) and collect additional participants to replace the affected ratings (8 Set 1 ratings and 10 Set 2 ratings; we kept the ratings that these participants provided on the other property, general desirability). We also took this opportunity to top up the other conditions that had fewer than 20 raters (because Qualtrics did not evenly assign participants to conditions, and because 8 of the 120 initial sign-ups did not complete the study before the deadline).

To ensure balanced assignment, we manually assigned the top-up participants to the following conditions: (g) Set 1: Desirability (friend), Set 2: Observability ($n = 5$); (h) Set 1: Observability, Set 2: Breadth ($n = 5$); (i) Set 1: Breadth, Set 2: Observability ($n = 3$); (j) Set 1: Observability, Set 2: Desirability (friend) ($n = 3$); (k) Set 1: Base rate, Set 2: Observability ($n = 2$); (l) Set 1: Observability, Set 2: Desirability (self) ($n = 1$). Thus, we ended up with 21 ratings for some descriptors and properties (Set 1: Base rate, Breadth, and Observability; Set 2: Desirability–Friend) and 20 ratings for all other descriptors and properties.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Inter-rater reliabilities and intercorrelations among the trait properties are shown in Table S8. Table S9 shows the personality descriptors with the highest and lowest ratings on the trait properties. Table S10 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the rated properties, separately for best and worst traits reported by the self and by friends (for each sample).

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As shown in Table S8, all of the individual trait properties were reliably rated, but the index of relative importance was slightly less reliable. Perceived base rate and objectively-measured relative frequency were only modestly correlated ($r = .25$). Replicating past work (Leising et al., 2014), desirable traits were broader (i.e., more abstract), were rated as being more frequent, and were actually more frequently used. All three ratings of desirability (general, self, and friend) were highly intercorrelated. However, as Table S9 shows, many of the traits that are most desirable for the self (e.g., “intelligent,” “happy,” “motivated”) are not the same as those that are most desirable for a friend (e.g., “loyal,” “good listener,” “kind”), and many of the traits that are least desirable for the self (e.g., “idiot,” “difficulty making friends,” “self-hating”) are not the same as those that are least desirable for a friend (e.g., “mean,” “manipulative,” “unsupportive”). The analyses that involve the relative personal importance variable and the desirability ratings for the self and for friends (see below) also suggest that these two sets of desirability ratings function in different ways, and thus are not interchangeable.

Table S8

Inter-Rater Reliabilities and Correlations Among Trait Properties

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Desirability (general)	.97						
2. Desirability (self)	.97	.98					
3. Desirability (friend)	.98	.95	.97				
4. Relative personal importance	-.20	-.26	-.19	.66			
5. Observability	.08	.08	.09	-.07	.83		
6. Breadth	.38	.38	.38	-.11	.12	.87	
7. Base rate	.25	.23	.27	-.09	.08	.14	.82
8. Relative frequency	.20	.17	.20	-.06	.13	.22	.25

Note. $N = 629$ unique trait descriptors, pooled across the three samples. Inter-rater reliabilities (in **boldface** along the diagonal) for all properties except relative personal importance were estimated using the intraclass correlation coefficient, ICC(2, k). We computed the ICC(2, k) separately for each set, then computed the mean across the two sets. For relative personal importance, we computed split-half reliability by correlating relative personal importance computed based on the first half of the raters with self-relevance computed based on the second half of the raters for the constituent desirability (self; 10 raters per half) and desirability (friend; 10 raters for the first half, 11 raters for the second half) properties, and used the Spearman-Brown formula to convert the resulting correlation into a reliability coefficient. All r s except for the *italicized* coefficients were significant at $p < .05$, and all r s $\geq |.12|$ were significant at $p < .005$.

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Table S9

Personality Trait Descriptors with the Highest and Lowest Average Ratings for Each Property

	Highest	Lowest
Desirability (general)	respectful, reliable, good heart, good listener, loyal, hardworking, honest, loving, sincere, motivated	hypocritical, untrustworthy, ungrateful, narcissistic, rude, mean, back-stabber, intolerant, close-minded, inconsiderate
Desirability (self)	intelligent, smart, happy, good friend, interesting, motivated, laughter, lovable, easy to talk to, non-discriminatory	stupid, idiot, addiction, back-stabber, difficulty making friends, liar, self-hating, bad decision-making, annoying, rude
Desirability (friend)	good friend, loyal, loving, reliable, genuine, good listener, easy to talk to, authentic, kind, good heart	rude, mean, annoying, manipulative, liar, dishonest, deceptive, unpleasant, inconsiderate, ungrateful
Relative personal importance	test taking, gullible, clueless, gluttonous, difficulty making friends, clumsy, leadership, incognizant, unconfident, socially awkward	silly, self-interested, carefree, casual, laid-back, joker, self-important, commanding, controlling, open
Observability	loud, laughter, talkative, laughter, rude, polite, well-spoken, socially awkward, charismatic, flirtatious	liar, depressed, hides emotions, changeable, low self-trust, guilt-prone, escapist, not being able to move on, self-destructive, not speaking mind
Breadth	interesting, open, nice, values, unique, weird, crazy, fun, weak, openness	eats late night snacks, dislikes exercise, in-your-face-feminism, doesn't take advice, speaks before thinking, oversleeper, holds grudges, loses sight of reality, not being able to move on, back-stabber
Base rate	wants happiness, stressed, biased, rejection-sensitive, self-critical, self-conscious, follower, lovable, procrastinator, preference for fun versus work	robotic, brutal, helpless, delusional, emotionless, explosive, sissy, prankster, idiot, original

Note. Descriptors that were coded as “Not a personality trait” were excluded from this table (but were included in analyses).

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Table S10

Descriptive Statistics for Rated Properties of Best and Worst Traits Reported by the Self and by Friends

Variable	Best Traits				Worst Traits			
	Self		Friend		Self		Friend	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sample 1								
Desirability (general)	2.63	0.62	2.74	0.57	−1.57	1.16	−1.61	1.19
Desirability (self)	2.67	0.66	2.72	0.61	−1.99	1.20	−1.99	1.29
Desirability (friend)	2.47	0.67	2.61	0.63	−1.37	1.09	−1.46	1.19
Relative personal importance	0.20	0.6	0.12	0.61	0.64	0.71	0.53	0.69
Observability	5.61	0.93	5.78	0.97	5.52	0.94	5.68	0.97
Breadth	5.98	0.87	6.11	0.86	4.97	0.86	4.99	0.87
Perceived base rate	5.03	0.52	5.15	0.52	4.99	0.77	4.95	0.85
Sample 2								
Desirability (general)	2.61	0.65	2.59	0.72	−1.24	1.20	−1.40	1.50
Desirability (self)	2.61	0.65	2.58	0.74	−1.76	1.38	−1.70	1.60
Desirability (friend)	2.45	0.64	2.52	0.75	−1.16	1.11	−1.24	1.44
Relative personal importance	0.16	0.57	0.07	0.58	0.66	0.68	0.49	0.70
Observability	5.48	0.93	5.55	0.97	5.48	0.87	5.47	0.96
Breadth	5.9	0.82	5.93	0.85	4.96	0.84	4.88	0.98
Perceived base rate	5.06	0.52	5.03	0.56	5.19	0.86	4.94	0.86
Sample 3								
Desirability (general)	2.53	0.76	2.62	0.69	−1.25	1.28	−1.30	1.33
Desirability (self)	2.47	0.79	2.55	0.7	−1.73	1.39	−1.60	1.52
Desirability (friend)	2.43	0.79	2.52	0.74	−1.05	1.21	−1.16	1.31
Relative personal importance	0.04	0.49	0.03	0.57	0.66	0.67	0.46	0.69
Observability	5.75	0.98	5.71	1.06	5.63	0.89	5.54	0.89
Breadth	5.94	0.94	5.98	0.86	5.09	0.86	4.92	0.94
Perceived base rate	5.15	0.52	5.05	0.53	5.03	0.76	4.87	0.79

Exploring Explanations for Greater Self–Other Agreement on Best Traits

Why did friends and targets agree more about what the targets’ best traits were, compared to what their worst traits were (see Figure 3)? We examined four possible explanations: relative personal importance, observability, breadth, and base rates (operationalized both as perceived base rates and as actual relative frequencies). To identify plausible candidate mediators, we initially examined (a) whether best and worst traits differed on these four properties (i.e., the IV

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→ M path) and (b) which trait properties predicted self–other agreement on specific traits (i.e., the M → DV path).

Differences in the Properties of Best and Worst Traits. First, we conducted a series of mixed-effects models (with random intercepts for each target) predicting trait properties from whether the descriptor was reported as a best or worst trait. For additional context and comprehensiveness, we added two predictors to the same model—whether it was reported by the self or by a friend, and the interaction between the best vs. worst and self vs. friend factors—and also ran these analyses for the three indices of desirability (in general, for the self, and for a friend). However, the key effects of interest were whether best and worst traits differed in their relative personal importance, observability, breadth, and base rates.

As shown in Table S11, best traits were lower in relative personal importance, compared to worst traits (across all three samples). That is, worst traits tended to be more evaluative for the self than for a friend, whereas best traits were relatively more similar in their evaluative implications for the self and friends alike. Best traits were also rated as being broader (i.e., more abstract) than were worst traits (across all three samples). Best traits were also rated as being more frequent (in Samples 1 and 3), and those descriptors were actually more frequently used (across all three samples). Finally, best traits were rated as being more observable than worst traits in Sample 3 only.

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Table S11

Predicting Trait Properties from Valence (Best vs. Worst), Perspective (Self vs. Friend), and their Interaction

Outcome	Best (vs. Worst) Trait			Self-Reported (vs. Friend-Reported)			Interaction (Best × Self)		
	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Sample 1									
Desirability (general)	4.36	[4.22, 4.49]	< .001	0.05	[−0.09, 0.18]	.505	−0.16	[−0.35, 0.03]	.100
Desirability (self)	4.72	[4.57, 4.86]	< .001	0.00	[−0.14, 0.15]	.954	−0.06	[−0.26, 0.14]	.573
Desirability (friend)	4.06	[3.93, 4.20]	< .001	0.08	[−0.05, 0.22]	.225	−0.22	[−0.40, −0.03]	.025
Relative personal importance	−0.41	[−0.50, −0.32]	< .001	0.11	[0.01, 0.20]	.026	−0.02	[−0.16, 0.11]	.727
Observability	0.10	[−0.04, 0.23]	.161	−0.17	[−0.30, −0.03]	.015	0.00	[−0.19, 0.19]	.968
Breadth	1.12	[1.00, 1.24]	< .001	−0.02	[−0.15, 0.10]	.719	−0.11	[−0.28, 0.07]	.242
Perceived base rate	0.19	[0.1, 0.29]	< .001	0.04	[−0.06, 0.13]	.472	−0.15	[−0.28, −0.01]	.036
Relative frequency	0.55	[0.43, 0.68]	< .001	0.13	[+0.00, 0.25]	.05	−0.26	[−0.44, −0.08]	.004
Sample 2									
Desirability (general)	3.99	[3.8, 4.18]	< .001	0.16	[−0.03, 0.35]	.095	−0.15	[−0.42, 0.12]	.270
Desirability (self)	4.28	[4.07, 4.49]	< .001	−0.06	[−0.27, 0.15]	.572	0.09	[−0.20, 0.39]	.530
Desirability (friend)	3.76	[3.58, 3.94]	< .001	0.08	[−0.10, 0.27]	.373	−0.15	[−0.41, 0.11]	.252
Relative personal importance	−0.42	[−0.53, −0.30]	< .001	0.17	[0.06, 0.28]	.003	−0.08	[−0.24, 0.08]	.331
Observability	0.08	[−0.09, 0.24]	.370	0.00	[−0.16, 0.17]	.957	−0.07	[−0.30, 0.16]	.567
Breadth	1.05	[0.89, 1.20]	< .001	0.08	[−0.07, 0.24]	.312	−0.11	[−0.33, 0.11]	.331
Perceived base rate	0.10	[−0.03, 0.22]	.141	0.25	[0.12, 0.38]	< .001	−0.23	[−0.40, −0.05]	.013
Relative frequency	0.64	[0.52, 0.75]	< .001	0.24	[0.12, 0.36]	< .001	−0.17	[−0.34, −0.00]	.048
Sample 3									
Desirability (general)	3.92	[3.76, 4.08]	< .001	0.05	[−0.11, 0.21]	.552	−0.14	[−0.37, 0.08]	.214
Desirability (self)	4.15	[3.98, 4.33]	< .001	−0.13	[−0.30, 0.05]	.165	0.05	[−0.20, 0.30]	.716
Desirability (friend)	3.68	[3.52, 3.84]	< .001	0.11	[−0.05, 0.27]	.170	−0.20	[−0.42, 0.02]	.082
Relative personal importance	−0.43	[−0.53, −0.34]	< .001	0.20	[0.11, 0.30]	< .001	−0.19	[−0.32, −0.06]	.005
Observability	0.17	[0.02, 0.31]	.023	0.09	[−0.05, 0.24]	.211	−0.05	[−0.25, 0.16]	.642
Breadth	1.06	[0.92, 1.2]	< .001	0.17	[0.03, 0.31]	.020	−0.21	[−0.40, −0.01]	.041
Perceived base rate	0.19	[0.08, 0.29]	< .001	0.17	[0.06, 0.27]	.001	−0.07	[−0.21, 0.08]	.367
Relative frequency	0.72	[0.59, 0.85]	< .001	0.36	[0.23, 0.50]	< .001	−0.33	[−0.52, −0.14]	.001

Note. Effects that replicated at $p < .05$ across at least two samples are highlighted in **boldface**.

Which Trait Properties Predict Greater Self–Other Agreement? Next, we conducted linear mixed-effects models predicting self–other agreement on a specific trait from each property of the self-reported trait descriptor. Models included random intercepts for each target and only one predictor at a time. All predictors were centered around each target’s mean. To facilitate interpretability, we chose to use linear regression rather than logistic regression (in line with recent recommendations; Gomila, 2021). The resulting unstandardized b coefficients can be interpreted as the increase in the probability of a match (e.g., $b = 0.01$ corresponds to a 1% increase) for each 1 unit increase on the predictor variable (on a 9-point scale).

Table S12

Predicting Self–Other Agreement on Specific Traits from Trait Properties (Single-Predictor Models)

Predictor	b	95% CI	p
Sample 1			
Relative personal importance	–0.08	[–0.12, –0.03]	.001
Observability	0.01	[–0.02, 0.05]	.477
Breadth	0.05	[0.02, 0.08]	.002
Perceived base rate	0.05	[0, 0.1]	.072
Relative frequency	0.11	[0.07, 0.14]	< .001
Sample 2			
Relative personal importance	–0.03	[–0.09, 0.02]	.216
Observability	0.03	[–0.01, 0.07]	.170
Breadth	0.07	[0.04, 0.11]	< .001
Perceived base rate	–0.01	[–0.06, 0.05]	.838
Relative frequency	0.08	[0.03, 0.13]	.003
Sample 3			
Relative personal importance	–0.02	[–0.07, 0.03]	.353
Observability	0.05	[0.01, 0.09]	.015
Breadth	0.05	[0.02, 0.08]	.004
Perceived base rate	0.02	[–0.03, 0.07]	.473
Relative frequency	0.08	[0.04, 0.12]	< .001

Note. Effects that replicated at $p < .05$ across at least two samples are highlighted in **boldface**.

As shown in Table S12, the only replicable effects were that the breadth and relative frequency of the self-reported descriptor predicted a greater probability of self–other agreement.

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That is, a self-reported descriptor was more likely to be coded as matching one of the two friend-reported descriptors if that descriptor was more abstract and more frequently used in that sample (across both self- and friend-reports). There were also inconsistent effects of relative personal importance (Sample 1) and observability (Sample 3). There were no detectable effects of perceived base rates in any of the samples.

Mediation Analyses. Based on these preliminary analyses, because perceived base rates did not predict self–other agreement in any of the three samples, we ruled it out as being a potential mediator. Despite some inconsistencies between the samples on the constituent $IV \rightarrow M$ and $M \rightarrow DV$ paths for the remaining trait properties—relative personal importance, observability, breadth, and relative frequency—we proceeded to explore whether each of these properties statistically mediated the greater self–other agreement on best traits compared to worst traits. To do so, we conducted single-mediator models using the R package *mediate* (Tingley et al., 2014), as well as multiple-mediator models (with all four mediators in the model at the same time) using Mplus Version 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017).

As shown in Table S13, relative frequency statistically mediated the greater self–other agreement on best traits compared to worst traits in Samples 1 and 3, but not Sample 2. This was true for single-mediator models and for multiple-mediator models (which controlled for the effects of the other potential mediators). Specifically, in single-mediator models, relative frequency explained 34.41% (Sample 1) and 24% (Sample 3) of the total effect of best traits on self–other agreement; in multiple-mediator models, relative frequency explained 36.3% (Sample 1) and 20.4% (Sample 3) of the total effect of best traits on self–other agreement. There were also some signs that lower relative personal importance mediated the greater self–other agreement on best traits, but this was only detectable in Sample 1.

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Table S13

Multilevel Mediation Models Testing Whether Trait Properties Explain the Greater Self–Other Agreement on Best Traits (vs. Worst Traits)

Mediator	IV → M (<i>a</i> path)	M → DV (<i>b</i> path)	Direct effect (<i>c'</i> path)		Indirect effect (<i>a</i> × <i>b</i> path)	
			<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI
Sample 1						
Single-mediator models						
Rel. personal importance	−0.44***	−0.06*	0.06	[−0.01, 0.12]	0.03**	[0.01, 0.05]
Observability	0.09	0.01	0.08***	[0.03, 0.14]	0.00	[0.00, 0.01]
Breadth	1.03***	0.03	0.05	[−0.02, 0.12]	0.03	[−0.01, 0.07]
Relative frequency	0.30***	0.10***	0.06	[0.00, 0.12]	0.03***	[0.02, 0.05]
Multiple-mediator model						
Rel. personal importance	−0.44***	−0.06*	0.03	[−0.04, 0.1]	0.03*	[0.00, 0.05]
Observability	0.09	−0.01			0.00	[0.00, 0.00]
Breadth	1.03***	−0.01			−0.01	[−0.05, 0.04]
Relative frequency	0.30***	0.10***			0.03***	[0.02, 0.05]
Sample 2						
Single-mediator models						
Rel. personal importance	−0.52***	0.04	0.20***	[0.14, 0.27]	−0.02	[−0.05, 0.01]
Observability	−0.01	0.03	0.19***	[0.12, 0.24]	0.00	[−0.01, 0.00]
Breadth	0.92***	0.03	0.16***	[0.09, 0.23]	0.02	[−0.01, 0.06]
Relative frequency	0.47***	0.02	0.17***	[0.1, 0.24]	0.01	[−0.02, 0.04]
Multiple-mediator model						
Rel. personal importance	−0.52***	0.04	0.18***	[0.1, 0.26]	−0.02	[−0.05, 0.01]
Observability	−0.01	0.02			0.00	[−0.00, +0.00]
Breadth	0.92***	0.02			0.02	[−0.02, 0.06]
Relative frequency	0.47***	0.02			0.01	[−0.02, 0.03]
Sample 3						
Single-mediator models						
Rel. personal importance	−0.63***	0.03	0.13***	[0.06, 0.19]	−0.02	[−0.05, 0.02]
Observability	0.11	0.04*	0.10**	[0.04, 0.16]	0.00	[−0.00, 0.01]
Breadth	0.85***	0.03	0.09*	[0.02, 0.15]	0.02	[−0.01, 0.05]
Relative frequency	0.39***	0.06**	0.08**	[0.02, 0.14]	0.03**	[0.01, 0.04]
Multiple-mediator model						
Rel. personal importance	−0.63***	0.03	0.10**	[0.03, 0.17]	−0.02	[−0.06, 0.02]
Observability	0.11	0.02			0.00	[0.00, 0.01]
Breadth	0.86***	0.00			0.00	[−0.03, 0.04]
Relative frequency	0.40***	0.06*			0.02*	[+0.00, 0.04]

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Indirect effects that replicated at $p < .05$ across at least two samples are highlighted in **boldface**. IV → M = the effect of best trait (vs. worst trait) on the mediator. M → DV = the effect of the mediator on self–other agreement.

Direct effects were consistently detectable in Samples 2 and 3, and generally detectable in Sample 1 (in which the lower bounds of the 95% CIs for direct effects that were not detectable

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were close to zero). Notwithstanding the methodological issues (e.g., the impact of measurement error and statistical power) that make it difficult to draw strong conclusions about full vs. partial mediation (and the general limitations of statistical mediation; Bullock et al., 2010), our interpretation of these results is that other factors beyond the ones we considered here likely contribute to the greater self–other agreement on best traits (compared to worst traits).

To What Extent is the Desirability of a Trait in the Eye of the Beholder?

Our next goal was to test an explanation we raised in the Discussion section regarding one potential source of self–other asymmetries: targets and friends may both be evaluating which of the targets’ traits are instrumentally best or worst for *themselves*, such that targets tend to report traits that are more desirable or undesirable for the self, whereas friends tend to report traits that are more desirable or undesirable to have in a friend. We explore this issue in two ways.

Self–Other Differences in Relative Personal Importance. First, we compare whether targets’ self-reported best and worst traits are relatively more desirable or undesirable for the self than for a friend, compared to friend-reported traits. Across all three samples, best vs. worst traits, and self- vs. friend-reports, the means for the relative personal importance variable were positive (see Table S10). That is, on average, both the self and friends tended to report traits that were more desirable or undesirable for the self than for a friend. This might be in part because the same trait tended to be rated as being less evaluatively extreme for a friend than for the self, as revealed by a paired-samples *t*-test on the set of 629 traits ($M_{\text{dif}} = 0.42$, 95% CI = [0.36, 0.47], $p < .001$).

However, mixed-effects models (described above; see Table S11) showed that self-reported (vs. friend-reported) best and worst traits tended to be relatively more personally

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important for the self than for a friend. Notably, in Sample 3, these self–other differences in relative personal importance were especially large for worst traits (compared to best traits). Overall, this illustrates one way in which the desirability of a trait appears to be in the eye of the beholder: when people are thinking about their own best and worst traits (compared to a friend’s best and worst traits), they have a stronger tendency to report best and worst traits that are especially good or bad for the self than for a friend. The interaction effect in Sample 3 provides suggestive evidence that this might be particularly true for worst traits.

Broad Trait Categories’ Relative Desirability for the Self vs. for Friends. Next, we compare the relative desirability of broad trait categories for the self vs. for a friend (e.g., are low emotional stability traits more undesirable for the self than for a friend)? To do so, for each broad trait category (pooling across best and worst traits and self- and friend-reports), we computed traits’ mean desirability ratings for the self or a friend (see Figure S2). Interestingly, whereas extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness tended to be more evaluative for the self than for a friend, the prosocial domains appeared to be similarly (agreeableness) or less (honesty-humility) evaluative for the self, compared to for a friend.

Figure S2. Desirability ratings of high and low levels of the Big Five (Sample 1, Panel S1) or Big Six traits (Sample 2–3, Panels S2–S3) for the self or for a friend. “High pole” and “Low pole” denote the mean desirability ratings of traits that fell within the high or low pole of each domain, respectively. Traits were pooled across best and worst traits and self- and friend-reports.

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Rather than conducting all possible comparisons, we chose to focus on a few comparisons that were most relevant for understanding the self–other similarity on best traits and the self–other asymmetries on low emotional stability and low prosociality worst traits. Thus, we used linear regression models to examine (a) self–friend differences in the desirability of high extraversion, agreeableness, and honesty-humility traits and (b) whether low emotional stability traits were relatively less desirable than low agreeableness and honesty-humility traits for the self than for a friend.

In the Discussion, we suggested that the emphasis by both the self and friends on sociable and prosocial best traits may reflect the fact that these traits are beneficial for both personal well-being and friendships. Partially supporting this idea, high extraversion and high agreeableness traits were generally rated as being similarly desirable for the self and for friends; one exception was that high agreeableness traits were rated as being slightly more desirable for friends than the self in Sample 1 (see Table S14). However, consistent with the finding that friends more frequently mentioned high honesty-humility traits than did the self (in Sample 3), high honesty-humility traits were also rated as being more desirable for a friend than for the self (in both Samples 2 and 3).

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Table S14

Examining Differences in Trait Categories’ Desirability Ratings for the Self or for Friends

Predictor or Domain	Sample 1			Sample 2			Sample 3		
	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Desirability for the self (vs. for friends)									
High E	0.06	[−0.16, 0.27]	.589	−0.01	[−0.35, 0.32]	.932	−0.01	[−0.21, 0.20]	.945
High A	−0.17	[−0.27, −0.07]	.001	−0.16	[−0.42, 0.09]	.214	−0.20	[−0.44, 0.03]	.094
High H				−0.5	[−0.67, −0.33]	< .001	−0.48	[−0.75, −0.22]	< .001
Low ES vs. Low A									
Domain (low ES)	0.60	[0.39, 0.81]	< .001	0.43	[0.15, 0.70]	.002	0.13	[−0.12, 0.37]	.304
Simple slopes: self	−0.29	[−0.51, −0.06]	.012	−0.27	[−0.57, 0.04]	.085	−0.62	[−0.89, −0.36]	< .001
Simple slopes: friend	0.60	[0.40, 0.80]	< .001	0.43	[0.18, 0.67]	.001	0.13	[−0.09, 0.35]	.256
Perspective (self)	0.09	[−0.13, 0.31]	.408	0.03	[−0.30, 0.36]	.841	0.07	[−0.21, 0.35]	.625
Low ES × self	−0.89	[−1.19, −0.59]	< .001	−0.69	[−1.08, −0.3]	.001	−0.75	[−1.10, −0.4]	< .001
Low ES vs. Low H									
Domain (low ES)				0.96	[0.63, 1.29]	< .001	0.46	[+0.00, 0.91]	< .001
Simple slopes: self				0.27	[−0.09, 0.64]	.135	−0.24	[−0.75, 0.26]	.343
Simple slopes: friend				0.96	[0.67, 1.25]	< .001	0.46	[0.05, 0.86]	.027
Perspective (self)				0.03	[−0.39, 0.45]	.898	0.02	[−0.60, 0.64]	.953
Low ES × self				−0.69	[−1.15, −0.22]	.004	−0.70	[−1.34, −0.06]	.033

Note. Effects that replicated at $p < .05$ across at least two samples are highlighted in **boldface**. All mentions of “self” or “friend” refer to the desirability of the trait for the self or for a friend, rather than whether the trait was self-reported or friend-reported.

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Next, we compared whether low emotional stability traits were relatively less desirable than low agreeableness and honesty-humility traits for the self than for a friend. As shown in Table S14, all interaction effects were significant. This shows that low emotional stability traits were relatively less desirable than low agreeableness and low honesty-humility traits for the self than for friends. Simple slope analyses revealed that low emotional stability traits were generally less desirable than low agreeableness traits for the self (detectable in Samples 1 and 3, and marginal in Sample 2), and low agreeableness traits were generally less desirable than low emotional stability traits for friends (in Samples 1 and 2). However, the simple slope results for honesty-humility were slightly more ambiguous: consistent with the results for low agreeableness, low honesty-humility was less desirable than low emotional stability for friends (in both Samples 2 and 3). However, low honesty-humility was also *less* desirable (rather than more desirable) than low emotional stability traits for the self (in Sample 2 only). All in all, however, the results clearly show that low emotional stability traits are relatively less desirable than low prosociality traits for the self than for a friend.

General Desirability and Evaluative Extremity of Best and Worst Traits

Finally, for interest, Figure S3 shows the distributions of best and worst traits’ general desirability ratings, pooled across the three samples. This shows that worst traits spanned a wider range of the continuum of general desirability, compared to best traits. That is, whereas the vast majority of best traits were clearly desirable (when rated in the abstract), a sizable proportion of worst traits were rated as being neither desirable nor undesirable, or even somewhat desirable in the abstract.

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Figure S3. Distributions of general desirability ratings for best traits and worst traits. Trait descriptors were pooled across the three samples and self- and friend-perspectives (i.e., 1,850 best traits and 1,849 worst traits).

Past work (Leising et al., 2012) found that negative descriptors were more evaluatively extreme than positive descriptors. We explored whether this pattern would replicate in the context of best and worst traits reported by the self and by friends. Mixed-effects models predicting evaluativeness (i.e., the absolute distance from the midpoint of the general desirability scale) from whether a descriptor was reported as a best or worst trait (with random intercepts for each target) revealed the opposite pattern: best traits were more positive than worst traits were negative (Sample 1: $b = 0.91$, 95% CI [0.83, 0.98], Sample 2: $b = 0.92$, 95% CI [0.83, 1.01], Sample 3: $b = 0.97$, 95% CI [0.88, 1.05]; all $ps < .001$). This is likely because all descriptors in this study referred to liked targets (i.e., either oneself or a friend), whereas Leising et al.’s (2012) negative descriptors referred to disliked targets. Thus, the self and friends may have shown restraint in their choice of negative descriptors, or may simply not have had extreme negative perceptions of the targets.

8. Predicting Best and Worst Traits from Trait Levels

Do best and worst traits reflect stable behavioral tendencies or uncharacteristic, infrequent behaviors? To what extent do best and worst traits reflect participants’ standings on corresponding broad traits? To answer these questions, we predicted the trait category of best and worst traits from self- or friend-reported Big Five (Sample 1) or Big Six (Samples 2 and 3) trait levels. In Sample 1, participants and friends completed the 44-item Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999), where responses were made on a 15-point scale anchored by *disagree strongly* and *agree strongly*. In Samples 2 and 3, participants and friends completed the 60-item Big Five Inventory–Revised (Soto & John, 2017), where responses were made on a 5-point scale anchored by *disagree strongly* and *agree strongly*. They also completed the honesty-humility scale from the 100-item HEXACO Personality Inventory–Revised (Lee & Ashton, 2018), where responses were made on a 5-point scale anchored by *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*.

Descriptive statistics for the trait measures are shown in Table S15. Figure S4 plots the means of trait scores separated by whether participants had one or more best traits, one or more worst traits, or neither best traits nor worst traits that reflected that broad trait category.

As might be expected, in general, participants who had a worst trait that reflected low levels of the corresponding trait category tended to have lower levels of that trait, whereas participants who had a best trait or worst trait that reflected high levels of the corresponding trait category tended to have higher levels of that trait (relative to the sample mean). However, as evidenced by the substantial variability around these trends, many people with lower than average scores on a given broad trait had best traits that reflected high levels of that trait (and vice versa for worst traits).

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Table S15

Descriptive Statistics for Current Trait Levels

	Self-Reports			Friend-Reports			Self-Other Agreement		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ω	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ω	<i>r</i>	95% CI	<i>p</i>
Sample 1									
Extraversion	3.31	0.98	.91	3.69	0.87	.89	.59	[.49, .68]	< .001
Agreeableness	3.82	0.74	.83	3.86	0.82	.88	.38	[.25, .50]	< .001
Conscientiousness	3.57	0.82	.86	3.73	0.85	.89	.46	[.34, .57]	< .001
Emotional Stability	3.21	0.85	.84	3.45	0.88	.88	.51	[.40, .61]	< .001
Openness	3.51	0.69	.81	3.56	0.69	.86	.53	[.41, .62]	< .001
Sample 2									
Extraversion	3.38	0.74	.89	3.6	0.74	.87	.67	[.55, .75]	< .001
Agreeableness	3.79	0.59	.82	3.84	0.66	.84	.37	[.21, .52]	< .001
Conscientiousness	3.69	0.62	.83	3.83	0.72	.87	.44	[.28, .57]	< .001
Emotional Stability	2.83	0.85	.91	3.11	0.87	.91	.58	[.45, .69]	< .001
Openness	3.81	0.63	.83	3.85	0.68	.88	.38	[.21, .52]	< .001
Honesty-Humility	3.28	0.52	.79	3.34	0.65	.85	.31	[.14, .46]	.001
Sample 3									
Extraversion	3.05	0.72	.86	3.38	0.69	.84	.56	[.44, .66]	< .001
Agreeableness	3.67	0.58	.79	3.84	0.61	.82	.31	[.17, .45]	< .001
Conscientiousness	3.49	0.63	.84	3.81	0.73	.87	.42	[.28, .54]	< .001
Emotional Stability	2.69	0.8	.89	3.14	0.88	.92	.40	[.26, .52]	< .001
Openness	3.69	0.62	.84	3.8	0.64	.85	.34	[.20, .47]	< .001
Honesty-Humility	3.51	0.49	.75	3.52	0.6	.85	.26	[.11, .40]	.001

Note. Sample 1 used the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999); Samples 2 and 3 used the Big Five Inventory–Revised (Soto & John, 2017) and the honesty-humility subscale from the HEXACO Personality Inventory–Revised (Lee & Ashton, 2018). In Sample 1, responses were made on a 1–15 scale. To facilitate comparability with Samples 2 and 3, we rescaled the scores to a 1–5 scale. ω = omega reliability coefficient.

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Figure S4. Standardized trait scores (y-axis) for participants who had worst traits that reflected low levels of the corresponding trait domain, best traits that reflected high levels of the corresponding trait domain, worst traits that reflected high levels of the corresponding trait domain, or did not have a best or worst trait the reflected the corresponding trait domain (“None”). The worst trait (low), best trait (high), and worst trait (high) categories were not mutually exclusive. Error bars depict 95% confidence intervals (CIs) around the mean. We do not present error bars for categories that had three or fewer participants in that category (as some of these CIs were misleadingly small). The left column shows data from self-reported trait levels and self-reported best and worst traits; the right column shows data from friend-reported trait levels and friend-reported best and worst traits. Transparent dots depict individual data points. Missing means and error bars indicate that no participants were in that category.

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Interestingly, participants who had a given trait as a best or worst trait did not typically have particularly extreme scores on the corresponding broad traits. On average, trait scores were around +0.23 SD for those with a best trait that reflected high levels of the corresponding trait, -0.36 SD for those with a worst trait that reflected low levels of the corresponding trait, and +0.26 SD for those with a worst trait that reflected high levels of the corresponding trait. This might be partially due to a mismatch in breadth (e.g., a person might have extremely high levels of the specific trait of kindness without having extremely high levels of the broad trait of agreeableness). Moreover, even if a person has lower levels of kindness (for example) than the average person, it might still be the case that most people have “enough” kindness (in an absolute sense; Blanton & Jaccard, 2006; Tay & Jebb, 2018) to be able to claim that it is one of their best traits. Thus, it seems likely that best and worst traits capture more than just relative standings on broad traits.

Next, we conducted logistic regression analyses in which we predicted whether or not people or their friends named a best or worst trait that reflected high or low levels of a given trait domain (0 = no, 1 = yes) from self- or friend-reports of their current levels of that trait. Analyses were conducted separately for each of the Big Five or Six traits, for each best or worst trait type (best traits that reflected high levels of the Big Five or Six, worst traits that reflected low levels of the Big Five or Six, and worst traits that reflected high levels of the Big Five or Six), and for each perspective (self- or friend-reports). For example, were participants who rated themselves as having higher (vs. lower) levels of trait extraversion more likely to report a best trait that reflected high levels of extraversion? We did not attempt to predict best traits that reflected low levels of the Big Five or Six because such traits were almost never reported.

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As shown in Figure S5, overall, best and worst traits were somewhat calibrated to participants’ and friends’ perceptions of their current levels of those traits. Although effects were somewhat inconsistent across samples, traits, and perspectives, we computed average odds ratios to provide a descriptive sense of the overall effect sizes. These indicated that each 1 SD increase in levels of a given trait predicted a 47% increase in the odds of reporting high levels of that trait as a best trait. Each 1 SD increase in levels of a given trait predicted a 61% increase in the odds of reporting high levels of that trait as a worst trait, and each 1 SD decrease in levels of a given trait predicted an 86% increase in the odds of reporting low levels of that trait as a worst trait.

More specifically, across two samples, targets who reported having higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were more likely to report a best trait that reflected high levels of these respective traits. Across two samples, friends were also more likely to say that one of their target’s best traits was high extraversion or conscientiousness if they rated them as having higher levels of these traits.

For worst traits, across at least two samples, targets who reported having lower levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were more likely to report a worst trait that reflected low levels of these respective traits. These effects held for friend-reports (across at least two samples). Friends were also more likely to report that one of their target’s worst traits was low honesty-humility if they rated them as having lower levels of honesty-humility.

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Figure S5. Odds ratios (ORs) for logistic regressions predicting whether or not a person had a best or worst trait that reflected high or low levels of a broad trait domain from trait levels of the respective trait. Error bars depict 95% confidence intervals. Analyses were within-perspective; that is, self-reported best or worst traits were regressed onto self-reported trait levels (z -scored), and friend-reported best or worst traits were regressed onto friend-reported trait levels (z -scored). ORs for analyses predicting worst traits that reflected low levels of a trait (second row) were inverted to facilitate comparability of effect sizes with the other two sets of analyses. For analyses predicting best or worst traits that reflected high levels, ORs > 1 mean that a person who had higher levels of that trait were more likely to have high levels or that trait as a best or worst trait (respectively); for analyses predicting worst traits that reflected low levels of a trait, ORs > 1 mean that a person who had lower levels of that trait were more likely to have low levels of that trait as a worst trait.

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Finally, the effects for predicting worst traits that reflected high levels of the Big Five or Six were less precise because these kinds of worst traits were less prevalent. Nevertheless, across two samples, targets who self-reported having higher levels of extraversion and conscientiousness were more likely to report a worst trait that reflected high levels of these respective traits. These effects held for friend-reports (across at least two samples). Friends were also more likely to report that one of their target’s worst traits was high agreeableness if they rated them as being more agreeable.

Overall, these results suggest that best and worst traits are at least somewhat calibrated to self- and friend-perceptions of the targets’ levels of corresponding broad traits. However, perceptions of relative standings on broad traits are likely only one small contributor to judgments of best and worst traits.

9. Gender Differences

Figure S6. The percentage of self- or friend-reported best or worst traits that reflected the high (+) or low (–) poles of each of the Big Five or Big Six traits, separately for men and women. Results for the extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness domains were pooled across all three samples (102 men and 359 women). Because we used different definitions of agreeableness for Sample 1 (A_1 ; 50 men and 132 women) compared to Samples 2 and 3 ($A_{2\&3}$; 52 men and 227 women), we pooled the results for agreeableness separately for these respective samples. Honesty-humility was only coded in Samples 2 and 3 (52 men and 227 women). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ for the differences between self- and friend-reports. Asterisks are on the side with a larger percentage. The percentages were computed separately for self- and friend-reports, and the denominator included all responses for each perspective (even those that could not be coded as a Big Five or Six trait). Error bars depict 95% confidence intervals.

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Figure S7. Gender differences in the relative frequency of the top 50 most frequent best trait (Panel A) and worst trait (Panel B) descriptors, pooled across all three samples and self- and friend-reports. The top 50 frequencies were based on the average of the relative frequencies for men and women. Relative frequencies were computed by dividing the total frequency by the sample sizes for men and women, multiplied by 4 (corresponding to two self-reported traits and two friend-reported traits). Participants who identified as neither male nor female (or did not report their gender) were excluded from this analysis. Larger and darker words and the y-axis correspond to more frequently-mentioned descriptors (summed across men and women). Descriptors on the left and right of the 0 on the x-axis were relatively more frequently used to describe female ($n = 359$) and male targets ($n = 102$), respectively; 0 on the x-axis indicates that the descriptor was used to describe men and women at the same relative frequency.

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