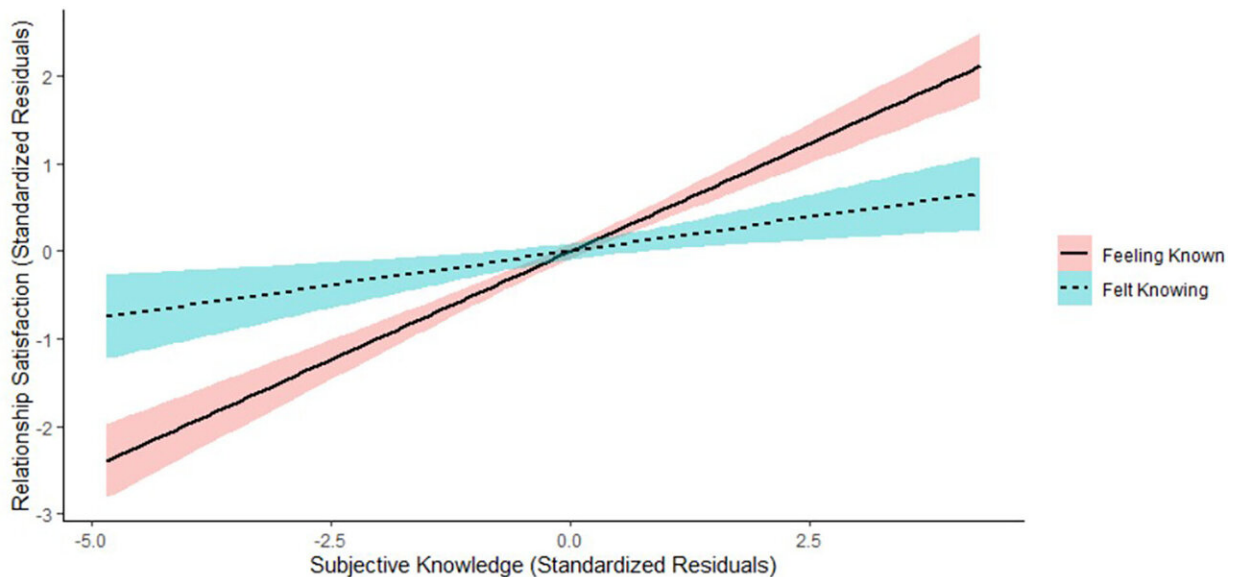


# Research reveals the key to an irresistible online dating profile

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Partial regression plot of the effects of feeling known (standardized residuals controlling for felt knowing) and felt knowing (standardized residuals controlling for feeling known) on the standardized residual of relationship satisfaction with family in Study 1a. Credit: *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (2023). DOI: 10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104559

In writing a good online dating profile, the average love-seeker will likely fill it up with all the appealing qualities and interests that make them special. They paraglide and do hot yoga on the weekends, enjoy Riesling on the beach or seeing indie bands in basements, are a Libra

with Scorpio rising, or have a dog or three kids or an iguana. There's one thing they routinely leave out, however: what they want to know about their potential partner.

Yet, that detail might be the most important thing to include, according to research by Haas Associate Professor Juliana Schroeder.

"People want to be known, so they're looking for partners who will know them and support them," she says. "But because other people also want to be known, they end up writing these not-super-appealing profiles when trying to attract partners."

In her recent paper "[Feeling Known Predicts Relationship Satisfaction](#)," Schroeder argues the phenomenon occurs not only with romantic couples, but in all manner of interpersonal relationships, including friends, neighbors, [family members](#), work colleagues, and casual acquaintances.

In each case, people were more satisfied when they felt like they were known rather than when they felt like they knew the other person, according to a series of experiments Schroeder carried out with co-author Ayelet Fishbach of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

"Of course, people say they want to know their relationship [partner](#) and support their partner," says Schroeder, Harold Furst Chair in Management Philosophy & Values at Berkeley Haas. "But that's not actually the thing that makes them happiest in their relationships. People feel happier in relationships where they feel like they are being supported—and for that, they have to be known."

Fishbach noted that the research project started a decade ago after she and Schroeder discovered that patients want their physicians not to have

emotions of their own so that they can fully attend to them and feel their pain—a phenomenon they called the empty vessel effect. "We wondered whether this is a more general phenomenon whereby people are attuned to what others know about them more than what they know about others," Fishbach says.

In an initial set of experiments published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, the researchers asked participants to rate how well they believed they knew a family member, partner, or friend compared to how well they believed they were known—and then to rate their [relationship satisfaction](#) on a scale of 1 to 7.

Interestingly, people routinely thought they knew the other person better than the other person knew them. This effect has been called the illusion of asymmetric insight. "People think they are unique and special and have a lot of complexity to them, so other people just don't know their true self," Schroeder says. "Whereas once they know one thing about the other person, they're like "I know you. Done.'"

Perhaps because it's so rare to feel that anyone really knows us, people value it more highly in their relationships. In fact, the degree to which they knew the other person mattered less in how they felt about the relationship compared to the degree to which they felt they were known, regardless of how they felt about the overall quality of the relationship.

In another study, the researchers presented participants with one of two scenarios in which they ran into an acquaintance at a party who either forgot their name or whose name they forgot. Participants had different reactions to the two scenarios—as Schroeder summarizes: "If you forget their name, it's not great for the relationship, but if they forget your name, it's much worse—the relationship is over," Schroeder says.

Carrying these concepts over to dating profiles, Schroeder and Fishbach

enlisted a team of research assistants to examine profiles from dating sites Match.com and Coffee Meets Bagel. Based on statements in the profiles, they rated more than 50% of the writers as wanting to be known by a potential partner, while only about 20% expressed a desire to know their potential partner.

They then asked several dozen online participants to write their own profiles, either emphasizing being known or getting to know the other person. Finally, they asked more than 250 other people to rate these profiles on a scale of 1 to 7, according to how much they found them appealing and how much they would potentially want to contact them.

In keeping with the rest of their findings, Schroeder and Fishbach found that the raters preferred those profile writers who emphasized wanting to know the other person.

Those findings could be instructive for someone trying to make themselves as appealing as possible on a dating site. "What they want to be doing is saying, "I really care about you, and I'm going to get to know you and be there for you and listen to you and be a great partner," Schroeder says.

In all of the studies, there was only one type of relationship in which people did not care about being known: a parent's relationship with their child. "In fact, we found an effect going in the opposite direction," Schroeder says. "The thing that predicts relationship satisfaction is not how well they think their child knows them, it's how well they know their child."

That makes sense, she adds, lending credence to the idea that the phenomenon is essentially about support. "It's the one relationship where it's very clear the parent needs to be supporting the child."

The next step for Schroeder and Fishbach is to consider how people might shift their focus towards using their knowledge of other people to make them feel known in a genuine way. In a workplace context, for example, it's possible that feeling known might not only improve relationship satisfaction with colleagues, but overall job satisfaction as well.

"To develop relationships with work colleagues, you might think not just about [personal knowledge](#), but also what are people's habits and how they like to work," Schoeder says. "While this was beyond the scope of our study, it's possible that stronger workplace relationships could ultimately make a difference in terms of people's satisfaction with their jobs."

**More information:** Juliana Schroeder et al, Feeling known predicts relationship satisfaction, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104559](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104559)

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