Written by Watsons:
an Introspective Look at Oneself Through Sherlock Holmes

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Abstract

Through survey-based data collection and comparison to Sherlock Holmes, I will attempt to figure out who *I* really am. Using surveys collected from myself, friends, and strangers regarding our opinions on Holmes, and with the exception of the strangers, our opinions on myself. Through this data I have found that my "I" is single-minded and precise and my "Me" is warm, sensitive, and self-reliant. I have also found that I fall in line with the findings of the MacNeill & DiTommaso study since I (an anxiously attached person) have a favorite character who is seen as having the traits of "Vigilant" and "Tension" (Sherlock Holmes).

Literature Review & Rationale

According to the MacNeill and DiTommaso research, a person who has an anxious attachment will report their favorite character to have standoffish and anxious characteristics. However, the opinions of a superfan are not the same as the opinions of a casual fan or non-fan. This is why I am planning on asking strangers and friends about Holmes's personality. This baseline of Holmes as a character will help me see if I truly fall in line with the results of the study. I also want a more rounded view of the character in order to see what parts of his personality I focus on when speaking about him - which will be shown in both my responses to the larger questionnaire and my friend's responses to the smaller questionnaire.

Our self identity is in part a mash-up of how we internalize others' opinions of us, which in this case will be my data; I am also going to internalize all of this information and try to make sense of who I've become over my years of loving Holmes content. Using concepts put forth by George Herbert Mead, specifically the "I" and the "Me," I will look for myself in this data. The "I" reacts to the self which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others. Through taking those attitudes we have introduced the "me" and we react to it as an "I."[1] The "Me" is socialized, it's the result of who you become once you internalize others perceptions of and reactions to you, whereas the "I" is the uninhibited self, who you are before these internalizations.

I am using this data in relation to Holmes because the original Holmes stories are written through the point-of-view of John Watson. A best

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[1] Mead, G. H. (1955). The Self. In C. W. Morris (Ed.), Mind, Self and Society (10th ed., pp. 135–226). Chicago University Press. (Original work published 1934)

friend who internalizes his own opinions and experiences with Holmes and puts them on the page - but also these men are created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and are born out of his life, experiences, needs, and wants. When it comes to the audience's perception of Holmes, the character is created through our internalization of the way John Watson writes him, therefore I am just continuing a loop of self-identification through the written opinions of others.

According to Mead, "There are parts of the self which exist only for the self in relationship to itself. We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances."[1] One of those different selves is the self we are when we speak of our favorite characters, or the self we are when taking a self-assessment test, or the self we are when we're with our friends. Who am *I* if all of these I's are Me?

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[1] Mead, G. H. (1955). The Self. In C. W. Morris (Ed.), Mind, Self and Society (10th ed., pp. 135–226). Chicago University Press. (Original work published 1934)

Methodology

The research for this project would come in 3 parts: a recorded adjusted recreation of the MacNeill & DiTommaso experiment, a survey of strangers, and a survey of friends. Here I will expand on what these pieces entail.

The MacNeill & DiTommaso experiment had people complete two assessments: one was a 36 item self-assessment of adult attachment filled out in relation to themselves and the second was a sixteen personality factor questionnaire filled out in relation to their favorite media character.

I will screen record myself taking both assessments. For the first assessment, I will be thinking about myself and answering accordingly. Then I will write down the name of my favorite fictional character and what piece of media they are from - for me, this will be Sherlock Holmes and I will reference my two favorite pieces of Holmes media: The four season series referred to as "Granada Holmes" which ran on British television from 1984 to 1994 and FOX's House M.D. which ran from 2004 to 2012. I will take the second questionnaire while thinking about Sherlock Holmes.

The group of strangers will essentially act as my control group. A total of 120 strangers were collected via r/SherlockHolmes, and asked to fill out a two point questionnaire: "When you are asked to think of Sherlock Holmes, what movie/tv show/book/game comes to mind first?" and "Out of these sixteen qualities, which three do you think relate the most to Sherlock Holmes?" The point of this is to collect a group of

people who have not already had their views of Holmes tainted by my incessant talking about him.

A total of 10 of my friends will respond to the same two point questionnaire. The thought behind having a friend group and a group of strangers is that I assume the friend group will fall more into line with the way I view Holmes, which will help me pinpoint what personality traits I emphasize when talking of Holmes to others.

However, I will also ask my friends to do the same second question but this time to think of me. They will list which three of the sixteen personality traits they attribute to me. This question will be asked first, in order to not have their responses be clouded by what they said about Holmes.

Discussion

What parts of me have I put in Sherlock Holmes?

I have not put any of myself in Holmes, my friends see me as a far more emotionally complex character than they see Holmes. Data for Holmes is clustered around the same traits listed by the 120 Holmes fans (Reasoning, Perfectionism, Self-Reliance); it was so clustered that six traits received zero votes, as compared to the three traits that received zero votes in the data about me.

Upon further reflection - an analysis of my preferred Holmes media (both canon and fan-made) and my personality trait assessment where I thought of Holmes - my personal view of Holmes seems to be a clearer reflection of myself than the one my friends have. Perhaps Hojung was just on Tumblr too much to not go, "GAY!" the moment I bring him up in conversation - my influence means nothing. Personally though, my analysis of Holmes is a little more cold and aloof (high scores of both Tension and Abstractedness) and when I think of purely Holmes - not a version of him like Greg or Bruce or Edwin - I think of him in the back of a horse-drawn wagon next to an amused Watson, wrapped up in a blanket that he will take to a mansion in Cornwall and never take off.[2] Soft. Closed off but willing to share when his interest is peaked - but only then.

Results show that I have not influenced the way my friends view Holmes, but I have projected onto the character far more than previously realized.

Results show that my "I" is a single-minded person, whose precision helps them achieve their goals, someone who is hoping to find connection and may be overzealous in that pursuit.

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[2] "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" *His Last Bow* ACD, 1910. "The Devil's Foot" Granada, 1988

What parts of Sherlock Holmes have I stolen and codified in myself?

According to the 120 responses from Sherlock Holmes fans, Holmes's two main personality traits are Reasoning and Self-Reliance - both of which make sense for Holmes as a character, he's a hyper-intelligent detective who often runs off on his own when deep in a case. When it comes to me, these two traits were tied for third place in the personality traits my friends used to describe me, following Warmth and Sensitivity. Personally, I think I'm a bitch, however I do give good presents so mayhaps that swayed the polls towards sentimentality. Reasoning and Self-Reliance were only used to describe me three times, so only by just under one third of the entire sample group.

However, a fun thing of note here is that in my 120 responses from Holmes fans, 5 of them checked off "Warmth" for Holmes and this group of 5 was within the 18 to 25 age range, most of them said their Holmes references was the original stories (⅗) and while others said Soviet Holmes and BBC Sherlock. I don't know, I just like the idea that younger people are seeing past the cold "British Gentleman" image constantly thrown at Holmes by the old men in the Holmes Societies that would probably never fund my work because I think Holmes is gay. Oh well.

Results show that I did not steal and codify any personality traits from Sherlock Holmes in myself.

Results show that I like the bitchy-but-warm-hearted characters because I may see myself in them, as I have been told I am "intimidating" upon first meeting.[3]

Results show that my "Me" is someone who pays attention to their friends, offers both a shoulder and a solution, and is prone to being a loner.

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[3] Nikki, Mary, Jeans, Khaleed, Kat

Does my attachment style & description of Holmes match the results of the MacNeill & DiTommaso study?

I have an anxious avoidant attachment, meaning that I am worried and dissatisfied with the attention I receive in personal romantic relationships but I am not quiet about it and will voice these opinions. My last therapist, Laura, once told me I never felt secure in childhood probably due to my parents never treating me like a child - their rule of "no baby speak around the baby" did not help with my development. I don't think I ever was a child.

The MacNeill and DiTommaso study claims that people with anxious attachment styles are more likely to like characters that they deem tense and vigilant, and this seems to ring true with me.

Holmes as a Real Person

Sherlock Holmes feels like an old friend, someone who was there when people would text the day of that they didn't feel up to hanging out after I was showered and ready - Holmes never stood me up.

Writing this resulted in multiple times I had to backspace out "Sherlock" and replace it with just "Holmes" because there's a level of familiarity with him that I feel it's okay to refer to him by his first name.

Once in middle school I got asked for the first time if Holmes was a real person, Noah in second period English. I laughed because - obviously not, he's very famously a fictional character.

"You talk about him like he is."

An aside on Holmes from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:

CHAPTER XI

SIDELIGHTS ON SHERLOCK HOLMES

"The Speckled Band"—Barrie's Parody on Holmes—Holmes on the Films—Methods of Construction—Problems—Curious Letters—Some Personal Cases—Strange Happenings.

I MAY as well interrupt my narrative here in order to say what may interest my readers about my most notorious character.

The impression that Holmes was a real person of flesh and blood may have been intensified by his frequent appearance upon the stage. After the withdrawal of my dramatization of "Rodney Stone" from a theatre upon which I held a six months' lease, I determined to play a bold and energetic game, for an empty theatre spells ruin. When I saw the course that things were taking I shut myself up and devoted my whole mind to making a sensational Sherlock Holmes drama. I wrote it in a week and called it "The Speckled Band" after the short story of that name. I do not think that I exaggerate if I say that within a fortnight of the one play shutting down I had a company working upon the rehearsals of a second one, which had been written in the interval. It was a considerable success. Lyn Harding, as the half epileptic and wholly formidable Doctor Grimesby Rylott, was wonderful, while Saintsbury as Sherlock Holmes was good. Before the end of the run that I had lost upon the other a permanent piece and a fine rock

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