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Title: "What we know and how we communicate it"

Abstract(s): "Two papers on how we communicate what we know to others. The first paper builds on the existing notion that we think we understand the world better than we really do. People have an inflated, but fragile, sense of subjective knowledge. Inflated because, across many domains, people express more mastery than they actually possess, and fragile because that subjective sense of mastery can be undone by merely asking people to explain their knowledge. While previous work has suggested that people interpret personal difficulty with these types of explanations to be diagnostic of their lack of knowledge in a specific domain (a domain diagnostic account), we suggest that this result should be constrained more broadly: explanation, whether difficult or not, reduces the sense of subject knowledge across domains (a domain agnostic account).

The second paper demonstrates an apparent flexibility by which we communicate our so-called “treasured” experiences to others. We find that people appear to be more effusive in their descriptions of these experiences to those who they think have been to the place than to those who have not. We additionally find a mechanism for this process—that the disparity in communicated enthusiasm for these types of experiences is due to the indescribable nature of the place. More simply, that people have difficulty capturing these places in words and believe that one must simply have been there to truly experience it."