

Personality

12

GROWING UP, STEFANI JOANNE ANGELINA GERMANOTTA seemed to have personality. As a child, she was said to have shown up at the occasional family gathering naked. As the pop star now known as Lady Gaga, she continues the tradition of being different. Her first albums, *The Fame* and *The Fame Monster*, and the fact that she calls her fans “Little Monsters” and herself the “Mother Monster,” hinted she might have issues. But she, like most of us, is not one-dimensional. Yes, her style is eccentric and seems silly to many (we’re looking at you, raw meat dress), but she also is a serious supporter of humanitarian and personal causes, including equality for people who are gay, bisexual, lesbian, or transgender (as in her song “Born This Way”). Lady Gaga is one of a kind. She has personality in an important sense—she has qualities that make her psychologically different from other people.

- Personality: What It Is and How It Is Measured
- The Trait Approach: Identifying Patterns of Behavior
- The Psychodynamic Approach: Forces That Lie Beneath Awareness
- The Humanistic–Existential Approach: Personality as Choice
- The Social–Cognitive Approach: Personalities in Situations
- The Self: Personality in the Mirror



The singer Lady Gaga in her meat dress at the MTV Video Music Awards, September 2010.

personality An individual's characteristic style of behaving, thinking, and feeling.

THE FORCES THAT CREATE ANY ONE PERSONALITY ARE ALWAYS something of a mystery. Your personality is different from anyone else's and expresses itself pretty consistently across settings—at home, in the classroom, and elsewhere. But how and why do people differ psychologically? By studying many unique individuals, psychologists seek to gather enough information to answer these central questions of personality psychology scientifically.

Personality is an individual's characteristic style of behaving, thinking, and feeling. Whether Lady Gaga's quirks are real or merely put on for publicity, they certainly are hers and they show her distinct personality. In this chapter, we will explore personality, first by looking at what it is and how it is measured, and then by focusing on each of four main approaches to understanding personality: trait—biological, psychodynamic, humanistic—existential, and social—cognitive. Psychologists have personalities, too [well, most of them], so their different approaches, even to the topic of personality, shouldn't be that surprising. At the end of the chapter, we discuss the psychology of self to see how our views of what we are like can shape and define our personality.

Personality: What It Is and How It Is Measured

Learning Outcomes

- Explain how prior and anticipated events influence personality differences.
- Compare personality inventories and projective techniques.

If someone said, "You have no personality," how would you feel? Like a cookie-cutter person, a boring, grayish lump who should go out and get a personality as soon as possible? As a rule, people don't strive for a personality—one seems to develop naturally as we travel through life. As psychologists have tried to understand the process of personality development, they have pondered questions of description (how do people differ?), explanation (why do people differ?), and the more quantitative question of measurement (how can personality be assessed?).

DESCRIBING AND EXPLAINING PERSONALITY

As the first biologists earnestly attempted to classify all plants and animals (whether lichens or ants or fossilized lions), personality psychologists began by labeling and describing different personalities. And just as biology came of age with Darwin's theory of evolution, which explained how differences among species arose, the maturing study of personality also has developed explanations of the basis for psychological differences among people.

Most personality psychologists focus on specific, psychologically meaningful individual differences, characteristics such as honesty, anxiety, or moodiness. Still, personality is often in the eye of the beholder. When one person describes another as a "conceited jerk," for example, you may wonder whether you have just learned more about the describer or the person being described. It is interesting that studies that ask acquaintances to describe each other find a high degree of similarity among any one individual's descriptions of many different people ("Jason thinks that Carlos is considerate, Renata is kind, and Jean Paul is nice to others"). In contrast, resemblance is quite low when many people describe one person ("Carlos thinks Jason is smart, Renata thinks he is competitive, and Jean Paul thinks he has a good sense of humor"; Dornbusch et al., 1965).

What leads Lady Gaga to all of her entertaining extremes? Many psychologists attempt to study and explain personality differences by thinking about them in terms of *prior events* that may have shaped an individual's personality or *anticipated events* that motivate the person to reveal particular personality characteristics. In a biological prior event, Stefani Germanotta received genes from her parents that may have led her to develop into the sort of person who loves putting on a display (not to mention putting on raw meat) and stirring up controversy. Researchers interested in events that happen prior to our behavior study our genes, brains, and other aspects of our biological makeup, and also delve into our subconscious and into our circumstances

and interpersonal surroundings. The consideration of anticipated events emphasizes the person's own, subjective perspective and often seems intimate and personal in its reflection of the person's inner life (hopes, fears, and aspirations).

Of course, our understanding of how the baby named Stefani Germanotta grew into the adult Lady Gaga (or of the life of any woman or man) also depends on insights into the interaction between the prior and anticipated events: We need to know how her history may have shaped her motivations.

MEASURING PERSONALITY

Of all the things psychologists have set out to measure, personality may be one of the toughest. How do you capture the uniqueness of a person? What aspects of people's personalities are important to know about? How should we quantify them? The general personality measures can be classified broadly into personality inventories and projective techniques.

Personality Inventories Rely on Self-reporting

To learn about an individual's personality, you could follow the person around and, clipboard in hand, record every single thing the person does, says, thinks, and feels (including how long this goes on before the person calls the police). Some observations might involve your own impressions (Day 5: seems to be getting irritable); others would involve objectively observable events that anyone could verify (Day 7: grabbed my pencil and broke it in half, then bit my hand).

Psychologists have figured out ways to obtain objective data on personality without driving their subjects to violence. The most popular technique is **self-report**, a method in which people provide subjective information about their own thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, typically via questionnaire or interview. In most self-report measures, respondents are asked to circle a number on a scale indicating the degree to which they endorse that item as being self-descriptive (e.g., reporting on a scale of 0–5 to what extent they believe they are a "worrier" or to indicate whether an item is true or false in describing them). The researcher then combines the answers to get a general sense of the individual's personality with respect to a particular domain. TABLE 12.1 shows the 10 items from a self-report test of different personality traits (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann, 2003). In this case, the respondent is asked to indicate whether each personality trait applies to him or her. To score the measure, you simply add up the two items for each of the five traits listed at the bottom of the table.

How is a self-report scale created? The usual strategy is to collect sets of self-descriptive statements that indicate different degrees of a personality characteristic. To measure friendliness, for example, you could ask people to rate their agreement with statements ranging from "I am somewhat friendly" to "I am very outgoing," or even to "I love being around people every minute of the day." Adding up the number of statements the person endorses that indicate friendliness (and subtracting endorsements of those who indicate unfriendliness) yields a measure of the person's self-reported friendliness. Scales based on the content of self-reports have been devised to assess a whole range of personality characteristics, all the way from general tendencies such as overall happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) to specific ones such as responding rapidly to insults (Swann & Rentfrow, 2001) or complaining about poor service (Lerman, 2006).

One of the most commonly used personality tests is the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)**, a well-researched clinical questionnaire used to assess personality and psychological problems. The MMPI was developed in 1939 and has been revised several times over the years, leading up to the current version, the MMPI-2-RF (restructured form; Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008). The MMPI-2-RF consists of 338 self-descriptive statements to which the respondent answers "true," "false," or "cannot say." The MMPI-2-RF measures a wide range of psychological constructs: clinical problems (e.g., antisocial behavior, thought dysfunction), somatic problems (e.g., head pain, cognitive

TABLE 12.1

Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree a little
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree a little
- Agree moderately
- Agree strongly

I see myself as:

- Extraverted, enthusiastic
- Critical, quarrelsome
- Dependable, self-disciplined
- Anxious, easily upset
- Open to new experiences, complex
- Reserved, quiet
- Sympathetic, warm
- Disorganized, careless
- Calm, emotionally stable
- Conventional, uncreative

TIPI scale scoring (R = reverse-scored items):
 Extraversion (1, 5R), Agreeableness (2R, 7),
 Conscientiousness (3, 8R), Emotional Stability
 (4R, 9), Openness to Experience (5, 10R).
 Information from Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003.

self-report A method in which a person provides subjective information about his or her own thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, typically via questionnaire or interview.

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) A well-researched clinical questionnaire used to assess personality and psychological problems.



Personality inventories ask people to report what traits they possess. Think about how you would rate yourself according to the items in Table 12.2. Can we rely on people to accurately report on their personality?



Howard Stern



Hillary Clinton



Kim Kardashian



Chris Rock

How would you describe each of these personalities?



▲ Figure 12.1
SAMPLE RORSCHACH INKBILOT Test takers are shown a card such as this sample and asked, “What might this be?” What they perceive, where they see it, and why they believe it looks that way are assumed to reflect unconscious aspects of their personality.

projective tests Tests designed to reveal inner aspects of individuals’ personalities by analysis of their responses to a standard series of ambiguous stimuli.

Rorschach Inkblot Test A projective technique in which respondents’ inner thoughts and feelings are believed to be revealed by analysis of their responses to a set of unstructured inkblots.

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) A projective technique in which respondents’ underlying motives, concerns, and the way they see the social world are believed to be revealed through analysis of the stories they make up about ambiguous pictures of people.



▲ Figure 12.2
SAMPLE TAT CARD Test takers are shown cards with ambiguous scenes such as this sample and are asked to tell a story about what is happening in the picture. The main themes of the story, the thoughts and feelings of the characters, and how the story develops and resolves are considered useful indices of unconscious aspects of an individual’s personality (Murray, 1943).

complaints), internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety, self-doubt), externalizing problems (e.g., aggression, substance abuse), and interpersonal problems (e.g., family problems, avoidance). The MMPI-2-RF also includes *validity scales* that assess a person’s attitudes toward test taking and any tendency to try to distort the results by faking answers.

Personality inventories such as the MMPI-2-RF are easy to administer: All that is needed is the test and a pencil (or a computer-based version). The respondent’s scores are then calculated and compared with the average ratings of thousands of other test takers. Because no human interpretation of the responses is needed (i.e., “true” means true, “false” means false, etc.), any potential biases of the person giving the test are minimized. Of course, an accurate measurement of personality will only occur if people provide accurate responses. Although self-report test results are easy to obtain, critics of this approach highlight several limitations. One problem is that many people have a tendency to respond in a socially desirable way, such that they underreport things that are unflattering or embarrassing. Perhaps even more problematic is that there are many things we don’t know about ourselves and so are unable to report! Studies show that people often are inaccurate in their self-report about what they have experienced in the past, what factors are motivating their behaviors in the present, or how they will feel or behave in the future (Wilson, 2009).

Projective Techniques Rely on Analysis of Ambiguous Information

A second, somewhat controversial, class of tools for evaluating personality designed to circumvent the limitations of self-report mentioned above, is **projective tests**, which are tests designed to reveal inner aspects of individuals’ personalities by analysis of their responses to a standard series of ambiguous stimuli. The developers of projective tests assume that people will project personality factors that are below awareness—wishes, concerns, impulses, and ways of seeing the world—onto the ambiguous stimuli and will not censor these responses. Probably the best known is the **Rorschach Inkblot Test**, a projective technique in which respondents’ inner thoughts and feelings are believed to be revealed by analysis of their responses to a set of unstructured inkblots. An example inkblot is shown in **FIGURE 12.1**. Responses are scored according to complicated systems (derived in part from research with people with psychological disorders) that classify what people see (Exner, 1993; Rappaport, 1946). For example, most people who look at **FIGURE 12.1** report seeing birds or people. Someone who reports seeing something very unusual (e.g., “I see two purple tigers eating a velvet cheeseburger”) may be experiencing thoughts and feelings that are very different from those of most other people.

The **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** is a projective technique in which respondents’ underlying motives and concerns and the way they see the social world are believed to be revealed through analysis of the stories they make up about ambiguous pictures of people. To get a sense of the test, look at **FIGURE 12.2**. The test administrator shows the respondent the card and asks him or her to tell a story about the picture, asking questions such as: Who is the woman shown on the card? What is happening? What led her to this moment? What will happen next? Many of the TAT drawings tend to elicit a consistent set of themes, such as successes and failures, competition and jealousy, conflict with parents and siblings, feelings about intimate relationships, aggression, and sexuality. Different people tell very different stories about the images. In creating the stories, the respondent is thought to identify with the main characters and to project his or her view of others and the world onto the other details in the drawing. Thus, any details that are not obviously drawn from the picture are believed to be projected onto the story from the respondent’s own desires and internal conflicts.

The value of projective tests is debated by psychologists. Although they continue to be widely used by practicing clinicians, critics argue that tests such as the Rorschach and the TAT are open to the biases of the examiner. A TAT story such as the one above may seem revealing, however, the examiner must always add an interpretation (Was this about the respondent’s actual father, about his own concerns about his academic failures, or about trying to be funny or provocative?), and that interpretation could well be the

scorer’s own projection into the mind of the test taker. Thus, despite the rich picture of a personality and the insights into an individual’s motives that these tests offer, we should understand projective tests primarily as a way in which a psychologist can get to know someone personally and intuitively (McClelland et al., 1953). When measured by rigorous scientific criteria, projective tests such as the TAT and the Rorschach have not been found to be reliable or valid in predicting behavior (Lilienfeld, Lynn, & Lohr, 2003).

Methods Utilizing Technology

Never personality measurement methods are moving beyond both self-report inventories and projective tests (Robins, Frayle, & Krueger, 2007). High-tech methods such as wireless communication, real-time computer analysis, and automated behavior identification open the door to personality measurements that are leaps beyond following the person around with a clipboard—and can lead to surprising findings. The stereotype that women are more talkative than men, for example, was challenged by findings when 396 college students in the United States and Mexico each spent several days wearing an EAR (electronically activated recorder) that captured random snippets of their talk (Mehl et al., 2009). The result? Women and men were equally talkative, each averaging about 16,000 words per day. The advanced measurement of how people differ (and how they do not) is a key step in understanding personality.

Psychologists also are using new forms of social media to better understand personality traits and how people express themselves in different ways. An important advantage of this approach, as with the EAR mentioned above, is that it allows psychologists to study people as they actually behave out in the world while interacting with others (vs. in the lab under experimental conditions). For example, one recent study analyzed over 700 million words and phrases that 75,000 people posted on their Facebook pages and compared them to the results from personality tests given to the same people (Schwartz et al., 2013). The results revealed significant differences in how males and females express themselves, as well as differences by age and by personality. For instance, females use more words about emotions, whereas males use more words about objects and more swear words. People posting about going out and partying were those who scored high on extraversion, people posting about being “sick of” things were those who scored high on neuroticism, and people posting about computers and Pokémon cards were those who scored high on introversion. As the world creates newer forms of communicating, psychologists benefit by having newer ways of studying personality.



The EAR [electronically activated recorder] sampled conversations of hundreds of participants and found that women and men are equally talkative (Mehl et al., 2009).

Build to the Outcomes

1. What does it mean to say that personality is in the eye of the beholder?
2. Compare the reliability of personality inventories and projective tests.
3. What is the advantage of measurements taken with the EAR and other new technologies?

The Trait Approach: Identifying Patterns of Behavior

Imagine writing a story about the people you know. To capture their special qualities, you might describe their traits: Keesha is *friendly*, *aggressive*, and *domineering*. Seth is *flaky*, *humorous*, and *superficial*. With a thesaurus and a free afternoon, you might even be able to describe William as *perspicacious*, *flagitious*, and *callipygus*. The trait approach to personality uses such trait terms to characterize differences among individuals. In attempting to create manageable and meaningful sets of descriptors, trait theorists face two significant challenges: narrowing down the almost infinite set of

Learning Outcomes

- Describe how the trait approach to personality has changed over time.
- Describe the traits in the Big Five Factor Model.
- Explain the biological basis for personality traits.

trait A relatively stable disposition to behave in a particular and consistent way.

adjectives and answering the more basic question of why people have particular traits and whether those traits arise from biological or hereditary foundations.

TRAITS AS BEHAVIORAL DISPOSITIONS AND MOTIVES

One way to think about personality is as a combination of traits. This was the approach of Gordon Allport (1937), one of the first trait theorists, who believed people could be described in terms of traits just as an object could be described in terms of its properties. He saw a **trait** as a relatively stable disposition to behave in a particular and consistent way. For example, a person who keeps his books organized alphabetically in bookshelves, hangs his clothing neatly in the closet, knows the schedule for the local bus, keeps a clear agenda in a smartphone or daily planner, and lists birthdays of friends and family in his calendar can be said to have the trait of *orderliness*. This trait consistently manifests itself in a variety of settings.

The orderliness trait *describes* a person but doesn't *explain* his or her behavior. Why does the person behave in this way? A trait might provide an explanation for behaving in two basic ways: The trait may be a preexisting disposition of the person that causes the person's behavior, or it may be a motivation that guides the person's behavior. Allport saw traits as preexisting dispositions, causes of behavior that reliably trigger that behavior. The person's orderliness, for example, is an inner property of the person that will cause the person to straighten things up and be tidy in a wide array of situations. Other personality theorists, such as Henry Murray (the creator of the TAT), suggested instead that traits reflect motives. Just as a hunger motive might explain someone's many trips to the snack bar, a need for orderliness might explain the neat closet, organized calendar, and familiarity with the bus schedule (Murray & Kluckhohn, 1953). Researchers examining traits as causes have used personality inventories to measure them, whereas those examining traits as motives have more often used projective tests.

Researchers have described and measured hundreds of different personality traits over the past several decades. Back in the late 1940s, in the wake of World War II, psychologists were very interested in right-wing *authoritarianism*, the tendency toward political conservatism, obedience to authority, and conformity. At that time, researchers were trying to understand what had made people support the rise of Nazi Germany and fascism (Adorno et al., 1950). Although research on the personality traits that lead to authoritarianism continues (Perry & Sidley, 2012), the topic became less focal for researchers once World War II receded into history. Other traits that have come into vogue over the years include cognitive complexity, defensiveness, sensation seeking, and optimism. Like television shows and hairstyles, fashions in trait dimensions come and go over time.

THE SEARCH FOR CORE TRAITS

Picking a fashionable trait and studying it in depth doesn't get us very far in the search for the core of human character: the basic set of traits that defines how humans differ from each other. People may differ strongly in their choice of Coke versus Pepsi, or dogs versus cats, but are these differences important? How have researchers tried to discover the core personality traits?

Early Research Focused on Adjectives That Describe Personality

The study of core traits began with an exploration of how personality is represented in the store of wisdom we call *language*. Generation after generation, people have described people with words, so early psychologists proposed that core traits could be discerned by finding the main themes in all of the adjectives used to describe personality. In one such analysis, a painstaking count of relevant words in a dictionary of English resulted in a list of over 18,000 potential traits (Allport & Odbert, 1936)! Attempts to narrow down the list to a more manageable set depend on the idea that traits might

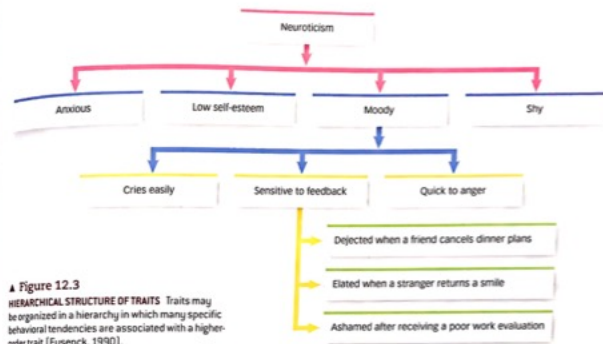


Figure 12.3
HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF TRAITS Traits may be organized in a hierarchy in which many specific behavioral tendencies are associated with a higher-order trait (Eysenck, 1990).

be related in a hierarchical pattern (see **FIGURE 12.3**), with more general or abstract traits at higher levels than more specific or concrete traits. Perhaps the more abstract traits represent the core of personality.

To identify this core, researchers have used the computational procedure called *factor analysis*, described in the Intelligence chapter, which sorts trait terms or self-descriptions into a small number of underlying dimensions, or *factors*, based on how people use the traits to rate themselves. In a typical study using factor analysis, hundreds of people rate themselves on hundreds of adjectives, indicating how accurately each one describes their personality. The researcher then performs calculations to determine similarities in the raters' usage, for example, whether people who describe themselves as *ambitious* also describe themselves as *active* but not *laid-back* or *contented*. Factor analysis also can reveal which adjectives are unrelated. For example, if people who describe themselves as *ambitious* are neither more nor less likely to describe themselves as *creative* or *innovative*, the factor analysis would reveal that *ambitiousness* and *creativity/innovativeness* represent different factors. Each factor is typically presented as a continuum, ranging from one extreme trait (such as *ambitious*) to its opposite (in this case, *laid-back*).

Different factor analysis techniques have yielded different views of personality structure. Cattell (1950) proposed a 16-factor theory of personality (way down from 18,000, but still a lot), whereas others proposed theories with far fewer basic dimensions (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Hans Eysenck (1967) simplified things nicely with a model of personality with only two major traits (although he later expanded it to three). Eysenck's two-factor analysis identified one dimension that distinguished people who are sociable and active (extraverts) from those who are more introspective and quiet (introverts). His analysis also identified a second dimension ranging from the tendency to be very neurotic or emotionally unstable to the tendency to be more emotionally stable. He believed that many behavioral tendencies could be understood in terms of their relation to the core traits of Extraversion and Neuroticism. The third factor he proposed was Psychoticism, which refers to the extent to which a person is impulsive or hostile. (Note that nowadays, the term *psychotic* refers to an abnormal mental state marked by detachment from reality. This is discussed further in the Disorders chapter.)

TABLE 12.2

The Big Five Factor Model

	High on trait	Low on trait
Openness to experience	imaginative	down-to-earth
	varied	routine
	independent	conforming
Conscientiousness	organized	disorganized
	careful	careless
	self-disciplined	weak-willed
Extraversion	social	retiring
	fun-loving	somber
	affectionate	reserved
Agreeableness	soothehearted	ruthless
	trusting	suspicious
	helpful	uncooperative
Neuroticism	worried	calm
	insecure	secure
	self-pitying	self-satisfied

A Consensus Is Reached: The Big Five Dimensions of Personality

Today most researchers agree that personality is best captured by 5 factors rather than 2, 3, 16, or 18,000 (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999). The **Big Five**, as they are affectionately called, are the *traits of the five-factor personality model: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism* (see TABLE 12.2; remember them by the initials O.C.E.A.N.). The five-factor model, which overlaps with the pioneering work of Cattell and Eysenck, is now widely preferred for several reasons. First, modern factor analysis techniques confirm that this set of five factors strikes the right balance between accounting for as much variation in personality as possible while avoiding overlapping traits. Second, in a large number of studies using different kinds of data (people's descriptions of their own personalities, other people's descriptions of their personalities, interviewer checklists, and behavioral observations) the same five factors have emerged. Third, and perhaps most important, the basic five-factor structure seems to show up across a wide range of participants, including children, adults in other cultures, and even among those who use other languages, suggesting that the Big Five may be universal (John & Srivastava, 1999).

In fact, the Big Five dimensions are so universal that they show up even when people are asked to evaluate the traits of complete strangers (Passini & Norman, 1966). This finding suggests that these dimensions of personality might reside in the eye of the beholder: categories that people use to evaluate others regardless of how well they know them. However, it's not all perception. The reality of these traits has been clearly established in research showing

that self-reports on the Big Five are associated with predictable patterns of behavior and social outcomes. People identified as high in extraversion, for example, tend to spend time with lots of other people and are more likely than introverts to look people in the eye. People high in conscientiousness generally perform well at work and tend to live longer. People low on conscientiousness and low in agreeableness are more likely than average to be juvenile delinquents (John & Srivastava, 1999). It turns out that the Big Five personality traits also predict people's online behavior on social networking sites such as Facebook (see Hot Science: Personality on the Surface).

Research on the Big Five has shown the interesting result that people's personalities tend to remain fairly stable through their lifetime. Scores at one time in life correlate strongly with scores at later dates, even decades later (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). William James offered the opinion that "in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again" (James, 1890, p. 121), but this turns out to be too strong a view. Some variability is typical in childhood, and though there is less in adolescence, some personality change can even occur in adulthood for some people (Srivastava et al., 2003). In general, people become slightly more conscientious in their 20s (got to keep that job!) and a bit more agreeable in their 30s (got to keep those friends!). Neuroticism decreases with age, but only among women (Srivastava et al., 2003). So enjoy the personality you have now, because it may be changing soon.

TRAITS AS BIOLOGICAL BUILDING BLOCKS

Can we explain why a person has a stable set of personality traits? Many trait theorists have argued that unchangeable brain and biological processes produce the remarkable stability of traits over the life span. Allport viewed traits as characteristics of the



DATA VISUALIZATION

Does Personality Remain Stable over Time? Go to launchpadworks.com.

Big Five The traits of the five-factor model: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

Personality on the Surface

When you judge someone as friendly or foe, interesting or boring, worth hiring or firing, how do you do it? It's nice to think that your impressions of personality are based on solid foundations—something deep. You wouldn't judge personality based on something as shallow as someone's looks, would you? You wouldn't form an impression of them from looking at what pops up on Google images, or on their Facebook page, would you?

These criteria may seem to be flimsy bases for understanding personality, but it turns out that some valid personality judgments can be made from exactly such superficial cues. And in certain cases, such judgments are remarkably accurate.

It turns out that you can get some accurate information about a book by judging its cover. Studies have shown that extraverts need to talk faster than others and to subtly mimic other people's behavior as a means of building rapport with them (Duffy & Chartrand, 2015), and people high in openness to experience are more likely to have tattoos (Swami et al., 2012). Find-

ings such as these suggest that people can manipulate their surface identities to try to make desired impressions on others, and that surface signs of personality might therefore be false or misleading. However, one recent study of people's Facebook pages, which are clearly surface expressions of personality intended for others to see, found that the personalities people project online are similar to their own scores on traditional personality tests (Schwartz et al., 2013). The signs

of personality that appear on the surface may be more than skin deep.

If we go one step further, it turns out that people's Facebook activity is significantly associated with their self-reported personality traits. People high in extraversion report having more Facebook friends as well as making more status updates and comments. People high in agreeableness make more comments on their friends' posts, whereas those high on sensation seeking and openness to experience report playing a lot of games. And as you might have guessed, people high on narcissism post lots of comments, especially about their ideal self, as well as lots of pictures of themselves (Seidman, 2013; Wang et al., 2012). Beyond Facebook, studies of personality have more recently shown that extraverts spend more time messaging friends via apps such as WhatsApp, whereas people high on conscientiousness spend much less time messaging (Montag et al., 2015). We can hope that those conscientious people are using the time they save doing other important things, such as their assigned Intro Psych reading.



▲ They say you can't judge a book by its cover, but some new research suggests you can judge a person by their Facebook page.

brain that influence the way people respond to their environment. And, as you will see, Eysenck searched for a connection between his trait dimensions and specific individual differences in the workings of the brain.

Brain damage certainly can produce personality change, as the classic case of Phineas Gage so vividly demonstrates (see the Neuroscience and Behavior chapter). You may recall that after the blasting accident that blew a steel rod through his frontal lobe, Gage showed a dramatic loss of social appropriateness and conscientiousness (Damasio, 1994). In fact, when someone experiences a profound change in personality, testing often reveals the presence of such brain pathologies as Alzheimer's disease, stroke, or brain tumor (Feinberg, 2001). The administration of antidepressant medication and other pharmaceutical treatments that change brain chemistry also can trigger personality changes, making people, for example, somewhat more extraverted and less neurotic (Ragby et al., 1999; Knutson et al., 1998).

Genes, Traits, and Personality

Some of the most compelling evidence for the importance of biological factors in personality comes from the domain of behavioral genetics. Like researchers studying genetic influences on intelligence (see the Intelligence chapter), personality psychologists have looked at correlations between the traits in monozygotic, or identical, twins, who share the same genes; and dizygotic, or fraternal, twins, who on average share only half of their genes. The evidence has been generally

TABLE 12.3

Heritability Estimates for the Big Five Personality Traits

Trait Dimension	Heritability
Openness	.45
Conscientiousness	.39
Extraversion	.48
Agreeableness	.35
Neuroticism	.41

Information from Loehlin, 1992.

consistent. In one review of studies involving over 24,000 twin pairs, for example, identical twins proved markedly more similar to each other in personality than did fraternal twins (Loehlin, 1992).

Simply put, the more genes you have in common with someone, the more similar your personalities are likely to be. Genes seem to influence most personality traits, and current estimates place the average genetic component of personality at about .40 (Vukosavic & Bratko, 2015). These heritability coefficients, as you learned in the Intelligence chapter, indicate that roughly 40% of the variability among individuals results from genetic factors, and the other 60% is from environmental influences. Of course, genetic factors do not account for everything; the remaining half of the variability in personality remains to be explained by differences in life experiences and other factors.

Twin Studies Underscore the Importance of Genetics

Studies of twins suggest that the extent to which the Big Five traits derive from genetic differences ranges from .35 to .49 (see TABLE 12.3).

As in the study of intelligence, potential confounding factors must be ruled out to ensure that effects are truly due to genetics and not to environmental experiences. Are identical twins treated more similarly, and do they have a greater shared environment, than fraternal twins? As children, were they dressed in the same snappy outfits and placed on the same Little League teams? Could this somehow have produced similarities in their personalities? Studies of identical twins reared far apart in adopted families—an experience that pretty much eliminates the potential effect of shared environmental factors—suggest that shared environments have little impact. Reared-apart identical twins end up just as similar in personality as those who grow up together (McGue & Bouchard, 1998; Tellegen et al., 1988).

Indeed, one provocative related finding is that such shared environmental factors as parental divorce or parenting style may have little direct impact on personality (Plomin & Caspi, 1999). According to these researchers, simply growing up in the same family does not make people very similar. In fact, when two siblings are similar, this is thought to be due primarily to genetic similarities.

Researchers also have assessed specific behavioral and attitude similarities in twins, and the evidence for heritability in these studies is often striking. One study that examined 3,000 pairs of identical and fraternal twins found evidence for the genetic transmission of conservative views regarding topics such as socialism, church authority, the death penalty, and interracial marriage (Martin et al., 1986). It is very unlikely that a specific gene is directly responsible for a complex psychological outcome such as beliefs about social or political issues. Rather, a set of genes (or, more likely, many sets of interacting genes) may produce specific characteristics or tendencies to think in a conservative or a liberal manner. One recent study examined the DNA of 13,000 people and measured the extent to which they reported conservative versus liberal attitudes. The researchers found associations between conservatism-liberalism and chromosomal regions linked to mental flexibility, or the extent to which a person changes their thinking in response to shifts in their environment, which could be one of the factors influencing our views on social and political issues (Hatemi et al., 2011). Current research by psychological scientists is aimed at better understanding how variations in our genetic code may contribute to the development of personality.

Gender Differences: Biology or Culture?

Do you think there is a typical female personality or a typical male personality? On a variety of personality characteristics, including helpfulness, men and women on average show no reliable differences. Overall, men and women seem to be far more



Our genes influence our personality in various ways. For instance, genetic factors can affect how rigidly versus flexibly we think about things such as religion and politics. This Trump supporter probably shares the same religious and political leanings as other members of his family.

Why Do Males and Females Have Different Personality Traits?

Although the gender differences in personality are quite small, they tend to get a lot of attention. The debate about the origins of gender differences in personality often involves contrasting an evolutionary biological perspective with a social-cognitive perspective known as social role theory. The evolutionary perspective holds that men and women have evolved different personality characteristics, in part because their reproductive success depends on different behaviors. For instance, aggressiveness in men may have an adaptive value in intimidating sexual rivals, women who are agreeable and nurturing may have evolved to protect and ensure the survival of their offspring (Campbell, 1999) as well as to secure a reliable mate and provider (Buss, 1989).

According to social role theory, personality characteristics and behavioral differences between men and women result from cultural standards and expectations that assign them socially permissible jobs, activities, and family positions (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Because of their physical size and their freedom from childbearing, men historically have taken roles of greater power—roles that in postindustrial society don't necessarily require physical strength. These differences then snowball, with men generally taking roles that require assertiveness and aggression (e.g., executive, school principal, surgeon) and women pursuing roles that emphasize greater supportiveness and nurturance (e.g., nurse, day-care worker, teacher).

Regardless of the source of gender differences in personality, the degree to which people identify personally with



PHOTOGRAPH BY UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE. COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE. 1991/11/15

Cultures differ in their appreciation of male and female characteristics, but the Hindu deity Ardhanarishwara represents the value of combining both parts of human nature. Male on one side and female on the other, this god is symbolic of the dual nature of the sacred. The only real problem with such side-by-side androgyny comes in finding clothes that fit.

masculine and feminine stereotypes may tell us about important personality differences between individuals. Sandra Bem (1974) designed a scale (the Bem Sex Role Inventory) that assesses the degree of identification with stereotypically masculine and feminine traits.

Bem suggested that psychologically androgynous people [those who adopt the best of both worlds and identify with positive feminine traits such as kindness and positive masculine traits such as assertiveness] might be better adjusted than people who identify strongly with only one sex role or low on both. So far, the data seem to support this idea. For instance, those who endorse an androgynous sex role report fewer symptoms of depression than those with a masculine or feminine role, regardless of their biological sex (Valari et al., 2016). This is also good news for the Hindu deity pictured above.

Bem Sex Role Inventory Sample Items

Respondents taking the Bem Sex Role Inventory rate themselves on each of the items without seeing the gender categorization. Then the scale is scored for masculinity [use of stereotypically masculine items], femininity [use of stereotypically feminine items], and androgyny [the tendency to use both the stereotypically masculine and feminine adjectives to describe oneself] (Bem, 1974).

Masculine Items	Feminine Items
Self-reliant	Yielding
Defends own beliefs	Affectionate
Independent	Flatterable
Assertive	Sympathetic
Forceful	Sensitive to the needs of others

similar in personality than they are different (Hyde, 2005). However, researchers have found some reliable differences between men and women with respect to their self-reported traits, attitudes, and behaviors. Some of these findings conform to North American stereotypes of masculine and feminine. For example, researchers have found women to be more verbally expressive, more sensitive to nonverbal cues, and more nurturing than are men. Males are more physically aggressive than females, but females engage in more relational aggression (e.g., using relationships to harm someone, such as intentionally excluding them from a social group) than do males, even from a very young age (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Leff, Waasdorp, & Crick, 2010; see A World of Difference: Why Do Males and Females Have Different Personality Traits?).



ERIC LUTHE/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES



ERIC LUTHE/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Research has shown that there are small differences in the personalities of men vs. women, however, these differences are largely absent during childhood and don't emerge until adolescence, suggesting that they may be learned based on cultural expectations. This brother and sister seem to have the same personality. Their dog looks happy though.

Other gender differences include males having more assertiveness, slightly higher self-esteem, a more casual approach to sex, and greater sensation seeking than females. On the Big Five, studies across dozens of cultures around the world show that women are higher on neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, in terms of openness, women report greater openness to feelings and men greater openness to ideas (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Schmitt et al., 2008).

Many of the gender differences that do exist among adults are much less pronounced during childhood. For instance, one recent review of over 150 previous studies that included more than 20,000 participants found that gender differences in the expression of emotion are detectable, with girls showing more internalizing emotions such as sadness and anxiety, and boys showing more externalizing emotions like anger (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). However, these differences were much more pronounced as children aged into adolescence, suggesting that cultural factors may play a role in how children learn to express their emotions. Context also seems to play a role, because the observed gender differences were less pronounced when kids were with their parents and more pronounced when with their friends. The finding that gender differences in personality do not begin to emerge until adolescence also has been reported in studies conducted across dozens of different cultures around the world, suggesting that this is a universal phenomenon (De Bolle et al., 2015).

Another factor that may contribute to the emergence of personality differences in adolescence, however, is the simultaneous emergence of differences in sex hormones during puberty. As you know, a lot of things change during adolescence (e.g., more hormones, more interactions with friends, less time spent with parents), and it can be difficult to know what changes are causing what other changes. Interestingly, however, the effect of hormones on personality can be studied experimentally. One recent study followed a sample of transgender men over a three-month period during which they were undergoing testosterone treatment (in an effort to make their bodies more masculine). Personality tests administered before and after testosterone treatment revealed that significant changes occurred, with the transgender men viewing themselves as being more masculine and their scores more closely matching those of nontransgender men (Keo-Meier et al., 2015).

Do Animals Have Personalities?

Another source of evidence for the biological basis of human personality comes from the study of nonhuman animals. Any dog owner, zookeeper, or cattle farmer can tell you that individual animals have characteristic patterns of behavior. One Missouri woman who reportedly enjoyed raising chickens in her suburban home said that the "best part" was "knowing them as individuals" (Tucker, 2003). As far as we know, this pet owner did not give her feathered companions a personality test, though the researcher Sam Gosling (1998) used this approach in a study of a group of spotted hyenas. Well, not exactly. He recruited four human observers to use personality scales to rate the different hyenas in the group. When he examined ratings on the scales, he found five dimensions; three closely resembled the Big Five traits of neuroticism (i.e., fearfulness, emotional reactivity), openness to experience (i.e., curiosity), and agreeableness (i.e., absence of aggression).

In similar studies of puppies and octopi, individual differences in traits resembling extraversion and neuroticism were reliably observed (Gosling & John, 1999). In each study, researchers identified particular behaviors that they felt reflected each trait, based on their observation of the animals' normal repertoire of activities. Octopi, for example, seldom get invited to parties, so they cannot be assessed for their socializing tendencies ("He was all hands!"), but they do vary in terms of whether they prefer to eat in the safety of their den or are willing to venture out at feeding time, and so a behavior that corresponds to extraversion can reasonably

be assessed (Gosling & John, 1999). Because different observers seem to agree on where an animal falls on a given dimension, the findings do not simply reflect a particular observer's imagination or tendency to anthropomorphize (attribute human characteristics to nonhuman animals). Such findings of cross-species commonality in behavioral styles help support the idea that biological mechanisms underlie personality traits shared by many species.

From an evolutionary perspective, differences in personality reflect alternative adaptations that have evolved in species—human and nonhuman—to deal with the challenges of survival and reproduction. For example, if you were to hang around a bar for an evening or two, you would soon see that evolution has provided humans with more than one way to attract and keep a mate. People who are extraverted would probably show off to attract attention, whereas you'd be likely to see people high in agreeableness displaying affection and nurturance (Buss, 1996). Both approaches might work well for attracting mates and reproducing successfully—depending on the environment. Through this process of natural selection, those characteristics that have proved successful in our evolutionary struggle for survival have been passed on to future generations.

Not only do animals have personalities but they also show consistency in these traits over time. For instance, one recent study examined 31 prior studies that measured the consistency of personality traits in dogs over time. It turns out that personality characteristics present during puppyhood tend to persist into dogs' adult years (Franklin et al., 2013). Consistency in dog personality is important for working dogs (e.g., bomb-sniffing dogs, service dogs, etc.), as well as for pet owners who sometimes select their pets for their apparent personality. Beyond that, studying personality in nonhuman animals offers several serious benefits: improved ability to measure physiological, more opportunities for naturalistic observation (e.g., observing aggression and social hierarchies), and an accelerated life span (e.g., making longitudinal and life-span studies much more efficient) (Gosling, 2008).

Traits Are Wired in the Brain

What neurophysiological mechanisms might influence the development of personality traits? Much of the thinking on this topic has focused on the extraversion-introversion dimension. In his personality model, Eysenck (1967) speculated that extraversion and introversion might arise from individual differences in cortical arousal. Eysenck suggested that extraverts pursue stimulation because their reticular formation (the part of the brain that regulates arousal or alertness, as described in the Neuroscience and Behavior chapter) is not easily stimulated. To achieve greater cortical arousal and feel fully alert, Eysenck argued, extraverts seek out social interaction, parties, and other activities to achieve mental stimulation. In contrast, introverts may prefer reading or quiet activities because their cortex is very easily stimulated to a point higher than optimal alertness.

Behavioral and physiological research generally supports Eysenck's view. When introverts and extraverts are presented with a range of intense stimuli, introverts respond more strongly, including salivating more when a drop of lemon juice is placed in their tongues and reacting more negatively to electric shocks or loud noises (Bartol & Costello, 1976; Stelmack, 1990). This reactivity has an impact on the ability to concentrate: Extraverts tend to perform well at tasks that are done in a noisy, arousing context (such as bartending or teaching), whereas introverts are better at tasks that require concentration in tranquil contexts (such as the work of a librarian or that required concentration in tranquil contexts (such as the work of a librarian or nighttime security guard, Geen, 1984; Lieberman & Rosenthal, 2001; Matthews & Gilliland, 1999).

In a refined version of Eysenck's ideas about arousability, Jeffrey Gray (1970) proposed that the dimensions of extraversion-introversion and neuroticism reflect two basic brain systems. The behavioral activation system (BAS), essentially a "go" system,

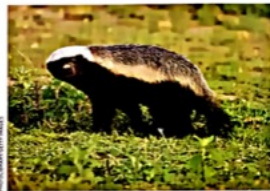


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

How would you rate this honey badger? Is it antagonistic or aggressive? Neurotic or emotionally stable? Researchers have found that even animals appear to have personalities. Or should they be called "animatities"?



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Extraverts pursue stimulation in the form of people, loud noise, and bright colors. Introverts tend to prefer softer, quieter settings. Pop quiz: Miley Cyrus: introvert or extravert?

activates approach behavior in response to the anticipation of reward. The *estraven* has a highly reactive BIS and will actively engage the environment, seeking social reinforcement and being on the go. The *behavioral inhibition system (BIS)*, a “stop” system, inhibits behavior in response to stimuli signaling punishment. The *anxious or introverted person*, in turn, has a highly reactive BIS and will focus on negative outcomes and be on the lookout for stop signs. Because these two systems operate independently, it is possible for someone to be both a go and a stop person (stimulus-approach activated and inhibited), caught in a constant conflict between these two traits. An introverted person might be low on BAS (being less motivated to seek out potentially rewarding social situations) and high on BIS (being more likely to steer clear of others for fear of some form of punishment, such as criticism from others). Studies of brain electrical activity (EEG) and functional brain imaging (fMRI) suggest that individual differences in activation and inhibition arise through the operation of distinct brain systems underlying these tendencies (DeYoung & Gray, 2009). Even more recently, studies have suggested that the core personality traits described above may arise from individual differences in the volume of the different brain regions associated with each trait. For instance, self-reported neuroticism is correlated with the volume of brain regions involved in sensitivity to threat; agreeableness with areas associated with processing information about the mental states of other people; conscientiousness with regions involved in self-regulation; and extraversion with areas associated with processing information about reward (DeYoung et al., 2010). Research aimed at understanding how the structure and activity of our brains can contribute to the formation of our personality traits is still in its early stages but is a growing area of the field that many believe holds great promise for helping us better understand how we each develop into the unique people that we are.

Build to the Outcomes

1. How might traits explain behavior?
2. How do psychologists identify the core personality traits?
3. What role has factor analysis played in identifying different traits?
4. What are the strengths of the five-factor model?
5. What do studies of twins tell us about personality?
6. Are there significant personality differences between the genders?
7. Why study animal behavioral styles?
8. What neurological differences explain why extraverts pursue more stimulation than introverts?

The Psychodynamic Approach: Forces That Lie Beneath Awareness

Learning Outcomes

- Differentiate the id, ego, and superego.
- Explain how defense mechanisms reduce anxiety.
- Describe how Freud's theory of psychosexual stages contributes to personality.

Rather than trying to understand personality in terms of broad theories for describing individual differences, Freud looked for personality in the details: the meanings and insights revealed by careful analysis of the tiniest blemishes in a person's thought and behavior. Working with patients who came to him with disorders that did not seem to have any physical basis, he began by interpreting the origins of their everyday mistakes and memory lapses, errors that have come to be called *Freudian slips*.

Freud used the term *psychoanalysis* to refer to both his theory of personality and his method of treating patients. Freud's ideas were the first of many theories building on his basic idea that personality is a mystery to the person who “owns” it because we can't know our own deepest motives. The theories of Freud and his followers

(discussed in the Treatment chapter) are referred to as the **psychodynamic approach**, an approach that regards personality as formed by needs, strivings, and desires largely operating outside of awareness—motives that can produce emotional disorders. The real engines of personality, in this view, are forces of which we are largely unaware.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MIND: ID, EGO, AND SUPEREGO

To explain the emotional difficulties that beset his patients, Freud proposed that the mind consists of three independent, interacting, and often conflicting systems: the id, the superego, and the ego.

The most basic system, the **id**, is the part of the mind containing the drives present at birth, it is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives. The id operates according to the *pleasure principle*, the psychic force that motivates the tendency to seek immediate gratification of any impulse. If governed by the id alone, you would never be able to tolerate the buildup of hunger while waiting to be served at a restaurant but would simply grab food from tables nearby.

Opposite the id is the **superego**, the mental system that reflects the internalization of cultural rules, mainly learned as parents exercise their authority. The superego consists of a set of guidelines, internal standards, and other codes of conduct that regulate and control our behaviors, thoughts, and fantasies. It acts as a kind of conscience, punishing us when it finds we are doing or thinking something wrong (by producing guilt or other painful feelings) and rewarding us (with feelings of pride or self-congratulation) for living up to ideal standards.

The final system of the mind, according to psychoanalytic theory, is the **ego**, the component of personality, developed through contact with the external world, that enables us to deal with life's practical demands. The ego operates according to the *reality principle*, the regulating mechanism that enables us to delay gratifying immediate needs and function effectively in the real world. It is the mediator between the id and the superego. The ego helps you resist the impulse to snatch others' food and also finds the restaurant and pays the check.

Freud believed that the relative strength of the interactions among the three systems of mind (i.e., which system is usually dominant) determines an individual's basic personality structure. Together the id force of personal needs, the superego force of pressures to quell those needs, and the ego force of reality's demands are in constant internal conflict. Freud believed that the dynamics among the id, superego, and ego are largely governed by *anxiety*, an unpleasant feeling that arises when unwanted thoughts or feelings occur, such as when the id seeks a gratification that the ego thinks



Sigmund Freud was the first psychology theorist to be honored with his own bobblehead doll. Let's hope he's not the last.



psychodynamic approach An approach that regards personality as formed by needs, strivings, and desires largely operating outside of awareness—motives that also can produce emotional disorders.

id The part of the mind containing the drives present at birth, it is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives.

superego The mental system that reflects the internalization of cultural rules, mainly learned as parents exercise their authority.

ego The component of personality, developed through contact with the external world, that enables us to deal with life's practical demands.

TABLE 12.4

Defense Mechanisms

Repression is the first defense the ego tries, but if it is inadequate, then other defense mechanisms may come into play.

Defense Mechanism	Description	Example
Repression	Removing painful experiences and unacceptable impulses from the conscious mind. "motivated forgetting"	Not lashing out physically in anger, putting a bad experience out of your mind.
Rationalization	Supplying a reasonable sounding explanation for unacceptable feelings and behavior to conceal (mostly from oneself) one's underlying motives or feelings.	Dropping calculus, allegedly because of poor ventilation in the classroom.
Reaction formation	Unconsciously replacing threatening inner wishes and fantasies with an exaggerated version of their opposite.	Being rude to someone you're attracted to.
Projection	Attributing one's own threatening feelings, motives, or impulses to another person or group.	Judging others as being dishonest because you believe that you are dishonest.
Regression	Reverting to an immature behavior or earlier stage of development, a time when things felt more secure, to deal with internal conflict and perceived threat.	Using baby talk, even though able to use appropriate speech, in response to distress.
Displacement	Shifting unacceptable wishes or drives to a neutral or less threatening alternative.	Slamming a door, yelling at someone other than the person you're mad at.
Identification	Dealing with feelings of threat and anxiety by unconsciously taking on the characteristics of another person who seems more powerful or better able to cope.	A bullied child becoming a bully.
Sublimation	Channeling unacceptable sexual or aggressive drives into socially acceptable and culturally enhancing activities.	Diverting anger to the football or rugby field, or other contact sport.

will lead to real-world dangers or that the superego sees as leading to punishment. When the ego receives an "alert" signal in the form of anxiety, it launches into a defensive position in an attempt to ward off the anxiety. According to Freud, it does so using one of several different **defense mechanisms**, unconscious coping mechanisms that reduce anxiety generated by threats from unacceptable impulses (see TABLE 12.4). Psychodynamically oriented psychologists believe that defense mechanisms help us overcome anxiety and engage effectively with the outside world and that our characteristic style of defense becomes our signature in dealing with the world—and an essential aspect of our personality.

PSYCHOSEXUAL STAGES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

Freud also proposed that a person's basic personality is formed before 6 years of age during a series of sensitive periods, or life stages, when experiences influence all that will follow. Freud called these periods **psychosexual stages**, distinct early life stages through which personality is formed as children experience sexual pleasures from specific body areas and caregivers redirect or interfere with those pleasures. He argued that as a result of adult interference with pleasure-seeking energies, the child experiences conflict. At each stage, a different bodily region, or *erotogenic zone*, dominates the child's subjective experience. (For example, during the oral stage, pleasure centers on the mouth.) Each region is a battleground between the child's id impulses and the adult external world.

Problems and conflicts encountered at any psychosexual stage, Freud believed, will influence personality in adulthood. Conflict resulting from a person's being deprived or, paradoxically, overindulged at a given stage could result in **fixation**, a phenomenon in which a person's pleasure-seeking drives become psychologically stuck, or arrested, at a particular psychosexual stage.

defense mechanisms Unconscious coping mechanisms that reduce anxiety generated by threats from unacceptable impulses.

psychosexual stages Distinct early life stages through which personality is formed as children experience sexual pleasures from specific body areas and caregivers redirect or interfere with those pleasures.

fixation A phenomenon in which a person's pleasure-seeking drives become psychologically stuck, or arrested, at a particular psychosexual stage.

a particular psychosexual stage. Freud described particular personality traits as being derived from fixations at the different psychosexual stages. Here's how he explained each stage and the effects of fixation at each stage:

- ▶ In the first year and a half of life, the infant is in the **oral stage**, the first psychosexual stage, in which experience centers on the pleasures and frustrations associated with the mouth, sucking, and being fed. Infants who are deprived of pleasurable feeding or indulgently overfed are believed to have a personality style in which they are focused on issues related to fullness and emptiness and what they can "take in" from others.
- ▶ Between 2 and 3 years of age, the child moves on to the **anal stage**, the second psychosexual stage, in which experience is dominated by the pleasures and frustration associated with the anus, retention and expulsion of feces and urine, and toilet training. Individuals who have had difficulty negotiating this conflict are believed to develop a rigid personality and remain preoccupied with issues of control.
- ▶ Between the ages of 3 and 5 years, the child is in the **phallic stage**, the third psychosexual stage, in which experience is dominated by the pleasure, conflict, and frustration associated with the phallic–genital region as well as coping with powerful incestuous feelings of love, hate, jealousy, and conflict. According to Freud, children in the phallic stage experience the **Oedipus conflict**, a developmental experience in which a child's conflicting feelings toward the opposite-sex parent are (usually) resolved by identifying with the same-sex parent.
- ▶ A more relaxed period in which children are no longer struggling with the power of their sexual and aggressive drives occurs between the ages of 5 and 13, when children experience the **latency stage**, the fourth psychosexual stage, in which the primary focus is on the further development of intellectual, creative, interpersonal, and athletic skills. Because Freud believed that the most significant aspects of personality development occur before the age of 6, psychodynamic psychologists do not speak of fixation at the latency period. Simply making it to the latency period relatively undisturbed by conflicts of the earlier stages is a sign of healthy personality development.
- ▶ At puberty and thereafter, the fifth and final stage of personality development occurs. The **genital stage** is the time for the coming together of the mature adult personality with a capacity to love, work, and relate to others in a mutually satisfying and reciprocal manner. Freud believed that people who are fixated in a prior stage fail to develop healthy adult sexuality and a well-adjusted adult personality.

What should we make of all this? On the one hand, the psychoanalytic theory of psychosexual stages offers an intriguing picture of early family relationships and the extent to which they allow the child to satisfy basic needs and wishes. On the other hand, critics argue that psychodynamic explanations lack any real evidence and tend to focus on provocative after-the-fact interpretation rather than testable prediction. The psychosexual stage theory offers a compelling set of story lines for interpreting lives once they have unfolded, but it has not generated clear-cut predictions supported by research.

oral stage The first psychosexual stage, in which experience centers on the pleasures and frustrations associated with the mouth, sucking, and being fed.

anal stage The second psychosexual stage, in which experience is dominated by the pleasures and frustrations associated with the anus, retention and expulsion of feces and urine, and toilet training.

phallic stage The third psychosexual stage, in which experience is dominated by the pleasure, conflict, and frustration associated with the phallic–genital region as well as coping with powerful incestuous feelings of love, hate, jealousy, and conflict.

Oedipus conflict A developmental experience in which a child's conflicting feelings toward the opposite-sex parent are [usually] resolved by identifying with the same-sex parent.

latency stage The fourth psychosexual stage, in which the primary focus is on the further development of intellectual, creative, interpersonal, and athletic skills.

genital stage The fifth and final psychosexual stage, the time for the coming together of the mature adult personality with a capacity to love, work, and relate to others in a mutually satisfying and reciprocal manner.



One of the id's desires is to make a fine mess (a desire that is often frustrated early in life, perhaps during the anal stage). The famous painter Jackson Pollock found a way to make extraordinarily fine messes—behavior that at some level all of us envy.

Build to the Outcomes

1. According to Freud, how is personality shaped by the interaction of the id, superego, and ego?
2. What are the various defense mechanisms we use to reduce anxiety?
3. How can fixation influence adult personality?
4. What is believed to occur in each psychosexual stage?
5. Why do critics say Freud's psychosexual stages are more interpretation than explanation?

The Humanistic–Existential Approach: Personality as Choice

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the humanistic–existential approach to personality.
- Explain the role of self-actualization and angst in personality development.

During the 1950s and 1960s, psychologists began to try to understand personality from a viewpoint quite different from trait theory's biological determinism and Freud's focus on unconscious drives from unresolved childhood experiences. These new humanistic and existential theorists turned attention to how humans make *healthy choices* that create their personalities. *Humanistic psychologists* emphasized a positive, optimistic view of human nature that highlights people's inherent goodness and their potential for personal growth. *Existentialist psychologists* focused on the individual as a responsible agent who is free to create and live his or her life while negotiating the issue of meaning and the reality of death. The *humanistic–existential approach* integrates these insights with a focus on how a personality can become optimal.

HUMAN NEEDS AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Humanists see the *self-actualizing tendency*, the human motive toward realizing one's inner potential, as a major factor in personality. The pursuit of knowledge, the expression of one's creativity, the quest for spiritual enlightenment, and the desire to give to society all are examples of self-actualization. As you saw in the Emotion and Motivation chapter, the noted humanistic theorist Abraham Maslow (1943) proposed a *hierarchy of needs*, a model of essential human needs arranged according to their priority, in which basic physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before a person can afford to focus on higher-level psychological needs. Only when these basic needs are met can one pursue higher needs, culminating in *self-actualization*: the need to be good, to be fully alive, and to find meaning in life.

Humanist psychologists explain individual personality differences as arising from the various ways that the environment facilitates—or blocks—attempts to satisfy psychological needs. For example, someone with the inherent potential to be a great scientist, artist, parent, or teacher might never realize these talents if his or her energies and resources are instead directed toward meeting basic needs of security, belongingness, and the like. Research indicates that when people shape their lives around goals that do not match their true nature and capabilities, they are less likely to be happy than those whose lives and goals do match (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

It feels great to be doing exactly what you are capable of doing. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) found that engagement in tasks that exactly match one's abilities creates a mental state of energized focus that he called *flow* (see FIGURE 12.4). Tasks that are below our abilities cause boredom, those that are too challenging cause anxiety, and those that are “just right” lead to the experience of flow. If you know how to play the piano, for example, and are playing a Chopin prelude that you know well enough that it just matches your abilities, you are likely to experience this optimal state. People report being happier at these times than at any other times. Humanists believe that such peak experiences, or states of flow, reflect the realization of one's human potential and represent the height of personality development.

PERSONALITY AS EXISTENCE

Existentialists agree with humanists about many of the features of personality but focus on challenges to the human condition that are more profound than the lack of a nurturing environment. Rollo May (1983) and Victor Frankl (2000), for example, argued that specific aspects of the human condition, such as awareness of our own existence and the ability to make choices about how to behave, have a double-edged quality: They bring an extraordinary richness and dignity to human life, but they also



Decades of research have shown that growing up in a distressed neighborhood is associated with worse educational, occupational, and health outcomes. Humanistic psychologists would suggest that people in such settings must struggle to meet their basic daily needs and so do not have opportunities for self-actualization.

self-actualizing tendency The human motive toward realizing our inner potential.

force us to confront realities that are difficult to face, such as the prospect of our own death. The **existential approach** is a school of thought that regards personality as governed by an individual's ongoing choices and decisions in the context of the realities of life and death.

According to the existential perspective, the difficulties we face in finding meaning in life and in accepting the responsibility of making free choices provoke a type of anxiety existentialists call *angst* (the anxiety of fully being). The human ability to consider limitless numbers of goals and actions is exhilarating, but it can also open the door to profound questions such as Why am I here? What is the meaning of my life?

Thinking about the meaning of existence also can evoke an awareness of the inevitability of death. What, then, should we do with each moment? What is the purpose of living if life as we know it will end one day, perhaps even today? Alternatively, does life have more meaning, given that it is so temporary? Existential theorists do not suggest that people consider these profound existential issues on a day-to-day and moment-to-moment basis. Rather than ruminating about death and meaning, people typically pursue superficial answers that help them deal with the angst and dread they experience, and the defenses they construct form the basis of their personalities (Binswanger, 1958; May, 1983). Some people organize their lives around obtaining material possessions, others may immerse themselves in drugs or addictive behaviors such as compulsive Web browsing, video gaming, or television watching in order to numb the mind to existential realities.

For existentialists, a healthier solution is to face the issues head on and learn to accept and tolerate the pain of existence. Indeed, being fully human means confronting existential realities rather than denying them or embracing comforting illusions. This requires the courage to accept the inherent anxiety and the dread of nothing that is part of being alive. Such courage may be bolstered by developing supportive relationships with others who can supply unconditional positive regard. Something about being loved helps take away the angst.



Figure 12.4

FLOW EXPERIENCE It feels good to do things that challenge your abilities but that don't challenge them too much. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described this feeling between boredom and anxiety as the “flow experience.”

existential approach A school of thought that regards personality as governed by an individual's ongoing choices and decisions in the context of the realities of life and death.

social-cognitive approach An approach that views personality in terms of how the person thinks about the situations encountered in daily life and behaves in response to them.

Build to the Outcomes

- How does the humanistic–existential approach differ from the trait and psychodynamic approaches?
- What does it mean to be self-actualized?
- How is “flow” created?
- What is the existential approach to personality?
- What is angst? How is it created?

The Social–Cognitive Approach: Personalities in Situations

What is it like to be a person? The **social-cognitive approach** views personality in terms of how the person thinks about the situations encountered in daily life and behaves in response to them. Bringing together insights from social psychology, cognitive psychology, and learning theory, this approach emphasizes how the person experiences and interprets situations (Bandura, 1986; Mischel & Shoda, 1999; Ross & Nisbett, 1991; Wegner & Gilbert, 2000).

Researchers in social cognition believe that both the current situation and learning history are key determinants of behavior, and focus on how people perceive their environments. People think about their goals, the consequences of their behavior,

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the social-cognitive approach to personality.
- Explain how personal constructs are key to personality differences.
- Identify how one's perception of control influences behavior.



"He's not very exciting in social situations but on the net he's a wideman."

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION: WALTER MISCHEL

and how they might achieve certain things in different situations (Lewin, 1951). The social-cognitive approach looks at how personality and situation interact to cause behavior, how personality contributes to the way people construct situations in their own minds, and how people's goals and expectancies influence their responses to situations.

CONSISTENCY OF PERSONALITY ACROSS SITUATIONS

Although social-cognitive psychologists attribute behavior both to the individual's personality and to his or her situation, situation can often trump personality. For example, a person would have to be pretty strange to act exactly the same way at a memorial service and at a keg party. In their belief that the strong push and pull of situations can influence almost everyone, social-cognitive psychologists are somewhat at odds with the basic assumptions of classic personality psychology; that is, that personality characteristics (such as traits, needs, unconscious drives) cause people to behave in the same way across situations and over time. At the core of the social-cognitive approach is a natural puzzle, the **person-situation controversy**, which focuses on the question of whether behavior is caused more by personality or by situational factors.

This controversy began in earnest when Walter Mischel (1968) argued that measured personality traits often do a poor job of predicting individuals' behavior. Mischel reviewed decades of research that compared scores on standard personality tests with actual behavior, looking at evidence from studies asking questions such as "Does a person with a high score on a test of introversion actually spend more time alone than someone with a low score?" Mischel's disturbing conclusion: The average correlation between trait and behavior is only about .30. This is certainly better than zero (i.e., no relation at all) but not very good when you remember that a perfect prediction is represented by a correlation of 1.0.

Mischel also noted that knowing how a person will behave in one situation is not particularly helpful in predicting that person's behavior in another situation. For example, in classic studies, Hugh Hartshorne and M. A. May (1928) assessed children's honesty by examining their willingness to cheat on a test and found that such dishonesty was not consistent from one situation to another. The assessment of a child's trait of honesty in a cheating situation was of almost no use in predicting whether that child would act honestly in a different situation, such as when given the opportunity to steal money. Mischel proposed that measured traits do not predict behaviors very



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES
Is a student who cheats on a test more likely than others to steal candy or lie to his grandmother? Social-cognitive research indicates that behavior in one situation does not necessarily predict behavior in a different situation.

person-situation controversy The question of whether behavior is caused more by personality or by situational factors.

Does Your Personality Change Depending on Who You're With?

Social-cognitive psychologists suggest that how you behave is influenced by both your personality and the situations you are in. For instance, you act differently when sitting in a classroom than you do when dancing at a club (unless it's a really fun class). But do your personality and behavior also change when you're talking to different people regardless of context? For instance, do things such as your language, tone of voice, and level of warmth change depending on whom you are talking to?

For most people, the answer is yes. For example, we speak and act differently when interacting with our parents ["Hello mother, hello father"] than with our friends ["Yo! Sup, punk?"]. Many people change their language and personality when interacting with

people from their own race or cultural group as opposed to those from other groups (e.g., Coates, 2015). And there is evidence from studies of bilingual speakers that people's personality traits shift slightly when they are speaking in one language versus another (Ramirez Esparza et al., 2004). These are notably subtle shifts rather than complete personality transplants.

Why would our personality characteristics change when we are interacting with one person versus another? One possibility is that we shift our personality and language to match the people with whom we are interacting in order to signal closeness or affiliation with them. Another possibility is that we do this to influence what other people think about us. For instance, one

recent study found that people in positions of power tend to downplay their competence when interacting with subordinates in order to appear warmer and more likeable, whereas subordinates tend to conceal their warmth in order to appear more competent (Swencionis & Fiske, 2016). The authors suggest that in both situations, the participants are attempting to increase the perceived similarity between them and the person with whom they are interacting. The fact that things such as personality, similarity, and perceived competence can influence decisions about hiring and promotions (Rivera, 2012; Lewis, Starford, & Tracing, 2011) means that personality actually has a huge impact on the experiences you have in the real world.

well because behaviors are determined more by situational factors than personality theorists were willing to acknowledge.

Is there no personality, then? Do we all just do what situations require? The person-situation controversy has inspired many studies in the years since Mischel's critique, and it turns out that information about both personality and situation are necessary to predict behavior accurately (Fleeson, 2004; Mischel, 2004). Some situations are particularly powerful, leading most everyone to behave similarly regardless of personality (Cooper & Withey, 2009). At a funeral, almost everyone looks somber, and during an earthquake, almost everyone shakes. But in more moderate situations, personality can come forward to influence behavior (Funder, 2001). Among the children in Hartshorne and May's (1928) studies, cheating versus not cheating on a test was actually a fairly good predictor of cheating on a test later—as long as the situation was similar. Personality consistency, then, appears to be a matter of when and where a certain kind of behavior tends to be shown (see the Real World: Does Your Personality Change Depending on Who You're With?). Social-cognitive theorists believe these patterns of personality consistency arise from the way different people interpret situations and from the ways different people pursue goals within situations.

PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS: THE KEY TO THE PERCEIVER'S PERSONALITY

How can we understand differences in how situations are interpreted? Recall our notion that personality often exists in the eye of the beholder. Situations may exist in the eye of the beholder as well. One person's gold mine may be another person's useless hole in the ground. George Kelly (1955) long ago realized that these differences in perspective could be used to understand the perceiver's personality. He suggested that people view the social world from differing perspectives and that these different views arise through the application of **personal constructs**, dimensions people use in making sense of their experiences. Consider, for example, different individuals' personal constructs of a clown: One person may see him as a source of fun, another as a tragic figure, and yet another as so frightening that McDonald's must be avoided at all costs.

personal constructs Dimensions people use in making sense of their experiences.

Are two of these people taller and one shorter? Are two bareheaded while one wears a hood? Or are two the daughters and one the mom? George Kelly held that the personal constructs we use to distinguish among people in our lives are basic elements of our own personalities.



Kelly assessed personal constructs about social relationships by asking people to (1) list the people in their life, (2) consider three of the people and state a way in which two of them are similar to each other and different from the third, and (3) repeat this for other triads of people to produce a list of the dimensions that respondents used to classify friends and family. One respondent might focus on the degree to which people (self included) are *lazy or hardworking*, for example; someone else might attend to the degree to which people are *sociable or unfriendly*.

Kelly proposed that different personal constructs (*construals*) are the key to personality differences; that is, different construals lead people to engage in different behaviors. Taking a long break from work for a leisurely lunch might seem *lazy* to you. To your friend, the break might seem an ideal opportunity for catching up with friends and for wondering why you always choose to eat at your desk. Social-cognitive theory explains different responses to situations with the idea that people experience and interpret the world in different ways.

PERSONAL GOALS AND EXPECTANCIES LEAD TO A CHARACTERISTIC STYLE OF BEHAVIOR

Social-cognitive theories also recognize that a person's unique perspective on situations is reflected in his or her personal goals, which are often conscious. In fact, people can usually tell you their goals, whether to find a date for this weekend, get a good grade in psychology, establish a fulfilling career, or just get this darn bag of chips open. These goals often reflect the tasks that are appropriate to the person's situation and, in a larger sense, fit the person's role and stage of life (Cantor, 1990; Klinger, 1977; Little, 1983; Vallacher & Wegner, 1985). For instance, common goals for adolescents include being popular, achieving greater independence from parents and family, and getting into a good college. Common goals for adults include developing a meaningful career, finding a mate, securing financial stability, and starting a family.

People translate goals into behavior in part through **outcome expectancies**, a person's assumptions about the likely consequences of a future behavior. Just as a laboratory rat learns that pressing a bar releases a food pellet, we learn that "if I am friendly toward people, they will be friendly in return," and "if I ask people to pull my finger, they will withdraw from me." So we learn to perform behaviors that we expect will have the outcome of moving us closer to our goals. We learn outcome expectancies through direct experience, both bitter and sweet, and through merely observing other people's actions and their consequences.

outcome expectancies A person's assumptions about the likely consequences of a future behavior.

TABLE 12.5

Rotter's Locus-of-Control Scale

For each pair of items, choose the option that most closely reflects your personal belief. Then check the answer key below to see if you have more of an internal or external locus of control.

- a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.

b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
- a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.

b. Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.
- a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.

b. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.
- a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.

b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.

Information from Rotter, 1966.

Answers: A more internal locus of control would be reflected in choosing options 1b, 2b, 3a, and 4a.



Some days you feel like a puppet on a string. If you have an external locus of control and believe you are at the mercy of other people, or of fate, you may feel that way most days.

Outcome expectancies combine with a person's goals to produce that person's characteristic style of behavior. An individual with the goal of making friends and the expectancy that being kind will produce warmth in return is likely to behave very differently from an individual whose goal is to achieve fame at any cost and who believes that shameless self-promotion is the route to fame. We do not all want the same things from life, clearly, and our personalities largely reflect the goals we pursue and the expectancies we have about the best ways to pursue them.

People differ in their generalized expectancy for achieving goals. Some people seem to feel that they are fully in control of what happens to them in life, whereas others feel that the world doles out rewards and punishments to them irrespective of their actions. Julian Rotter (1966) developed a questionnaire (see TABLE 12.5) to measure a person's tendency to perceive the control of rewards as internal to the self or external in the environment, a disposition he called **locus of control**. People whose answers suggest that they believe they control their own destiny are said to have an **internal locus of control**, whereas those who believe that outcomes are random, determined by luck, or controlled by other people are described as having an **external locus of control**. These beliefs translate into individual differences in emotion and behavior. For example, people with an internal locus of control tend to be less anxious, achieve more, and cope better with stress than do people with an external orientation (Lefcourt, 1982). To get a sense of your standing on this trait dimension, choose one of the options for each of the sample items from the locus-of-control scale in Table 12.5.

locus of control A person's tendency to perceive the control of rewards as internal to the self or external in the environment.

Build to the Outcomes

- Do researchers in social cognition think that personality arises from past experiences or from the current environment?
- How well do measured personality traits predict behavior, according to the social-cognitive approach?
- Does personality or the current situation predict a person's behavior?
- What are personal constructs?
- How do outcome expectancies and personal goals combine to form personality?
- What is the advantage of an internal, over an external, locus of control?

The Self: Personality in the Mirror

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the features that make up the self-concept.
- Identify how self-esteem develops.
- Identify the motivations for self-esteem.

Imagine that you wake up tomorrow morning, drag yourself into the bathroom, look into the mirror, and don't recognize the face looking back at you. This was the plight of a patient studied by the neurologist Todd Feinberg (2001). The woman, married for 30 years and the mother of two grown children, one day began to respond to her mirror image as if it were a different person. She talked to and challenged the person in the mirror. When she got no response, she tried to attack it as if it were an intruder. Her husband, shaken by this bizarre behavior, brought her to the neurologist, who was gradually able to convince her that the image in the mirror was in fact herself.

Most of us are pretty familiar with the face that looks back at us from every mirror. We develop the ability to recognize ourselves in mirrors by 18 months of age (as discussed in the Consciousness chapter), and we share this skill with chimpanzees and other apes that have been raised in the presence of mirrors. Self-recognition in mirrors signals our amazing capacity for reflexive thinking, for directing attention to our own thoughts, feelings, and actions—an ability that enables us to construct ideas about our own personality. Unlike a cow, which will never know that it has a poor sense of humor, or a cat, which will never know that it is awfully friendly, humans have rich and detailed self-knowledge.

Admittedly, none of us knows all there is to know about our own personality. In fact, sometimes others may know us better than we know ourselves (Vazire & Mehl, 2008). But we do have enough self-knowledge to respond reliably to personality inventories and report on our traits and behaviors. These observations draw on what we think about ourselves (our *self-concept*) and on how we feel about ourselves (our *self-esteem*). Self-concept and self-esteem are critically important facets of personality, not just because they reveal how people see their own personalities but because they also guide how people think others will see them.

What do these self-portraits of Frida Kahlo, Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, Wanda Wulz, and Jean-Michel Basquiat reveal about each artist's self-concept?



FRIDA KAHLO'S SELF-PORTRAITS REVEAL HER PAIN AND SUFFERING. (FRIDA KAHLO'S SELF-PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF THE FRIDA KAHLO FOUNDATION; FRIDA KAHLO'S SELF-PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF THE FRIDA KAHLO FOUNDATION)



PICASSO'S SELF-PORTRAITS REVEAL HIS UNUSUAL AND UNSTABLE MENTAL STATE. (PICASSO'S SELF-PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF THE PABLO PICASSO FOUNDATION)



DALÍ'S SELF-PORTRAITS REVEAL HIS UNUSUAL AND UNSTABLE MENTAL STATE. (DALÍ'S SELF-PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF THE SALVADOR DALÍ FOUNDATION)



BASQUIAT'S SELF-PORTRAITS REVEAL HIS UNUSUAL AND UNSTABLE MENTAL STATE. (BASQUIAT'S SELF-PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF THE JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT FOUNDATION)

SELF-CONCEPT

In his renowned psychology textbook, William James (1890) included a theory of self in which he pointed to the self's two facets, the *I* and the *Me*. The *I* is the self that thinks, experiences, and acts in the world; it is the self as a *knower*. The *Me* is the self that is an object in the world; it is the self that is *known*. The *I* is much like consciousness, then, a perspective on all of experience (see the Consciousness chapter), but the *Me* is less mysterious: It is just a concept of a person.

If asked to describe your *Me*, you might mention your physical characteristics (male or female, tall or short, dark-skinned or light); your activities (listening to hip-hop, alternative rock, jazz, or classical music); your personality traits (extraverted or introverted, agreeable or independent); or your social roles (student, son or daughter, member of a hiking club, krumper). These features make up the **self-concept**, a person's explicit knowledge of his or her own behaviors, traits, and other personal characteristics. A person's self-concept is an organized body of knowledge that develops from social experiences and has a profound effect on a person's behavior throughout life.

Self-Concept Organization

Almost everyone has a place for memorabilia, a drawer or box somewhere that holds all those sentimental keepsakes—photos, yearbooks, cards and letters, maybe that scrap of the old security blanket—all memories of “life as *Me*.” Perhaps you've wanted to organize these things sometime but have never gotten around to it. Fortunately, the knowledge of ourselves that we store in our *autobiographical memory* seems to be organized naturally in two ways: as narratives about episodes in our lives and in terms of traits (as would be suggested by the distinction between episodic and semantic memory discussed in the Memory chapter).

Self-Narratives Are Stories We Tell About Ourselves The aspect of the self-concept that is a *self-narrative* (a story that we tell about ourselves) can be brief or very lengthy. Your life story could start with your birth and upbringing, describe a series of defining moments, and end where you are today. You could select specific events and experiences, goals and life tasks, and memories of places and people that have influenced you. Self-narrative organizes the highlights (and low blows) of your life



FRIDA KAHLO'S SELF-PORTRAITS REVEAL HER PAIN AND SUFFERING. (FRIDA KAHLO'S SELF-PORTRAITS: COURTESY OF THE FRIDA KAHLO FOUNDATION)

Think about your own self-narrative (what you have done) and self-concept (how you view yourself). Are there areas that don't match up? Are there things that you've done, good or bad, that are not part of your self-concept? How might you explain that?

into a story in which you are the leading character and binds them together into your self-concept (McAdams, 1993; McLean, 2008). Psychodynamic and humanistic-existential psychologists suggest that people's self-narratives reflect their fantasies and thoughts about core motives and approaches to existence.

Self-Schemas Are Sets of Traits We Use to Define Ourselves Self-concept is also organized in a more abstract way, in terms of personality traits. Just as you can judge an object on its attributes (Is this apple green?), you can judge yourself on any number of traits—whether you are considerate or smart or lazy or active or, for that matter, green—and do so quite reliably, making the same rating on multiple occasions. Hazel Markus (1977) observed that each person finds certain unique personality traits particularly important for conceptualizing the self. One person might define herself as independent, for example, whereas another might not care much about her level of independence but instead emphasize her sense of style. Markus called the traits people use to define themselves *self-schemas*, emphasizing that they draw information about the self into a coherent scheme. Markus asked people to indicate whether they had a trait by pressing response buttons labeled *me* or *not me*. She found that participants' judgment reaction times were faster for self-schemas than for other traits. It's as though some facets of the self-concept have almost a knee-jerk quality—letting us tell quickly who we are and who we are not.

Research also shows that the traits people use to judge the self tend to stick in memory. When people make judgments of themselves on traits, they later recall the traits better than when they judge other people on the same traits (Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977). For example, answering a question such as "Are you generous?"—no matter what your answer—is likely to enhance your memory for the trait generous. In studies of this effect of *self-relevance* on memory, researchers using brain imaging technologies have found that the simple activity of making judgments about the trait self-concept is accompanied by activation of the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC), a brain area involved in understanding people (Mitchell, Heatherton, & Macrae, 2002). This activation is stronger, however, when people are judging their own standing on traits (see FIGURE 12.5) than when they are judging the standing of someone else (Kelley et al., 2002). Such stronger activation, then, is linked with better memory for the traits being judged (Macrae et al., 2004). Studies have not been entirely conclusive about which brain areas are most involved in the processing of self-information (Morin, 2002), but they do show that memory for traits is strengthened when the MPFC is activated during self-judgments.

Self-Narratives, Traits, and Behavior Don't Always Match Up How do our behavior self-narratives and trait self-concepts compare? These two methods of self-conceptualization don't always match up. You may think of yourself as an honest person, for example, but also recall that time you nabbed a handful of change from your parents' dresser and conveniently forgot to replace it. The traits we use to describe ourselves are generalizations, and not every episode in our life stories may fit them. In fact, research suggests that the stores of knowledge about our behaviors and traits are not very well integrated (Kihlstrom, Beer, & Klein, 2002). In people who develop amnesia, for example, memory for behaviors can be lost even though the trait self-concept remains stable (Klein, 2004). People can have a pretty strong sense of who they are even though they may not remember a single example of when they acted that way.

Causes and Effects of Self-Concept

How do self-concepts arise, and how do they affect us? In some sense, you learn something about yourself every day. Although we can gain self-knowledge in private moments of insight, we more often arrive at our self-concepts through

interacting with others. Young children in particular receive plenty of feedback from their parents, teachers, siblings, and friends about their characteristics, and this helps them to form an idea of who they are. Even adults would find it difficult to hold a view of the self as "kind" or "smart" if no one else ever shared this impression. The sense of self, then, is largely developed and maintained in relationships with others.

Over the course of a lifetime, however, we become less and less impressed with what others have to say about us. The social theorist George Herbert Mead (1934) observed that all the things people have said about us accumulate after a while into what we see as a kind of consensus held by the "generalized other." We typically adopt this general view of ourselves and hold on to it stubbornly. As a result, the person who says you're a jerk may upset you momentarily, but you bounce back, secure in the knowledge that you actually are not a jerk. And just as we might argue vehemently with someone who tried to tell us a refrigerator is a pair of underpants, we are likely to defend our self-concept against anyone whose view of us departs from our own.

Because it is so stable, a major effect of the self-concept is to promote consistency in behavior across situations (Lecky, 1945). We tend to engage in what William Swann (1983, 2012) called *self-verification*, the tendency to seek evidence to confirm the self-concept, and we find it disconcerting if someone sees us quite differently from the way we see ourselves. In one study, Swann (1983) gave people who considered themselves submissive feedback that they seemed very dominant and forceful. Rather than accepting this discrepant information, they went out of their way to act in an extremely submissive manner. As existential theorists emphasize, people derive a comforting sense of familiarity and stability from knowing who they are.

SELF-ESTEEM

When you think about yourself, do you feel good and worthy? Do you like yourself? Or do you feel bad and have negative, self-critical thoughts? **Self-esteem** is the extent to which an individual likes, values, and accepts the self. Thousands of studies have examined differences between people with high self-esteem (who generally like themselves) and those with relatively low self-esteem (who are less keen on, and may actively dislike, themselves). Researchers who study self-esteem typically ask participants to fill out a self-esteem questionnaire such as the one shown in TABLE 12.6 (Rosenberg, 1965). This widely used measure of self-esteem asks people to evaluate themselves



"I don't want to be defined by who I am."

self-verification The tendency to seek evidence to confirm the self-concept.

self-esteem The extent to which an individual likes, values, and accepts the self.

Medial prefrontal cortex



▲ Figure 12.5
SELF-CONCEPT IN THE BRAIN fMRI scans reveal that the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) is activated (shown here in red and yellow) when people make judgments about whether they possess certain personality traits compared with when they are judging whether those traits apply to someone else [from Kelley et al., 2002.]

TABLE 12.6

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Consider each statement and circle SA for strongly agree, A for agree, D for disagree, and SO for strongly disagree.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D	SO
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.	SA	A	D	SO
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SO
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA	A	D	SO
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	A	D	SO
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	SA	A	D	SO
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SO
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA	A	D	SO
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA	A	D	SO
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA	A	D	SO

Information from Rosenberg, 1965.

Scoring: For items 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10, SA = 3, A = 2, D = 1, SO = 0; for items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9, the scoring is reversed, with SA = 0, A = 1, D = 2, SO = 3. The higher the total score, the higher one's self-esteem.

in terms of each statement. People who strongly agree with the positive statements about themselves and strongly disagree with the negative statements are considered to have high self-esteem.

Although some personality psychologists have argued that self-esteem determines virtually everything about a person's life (from a tendency to engage in criminal activity and violence to professional success), the accumulated evidence shows that the benefits of high self-esteem are less striking and all-encompassing but still significant. In general, compared with people with low self-esteem, those with high self-esteem tend to live happier and healthier lives, cope better with stress, and be more likely to persist at difficult tasks. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem are more likely, for example, to perceive rejection in ambiguous feedback from others and develop eating disorders than those with high self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2003). How does this aspect of personality develop? And why does everyone—whether high or low in self-esteem—seem to want high self-esteem?

Sources of Self-Esteem

Some psychologists contend that high self-esteem arises primarily from being accepted and valued by significant others (Brown, 1993). Other psychologists focus on the influence of specific self-evaluations: judgments about one's value or competence in specific domains such as appearance, athletics, or scholastics.

An important factor is whom people choose for comparison. For example, James (1890) noted that an accomplished athlete who is the second best in the world should feel pretty proud, but this athlete might not if the standard of comparison involves being best in the world. In fact, athletes in the 1992 Olympics who had won silver medals looked less happy during the medal ceremony than those who had won bronze medals (Medvec, Madey, & Gilovich, 1995). If people see the actual self as falling short of the ideal self (the person that they would like to be), they tend to feel sad or dejected. When they become aware that the actual self is inconsistent with the self they have a duty to be, they are likely to feel anxious or agitated (Higgins, 1987).



These are the men's 1,500-meter speed skating medalists at the 2014 Winter Olympics. From left, Denny Morrison of Canada, bronze; Evgeny Bruska of Poland, gold; and Koen Verweij of the Netherlands, silver, pose with their medals. Notice the expression on Verweij's face compared with those of the gold- and bronze-medal winners.

Unconscious perspectives we take on feedback also can affect our sense of self-worth. In one study, researchers looked at the effect of an authority figure's disapproval on self-esteem. They examined the self-esteem of young, Catholic, female undergraduates who had read an article from *Cosmopolitan*, which described a woman's sexual dream (in PG-13 language), and who had either seen a photo of a disapproving-looking pope or a photo of an unfamiliar disapproving person. The photos were shown subliminally; that is, in such brief flashes that the women could not consciously recognize whom they had seen. In self-ratings made afterward, the women in the disapproving-pope group showed a marked reduction in self-esteem compared with the other women: They rated themselves as less competent, more anxious, and less moral. In the words of the researchers, self-esteem can be influenced when an important authority figure is "watching you from the back of your mind" (Baldwin, Carrell, & Lopez, 1989, p. 435).

Self-esteem is also affected by what kinds of domains we consider most important in our self-concept. One person's self-worth might be entirely contingent on, for example, how well she does in school, whereas another's self-worth might be based on her physical attractiveness (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Pelham, 1985). The first person's self-esteem might receive a big boost when she gets an A on an exam, but much less of a boost when she's complimented on her new hairstyle, and this effect might be exactly reversed in the second person.

The Desire for Self-Esteem

What's so great about self-esteem? Why do people want to see themselves in a positive light and avoid seeing themselves negatively?

Self-Esteem May Reflect High Social Status Does self-esteem feel good because it reflects our degree of social dominance or status? People with high self-esteem seem to carry themselves in a way that is similar to how high-status animals of other social species carry themselves. Dominant male gorillas, for example, appear confident and comfortable, not anxious or withdrawn. Perhaps high self-esteem in humans reflects high social status or suggests that the person is worthy of respect, and this perception triggers natural affective responses (Barkow, 1980; Maslow, 1937).

Self-Esteem May Have Played a Role in Evolution Could the desire for self-esteem come from a basic need to belong or to be related to others? Evolutionary theory holds that early humans who managed to survive and pass on their genes were those able to maintain good relations with others rather than being cast out to fend for themselves. Clearly, belonging to groups is adaptive, as is knowing whether you are accepted. Thus, self-esteem could be a kind of "sociometer," an inner gauge of how



PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY AROZZI/REUTERS

Survivor, *The Bachelor: Big Brother*. Why are shows in which everyone is fighting to remain a part of the group so popular today? Is it because these shows exploit the evolutionary desire to belong? [Do you desire just like to see other people get kicked out of the club?]

much a person feels included by others at any given moment (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). According to evolutionary theory, then, we seek higher self-esteem because we have evolved to seek out belongingness in our families, work groups, and culture, and higher self-esteem indicates that we are being accepted.

Self-Esteem Provides a Sense of Security Consistent with the existential and psychodynamic approaches to personality, self-esteem can be a matter of security. The studies of mortality salience discussed in the Emotion and Motivation chapter suggest that the source of distress underlying negative self-esteem is ultimately the fear of death (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). In this view, humans find it anxiety provoking—in fact, terrifying—to contemplate their own mortality, and so they try to defend against this awareness by immersing themselves in activities (such as earning money or dressing up to appear attractive) that their culture defines as meaningful and valuable. The desire for self-esteem may stem from a need to find value in ourselves as a way of escaping the anxiety associated with recognizing our mortality. The higher our self-esteem, the less anxious we feel with the knowledge that someday we will no longer exist. (See Other Voices: Does the Study of Personality Lack... Personality? for more on interesting ideas about self-esteem, security, and personality.)

But Can We All Be Above Average? Whatever the reason that low self-esteem feels so bad and high self-esteem feels so good, people are generally motivated to see themselves positively. In fact, we often process information in a biased manner in order to feel good about the self. Research on the **self-serving bias** shows that people tend to take credit for their successes but downplay responsibility for their failures. You may have noticed this tendency in yourself, particularly in terms of the attributions you make about exams when you get a good grade (I studied really intensely, and I'm good at that subject) or a bad grade (The test was ridiculously tricky, and the professor is unfair).

On the whole, most people satisfy the desire for high self-esteem and maintain a reasonably positive view of self by engaging in the self-serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975; Shepperd, Malone, & Sweeny, 2008). In fact, if people are asked to rate themselves across a range of characteristics, they tend to see themselves as better than the average person in most domains (Alicke et al., 1995). For example, 90% of drivers describe their driving skills as better than average, and 86% of workers rate their performance on the job as above average. Even among university professors, 94% feel they are above average in teaching ability compared with other professors (Cross, 1977). These kinds of judgments simply cannot be accurate, statistically speaking, because the average of a group of people has to be the average, not better than average! This particular error may be adaptive, however. People who do not engage in this self-serving bias to boost their self-esteem tend to be more at risk for depression, anxiety, and related health problems (Taylor & Brown, 1988).

On the other hand, a few people take positive self-esteem to the extreme. Unfortunately, seeing yourself as way, way better than average—a trait called **narcissism**, a

self-serving bias People's tendency to take credit for their successes but downplay responsibility for their failures.

narcissism A trait that reflects a grandiose view of the self combined with a tendency to seek admiration from and exploit others.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY AROZZI/REUTERS

Does the Study of Personality Lack . . . Personality?



David Brooks is a columnist for the *New York Times*, a commentator on CNN, and the author of several popular books on behavioral science.

OTHER VOICES
COMMENTARY EDITOR: THE NEW YORK TIMES

As described in this chapter, some of the field's older ideas about personality (such as those described in the sections on psychodynamic and humanistic–existential approaches) are very intriguing but lacking in evidence, and so are not widely studied these days. Instead, personality researchers today are aiming to understand what aspects of our personalities are passed through which genes, and how the Big Five might map onto brain structure and functioning. The old approaches lacked evidence, but is something lacking in the newer approaches to studying personality? David Brooks seems to think so.

... In the 20th century, psychoanalysts were a big deal. There were a number of best-selling authors spinning theories about the psyche, which had a large impact on how people saw the world and themselves. This includes not only Freud and Jung, but also people like Erick Erikson, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Viktor Frankl and Philip Rieff. Today we're more into cognition and the brain. Over the years, attention has shifted from the soul to the personality to decision making. Preceptions have migrated from intuition to psychic security to success.

When it comes to treating mental illness, I guess I'm glad we've made this shift. I put more faith in medications and cognitive therapies than in Freudian or Jungian analysis. But something has been lost as well as gained. We're less adept at talking about personalities and necessities than we were when psychoanalysts held center stage.

For example, in the middle of the 20th century, a woman named Karen Horney [pronounced HOY-nee] crafted a series of influential theories about personality. Like many authors of these intellectually ambitious theories, she was raised in Europe and migrated to the United States before World War II. More than most of her male counterparts, Horney felt that people were driven by anxiety and the desire for security. People who have been seriously damaged, she argued, tend to react in one of three ways.

Some people respond to their wounds by moving against others. These domineering types seek to establish security by conquering and outperforming other people. They deny their own weaknesses. They are rarely plagued by self-doubt. They fear dependence and helplessness. They use their children and spouses as tools to win prestige for themselves. . . .

Other people respond to anxiety by moving toward others. These dependent types try to win people's affections by being compliant. They avoid conflict. They become absorbed by their relationships, surrendering

their individual opinions. They regard everyone else as essentially good, even people who have been cruel. . . .

Other people move away from others. These detached types try to isolate themselves and adopt an onlooker's attitude toward life. As Barry S. Cooper summarizes the category in his book, *Sin, Power and Self-Acceptance*: "In quieter peace, it is necessary to leave the background of interpersonal relationships, where there is constant threat of being captured. . . ."

The domineering person believes that, if he wins life's battles, nothing can hurt him. The dependent person believes that, if he shuns private gain and conforms to the wishes of others, then the world will treat him nicely. The detached person believes that, if she asks nothing of the world, the world will ask nothing of him. These are ideal types, obviously, conceptual categories. They join a profusion of personality types that were charted out by various writers in the mid-20th century the inner directed, the outer directed, the Organization Man, the anal retentive, the narcissist, the outrole.

The books that explained these theories were good bad books. The good bad book [I'm denoting the category from a phrase from Dweck] makes sweeping claims, and lumps people into big groups. Sometimes these claims are not really defensible intellectually. But they are thought-provoking and useful. They provide categories and handles the rest of us can use to understand the people around us, seeing where the category fits and thinking more precisely about where it doesn't.

We're probably poorer now than people like Horney have sunk to near oblivion—less adept at analyzing personality. We probably have less practice analyzing personalities. . . .

Is David Brooks right? As the study of personality has moved away from big picture explanations like those of Freud, Maslow, and Frankl, which attempt to explain why we behave the way we do with one overarching theory, and toward efforts to break down personality into smaller constructs and understand how nature and nurture produce these core traits, have we actually gotten worse at understanding personality? On balance, should interesting theories that make intriguing assumptions about people's personalities, but have no data to support their accuracy, be retained simply because they tell a more interesting story? If you are reading this book, you represent the future of psychology. How can we better understand and measure human personality? What are the most important future steps?

From the *New York Times*, October 30, 2012 © 2012 The New York Times. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of this Content without express written permission is prohibited. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/30/opinion/brooks-the-personality-problem.html>

grandiose view of the self combined with a tendency to seek admiration from and exploit others—brings some costs. In fact, at its extreme, narcissism is considered a personality disorder (see the Psychological Disorders chapter). Research has documented disadvantages of an overinflated view of self, most of which arise from the need to defend that grandiose view at all costs. For example, when highly narcissistic adolescents were given reason to be ashamed of their performance on a task, their aggressiveness increased in the form of willingness to deliver loud blasts of noise to punish their opponents in a laboratory game (Thomas et al., 2008).

Implic Egotism

What's your favorite letter of the alphabet? About 30% of people answer by picking what just happens to be the first letter of their first name. Could this choice indicate

that some people think so highly of themselves that they base judgments of seemingly unrelated topics on how much those topics remind them of themselves?

This *name-letter effect* was discovered some years ago (Nuttin, 1985), but more recently researchers have gone on to discover how broad the egotistic bias in preferences can be. Brett Pelham and his colleagues have found subtle yet systematic biases toward and this effect when people choose their home cities, streets, and even occupations (Pelham, Amlberg, & Jones, 2002). When the researchers examined the rolls of people moving into several southern states, for example, they found that people named George were more likely than those with other names to move to Georgia. The same was true for Florences (Florida), Kenneths (Kentucky), and Louisises (Louisiana). You can guess where the Virginias tended to relocate. People whose last name is Street seem biased toward addresses ending in street, whereas Lanes like lanes. The name effect seems to work for occupations as well: Slightly more people named Dennis and Denise chose dentistry, and Lauras and Lawrences chose law, compared with other occupations. Although the biases are small, they are consistent across many tests of this hypothesis.

These biases have been called expressions of *implicit egotism* because people are not typically aware that they are influenced by the wonderful sound of their own names (Pelham, Carvalho, & Jones, 2005). When Buffy moves to Buffalo, she is not likely to volunteer that she did so because it matched her name. Yet people who show this egotistic bias in one way also tend to show it in others: People who strongly prefer their own name letter also are likely to pick their birth date as their favorite number (Koole, Dijksterhuis, & van Knippenberg, 2001). And people who like their name letter were also found to evaluate themselves positively on self-ratings of personality traits. This was especially true when the self-ratings were made in response to instructions to work quickly. The people who preferred their name letter made snap judgments about themselves that leaned in a positive direction, suggesting that their special self-appreciation was an automatic response. At some level, a bit of egotism is probably good for us, yet implicit egotism is a curiously subtle error: a tendency to make biased judgments of what we will do and where we will go in life just because we happen to have a certain name.

Which one of your authors would be least likely to want to move to Danville? Why?



COURTESY OF DANIEL LIBERMAN



COURTESY OF DENNIS COAKLEY



MATT JONES PHOTO COURTESY OF NICKI ALLEN/ISTOCK



THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBERMAN

The self is the part of personality that the person knows and can report about. Some of the personality measures we have seen in this chapter (such as personality inventories based on self-reports) are really no different from measures of self-concept. Both depend on the person's perceptions and memories of the self's behavior and traits. But personality runs deeper than this as well. The unconscious forces identified in psychodynamic approaches provide themes for behavior and sources of mental disorder that are not accessible for self-report. The humanistic and existential approaches remind us of the profound concerns we humans face and the difficulties we may have in understanding all the forces that shape our self-views. Finally, in emphasizing how personality shapes our perceptions of social life, the social-cognitive approach brings the self back to center stage. The self, after all, is the hub of each person's social world.

Build to the Outcomes

1. What is the difference between *l* and *me*?
2. What makes up our self-concept?
3. How does our self-narrative contribute to our self-concept?
4. What is a self-schema?
5. Why don't traits always reflect knowledge of behavior?
6. How does self-concept influence behavior?
7. What impact does self-verification have on our behaviors?
8. What is self-esteem? Why do we want to be high in it?
9. How do comparisons with others affect self-esteem?
10. How might self-esteem have played a role in evolution?
11. Why is it possible to have too much self-esteem?

Chapter Review

Personality: What It Is and How It Is Measured

- ▶ In *psychological*, personality refers to a person's characteristic style of behavior, thinking, and feeling. Personality differences can be studied from two points of view: *prior events*, such as biological makeup, life circumstances, and culture; and *anticipated events*, as reflected in a person's hopes, dreams and fears.
- ▶ Personality inventories, such as the MMPI-2-RE, are easy to administer, but people are often inaccurate in their self-reporting. Projective techniques, such as the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the TAT, provide richer information for a one-to-one relationship but are subject to interpreter bias.
- ▶ Newer, high-tech methods are proving to be even more effective.

- ▶ Many personality psychologists currently focus on the Big Five personality factors: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These traits account for variation in personality and appear universal, on the basis of results from many different studies and cultures.
- ▶ Twin studies indicate that the more genes you have in common with someone else, the more similar your personalities will be. Studies with animals further support the idea that biological mechanisms underlie personality traits.
- ▶ Research indicates that the part of the brain that regulates arousal and alertness [the reticular formation] is more easily stimulated in introverts than in extraverts, who may need to seek out more interaction and activity to achieve mental stimulation.

The Trait Approach: Identifying Patterns of Behavior

- ▶ The trait approach tries to identify personality dimensions that can be used to characterize an individual's behavior. Researchers have attempted to boil down into some core personality dimensions the potentially huge array of things people do, think, and feel.
- ▶ Researchers use factor analysis to study relationships between the adjectives that people use to self-report traits.

The Psychodynamic Approach: Forces That Lie Beneath Awareness

- ▶ Freud believed that the personality results from forces that are largely unconscious, shaped by the interplay among id, superego, and ego.
- ▶ Defense mechanisms are techniques the mind may use to reduce anxiety generated by unacceptable impulses.

- ▶ Freud also believed that the developing person passes through a series of psychosexual stages and that failing to progress beyond one of the stages results in fixation, which is associated with corresponding personality traits.
- ▶ Critics argue that psychodynamic explanations lack real evidence and are after the fact interpretations.

The Humanistic-Existential Approach: Personality as Choice

- ▶ The humanistic-existential approach to personality grew out of philosophical traditions that are at odds with most of the assumptions of the trait and psychoanalytic approaches. It focuses on how people make healthy choices that form their personalities.
- ▶ Humanists see personality as directed by an inherent striving toward self-actualization and development of our unique human potentials.
- ▶ Existentialists focus on angst and the defensive response people often have to questions about the meaning of life and the inevitability of death.

The Social-Cognitive Approach: Personalities in Situations

- ▶ The social-cognitive approach focuses on personality as arising from individuals' behavior in situations. According to social-cognitive

personality theorists, the same person may behave differently in different situations but should behave consistently in similar situations.

- ▶ Personal constructs are dimensions people use to make sense of their experiences and that reveal the perceiver's personality.
- ▶ People translate their goals into behavior through outcome expectancies. People differ in whether they believe they control their own destiny (internal locus of control) or are at the mercy of fate or other people (external locus of control). Those with an internal locus of control tend to be better able to cope with stress and achieve more.

The Self: Personality in the Mirror

- ▶ The self-concept is a person's knowledge of self, including both specific self-narratives and more abstract personality traits or self-schemas. Humanists' self-concept develops through social feedback, and people often act to try to confirm these views through a process of self-verification.
- ▶ Self-esteem is a person's evaluation of self; it is derived from being accepted by others, as well as by how we evaluate ourselves by comparison to others. Theories proposed to explain why we seek positive self-esteem suggest that we do so to achieve perceptions of status, or belonging, or of being symbolically protected against mortality.
- ▶ People strive for positive self-views through self-serving biases and implicit egotism.

KEY CONCEPT QUIZ

- From a psychological perspective, personality refers to
 - a person's characteristic style of behaving, thinking, and feeling
 - biological predispositions that manifest themselves psychologically
 - past events that have shaped a person's current behavior
 - choices people make in response to cultural norms
- Projective techniques to assess personality involve
 - personal inventories
 - self-reporting
 - responses to ambiguous stimuli
 - actuarial methodology
- A relatively stable disposition to behave in a particular and consistent way is a
 - motive
 - goal
 - trait
 - reflex
- Compelling evidence for the importance of biological factors in personality is best seen in studies of
 - parenting styles
 - identical twins reared apart
 - brain damage
 - factor analysis
- After performing poorly on an exam, you drop a class, saying that you and the professor are just a poor match. According to Freud, what defense mechanism are you employing?
 - regression
 - rationalization
 - projection
 - reaction formation
- Humanists see personality as directed toward the goal of
 - existentialism
 - self-actualization
 - ego control
 - sublimation
- According to the existential perspective, the difficulties we face in finding meaning in life and in accepting the responsibility for making free choices provoke a type of anxiety called
 - angst
 - flow
 - the self-actualizing tendency
 - mortality salience
- According to social-cognitive theorists, _____ are the dimensions people use in making sense of their experiences.
 - personal constructs
 - outcome expectancies
 - loci of control
 - personal goals
- What we think about ourselves is referred to as our _____, and how we feel about ourselves is referred to as our _____.
 - self-narrative; self-verification
 - self-concept; self-esteem
 - self-concept; self-verification
 - self-esteem; self-concept
- When people take credit for their successes but downplay responsibility for their failures, they are exhibiting
 - narcissism
 - implicit egotism
 - the self-serving bias
 - the name-letter effect



LearningCurve

Don't stop now! Quizzing yourself is a powerful study tool. Go to LaunchPad to access the LearningCurve adaptive quizzing system and your own personalized learning plan. Visit launchpadworks.com.

KEY TERMS

personality (p. 472)	psychodynamic approach (p. 485)	phallic stage (p. 487)	outcome expectancies (p. 492)
self-report (p. 473)	id (p. 485)	Oedipus conflict (p. 487)	locus of control (p. 493)
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (p. 473)	superego (p. 485)	latency stage (p. 487)	self-concept (p. 495)
projective tests (p. 474)	ego (p. 485)	genital stage (p. 488)	self-verification (p. 497)
Rorschach Inkblot Test (p. 474)	defense mechanisms (p. 486)	self-actualizing tendency (p. 488)	self-esteem (p. 497)
Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (p. 474)	psychosexual stages (p. 486)	existential approach (p. 489)	self-serving bias (p. 500)
test (p. 476)	fixation (p. 486)	social-cognitive approach (p. 489)	narcissism (p. 500)
Big Five (p. 478)	oral stage (p. 487)	person-situation controversy (p. 490)	
	anal stage (p. 487)	personal constructs (p. 491)	

CHANGING MINDS

- A presidential candidate makes a Freudian slip on live TV, calling his mother "pretty"; he corrects himself quickly and says he meant to say "pretty." The next day the video has gone viral, and the morning talk shows discuss the possibility that the candidate has an unresolved Oedipal conflict. If so, he's stuck in the phallic stage and is likely a relatively unstable person preoccupied with issues of seduction, power, and authority [which may be why he wants to be president]. Your roommate knows you're taking a psychology class and asks for your opinion: "Can we really tell that a person is sexually repressed, and maybe in love with his own mother, just because he stumbled over a single word?" How would you reply? How widely are Freud's ideas about personality accepted by modern psychologists?
- While reading a magazine, you come across an article on the nature-nurture controversy in personality. The magazine describes several adoption studies in which adopted children (who share no genes with each other, but grow up in the same household) are no more like each other than complete strangers. This suggests that family environment—and the influence of parental behavior—on personality is very weak. You show the article to a friend, who has trouble believing the results: "I always thought parents who don't show affection produce kids who have trouble forming lasting relationships." How would you explain to your friend the relationship between nature, nurture, and personality?
- One of your friends has found an online site that offers personality testing. He takes the test and reports that the results prove he's an "immature" rather than a "sensing" personality, who likes to look at the big picture rather than focusing on tangible here-and-now experiences. "This explains a lot," he says, "like why I have trouble remembering details like other people's birthdays, and why it's hard for me to finish projects before the deadline." Aside from warning your friend about the dangers of self-diagnosis via Internet quizzes, what would you tell him about the relationship between personality types and behavior? How well do scores on personality tests predict a person's actual behavior?
- One of your friends tells you that her boyfriend cheated on her, so she will never date him or anyone who has ever been unfaithful because "once a cheat, always a cheat." She goes on to explain that personality and character are stable over time, so people will always make the same decisions and repeat the same mistakes over time. What do we know about the interaction between personality and situations that might confirm or deny her statements?

ANSWERS TO KEY CONCEPT QUIZ

1. a, 2. c, 3. c, 4. b, 5. b, 6. b, 7. a, 8. a, 9. b, 10. c.



LaunchPad
macmillan learning

LaunchPad features the full e-Book of Psychology, the LearningCurve adaptive quizzing system, videos, and a variety of activities to boost your learning. Visit LaunchPad at launchpadworks.com.