

Personality



OVERVIEW

Enduring Issues in Personality

Studying Personality

Psychodynamic Theories

- Sigmund Freud
- Carl Jung
- Alfred Adler
- Karen Horney
- Erik Erikson

- A Psychodynamic View of Jaylene Smith
- Evaluating Psychodynamic Theories

Humanistic Personality Theories

- Carl Rogers
- A Humanistic View of Jaylene Smith

- Evaluating Humanistic Theories

Trait Theories

- The Big Five
- A Trait View of Jaylene Smith
- Evaluating Trait Theories

Cognitive–Social Learning Theories

- Expectancies, Self-Efficacy, and Locus of Control

- A Cognitive–Social Learning View of Jaylene Smith
- Evaluating Cognitive–Social Learning Theories

Personality Assessment

- The Personal Interview
- Direct Observation
- Objective Tests
- Projective Tests

Thirty-year-old Jaylene Smith is a talented physician who meets with a psychologist because she is troubled by certain aspects of her social life. Acquaintances describe Jay in glowing terms, saying she is highly motivated, intelligent, attractive, and charming. But Jay feels terribly insecure and anxious. When the psychologist asked her to pick out some self-descriptive adjectives, she selected “introverted,” “shy,” “inadequate,” and “unhappy.”

Jay was the firstborn in a family of two boys and one girl. Her father is a quiet, gentle medical researcher. His work often allowed him to study at home, so he had extensive contact with his children when they were young. He loved all his children, but clearly favored Jay. His ambitions and goals for her were extremely high; and as she matured, he responded to her every need and demand almost immediately and with full conviction. Their relationship remains as close today as it was during Jay’s childhood.

Jay’s mother worked long hours away from home as a store manager and consequently saw her children primarily at night and on an occasional free weekend. When she came home, Mrs. Smith was tired and had little energy for “nonessential” interactions with her children. She had always been career oriented, but she experienced considerable conflict and frustration trying to reconcile her roles as mother, housekeeper, and financial provider. Mrs. Smith was usually amiable toward all her children but tended to argue more with Jay, until the bickering subsided when Jay was about 6 or 7 years of age. Today, their relationship is cordial but lacks the closeness apparent between Jay and Dr. Smith. Interactions between Dr. and Mrs. Smith were sometimes marred by stormy outbursts over seemingly trivial matters. These episodes were always followed by periods of mutual silence lasting for days.

Jay was very jealous of her first brother, born when she was 2 years old. Her parents recall that Jay sometimes staged

temper tantrums when the new infant demanded and received a lot of attention (especially from Mrs. Smith). The temper tantrums intensified when Jay’s second brother was born, just 1 year later. As time passed, the brothers formed an alliance to try to undermine Jay’s supreme position with their father. Jay only became closer to her father, and her relationships with her brothers were marked by greater-than-average jealousy and rivalry from early childhood to the present.

Throughout elementary, junior high, and high school, Jay was popular and did well academically. Early on, she decided on a career in medicine. Yet, off and on between the ages of 8 and 17, she had strong feelings of loneliness, depression, insecurity, and confusion—feelings common enough during this age period, but stronger than in most youngsters and very distressing to Jay.

Jay’s college days were a period of great personal growth, but several unsuccessful romantic involvements caused her much pain. The failure to achieve a stable and long-lasting relationship persisted after college and troubled Jay greatly. Although even-tempered in most circumstances, Jay often had an explosive fit of anger that ended each important romantic relationship that she had. “What is wrong with me?” she would ask herself. “Why do I find it impossible to maintain a serious relationship for any length of time?”

In medical school, her conflicts crept into her consciousness periodically: “I don’t deserve to be a doctor”; “I won’t pass my exams”; “Who am I, and what do I want from life?”

How can we describe and understand Jaylene Smith’s personality? How did she become who she is? Why does she feel insecure and uncertain despite her obvious success? Why do her friends see her as charming and attractive, though she describes herself as introverted and inadequate? These are the kinds of questions that personality psychologists are likely to ask about Jay—and the kinds of questions we will try to answer in this chapter.

ENDURING ISSUES IN PERSONALITY

As we explore the topic of personality in this chapter, the enduring issues that interest psychologists emerge at several points. The very concept of personality implies that our behavior differs in significant ways from that of other people (diversity–universality) and that our behavior in part reflects our personality as opposed to the situations in which we find ourselves (person–situation). We will also assess the extent to which personality is a result of inheritance, rather than a reflection of life experiences (nature–nurture). Finally, we will consider the extent to which personality changes as we grow older (stability–change).

STUDYING PERSONALITY

What do psychologists mean when they talk about personality?

Many psychologists define **personality** as an individual’s unique pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that persists over time and across situations. There are two important parts to this definition. On the one hand, personality refers to *unique differences*—those

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Define personality. Explain the difference between describing personality (in particular trait theory) and understanding the causes of personality (psychodynamic, humanistic, and cognitive–social learning theories).

personality An individual’s unique pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that persists over time and across situations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the five propositions that are central to all psychodynamic personality theories.
- Describe Freud's theory of personality, including the concepts of *sexual instinct*, *libido*, *id*, *ego*, *superego*, and *pleasure principle* versus *reality principle*. Summarize Freud's stages of development and the consequences of *fixation* at a particular stage.
- Compare and contrast Freud's theory, Carl Jung's theory, Adler's theory, Horney's theory, and Erikson's theory of personality.
- Explain how contemporary psychologists view the contributions and limitations of the psychodynamic perspective.

unconscious In Freud's theory, all the ideas, thoughts, and feelings of which we are not and normally cannot become aware.

psychoanalysis The theory of personality Freud developed, as well as the form of therapy he invented.

libido According to Freud, the energy generated by the sexual instinct.

id In Freud's theory of personality, the collection of unconscious urges and desires that continually seek expression.

pleasure principle According to Freud, the way in which the id seeks immediate gratification of an instinct.

ego Freud's term for the part of the personality that mediates between environmental demands (reality), conscience (superego), and instinctual needs (id); now often used as a synonym for "self."

reality principle According to Freud, the way in which the ego seeks to satisfy instinctual demands safely and effectively in the real world.

superego According to Freud, the social and parental standards the individual has internalized; the conscience and the ego ideal.

ego ideal The part of the superego that consists of standards of what one would like to be.

aspects that distinguish a person from everyone else. On the other hand, the definition asserts that personality is relatively *stable* and *enduring*—that these unique differences persist through time and across situations.

Psychologists vary in their approach to the study of personality. Some set out to identify the most important characteristics of personality, whereas others seek to understand why there are differences in personality. Among the latter group, some consider the family to be the most important factor in personality development, whereas others emphasize the importance of influences outside the family. Still others see personality as the product of how we think about ourselves and our experiences. In this chapter, we explore representative theories of these various approaches. We see how each theoretical paradigm sheds light on the personality of Jaylene Smith. Finally, we will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and will see how psychologists go about assessing personality.

PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES

What ideas do all psychodynamic theories have in common?

Psychodynamic theories see behavior as the product of internal psychological forces that often operate outside our conscious awareness. Freud drew on the physics of his day to coin the term *psychodynamics*: As thermodynamics is the study of heat and mechanical energy and the way that one may be transformed into the other, psychodynamics is the study of psychic energy and the way that it is transformed and expressed in behavior. Although psychodynamic theorists disagree about the exact nature of this psychic energy, the following five propositions are central to all psychodynamic theories and have withstood the tests of time (Huprich & Keaschuk, 2006; Westen, 1998):

1. Much of mental life is unconscious; as a result, people may behave in ways that they themselves do not understand.
2. Mental processes (such as emotions, motivations, and thoughts) operate in parallel and thus may lead to conflicting feelings.
3. Not only do stable personality patterns begin to form in childhood, but early experiences also strongly affect personality development.
4. Our mental representations of ourselves, of others, and of our relationships tend to guide our interactions with other people.
5. Personality development involves learning to regulate sexual and aggressive feelings as well as becoming socially interdependent rather than dependent.

Sigmund Freud

When Freud proposed that sexual instinct is the basis of behavior, how was he defining "sexual instinct"?

To this day, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is the best known and most influential of the psychodynamic theorists (Solms, 2004). As we saw in Chapter 1, "The Science of Psychology," Freud created an entirely new perspective on the study of human behavior. Up to his time, the field of psychology had focused on thoughts and feelings of which we are aware. In a radical departure, Freud stressed the **unconscious**—the ideas, thoughts, and feelings of which we are *not* normally aware (Zwettler-Otte, 2008). Freud's ideas form the basis of **psychoanalysis**, a term that refers both to his particular psychodynamic theory of personality and to the form of therapy that he invented.

According to Freud, human behavior is based on unconscious instincts, or drives. Some instincts are aggressive and destructive; others, such as hunger, thirst, self-preservation, and sex, are necessary to the survival of the individual and the species. Freud used the term *sexual instinct* to refer not just to erotic sexuality, but to the craving for pleasure of all kinds. He used the term **libido** for the energy generated by the sexual instinct. As we will see, Freud regarded the sexual instinct as the most critical factor in the development of personality.

How Personality is Structured Freud theorized that personality is formed around three structures: the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego*. The *id* is the only structure present at birth and is completely unconscious. (See **Figure 10–1**.) Consisting of all the unconscious urges and desires that continually seek expression, it operates according to the **pleasure principle**—that is, it tries to obtain immediate pleasure and to avoid pain. As soon as an instinct arises, the *id* seeks to gratify it. Because the *id* is not in contact with the real world, however, it has only two ways of obtaining gratification. One way is by reflex actions, such as coughing, which immediately relieve unpleasant sensations. The other is through fantasy, or *wish fulfillment*: A person forms a mental image of an object or a situation that partially satisfies the instinct and relieves the uncomfortable feeling. This kind of thought occurs most often in dreams and daydreams, but it may take other forms. For instance, if someone insults you and you spend the next half hour imagining clever retorts, you are engaging in wish fulfillment.

Mental images of this kind provide fleeting relief, but they cannot fully satisfy most needs. For example, just thinking about being with someone you love is a poor substitute for actually being with that person. Therefore, the *id* by itself is not very effective at gratifying instincts. It must link to reality if it is to relieve its discomfort. The *id*'s link to reality is the *ego*.

Freud conceived of the **ego** as the psychic mechanism that controls all thinking and reasoning activities. The *ego* operates partly consciously, partly *preconsciously*, and partly unconsciously. (“Preconscious” refers to material that is not currently in awareness but can easily be recalled.) The *ego* seeks to satisfy the *id*'s drives in the external world. But instead of acting according to the pleasure principle, the *ego* operates by the **reality principle**: By means of intelligent reasoning, the *ego* tries to delay satisfying the *id*'s desires until it can do so safely and successfully. For example, if you are thirsty, your *ego* will attempt to determine how effectively and safely to quench your thirst. (See **Figure 10–2**.)

A personality consisting only of *ego* and *id* would be completely selfish. It would behave effectively, but unsocially. Fully adult behavior is governed not only by reality, but also by the individual's conscience or by the moral standards developed through interaction with parents and society. Freud called this moral watchdog the **superego**.

The *superego* is not present at birth. In fact, in Freud's view young children are amoral and do whatever is pleasurable. As we mature, however, we adopt as our own the judgments of our parents about what is “good” and “bad.” In time, the external restraint applied by our parents gives way to our own internal self-restraint. The *superego*, eventually acting as our conscience, takes over the task of observing and guiding the *ego*, just as the parents once observed and guided the child. In addition, the *superego* compares the *ego*'s actions with an **ego ideal** of perfection and then rewards or punishes the *ego* accordingly. Like the *ego*, the *superego* works at the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious levels.

Ideally, our *id*, *ego*, and *superego* work in harmony, with the *ego* satisfying the demands of the *id* in a reasonable manner that is approved by the *superego*. We are then free to love and hate and to express our emotions sensibly and without guilt. When our *id* is dominant, our instincts are unbridled and we are likely to endanger both ourselves and society. When our *superego* dominates, our behavior is checked too tightly and we are inclined to judge ourselves too harshly or too quickly, impairing our ability to act on our own behalf and enjoy ourselves.

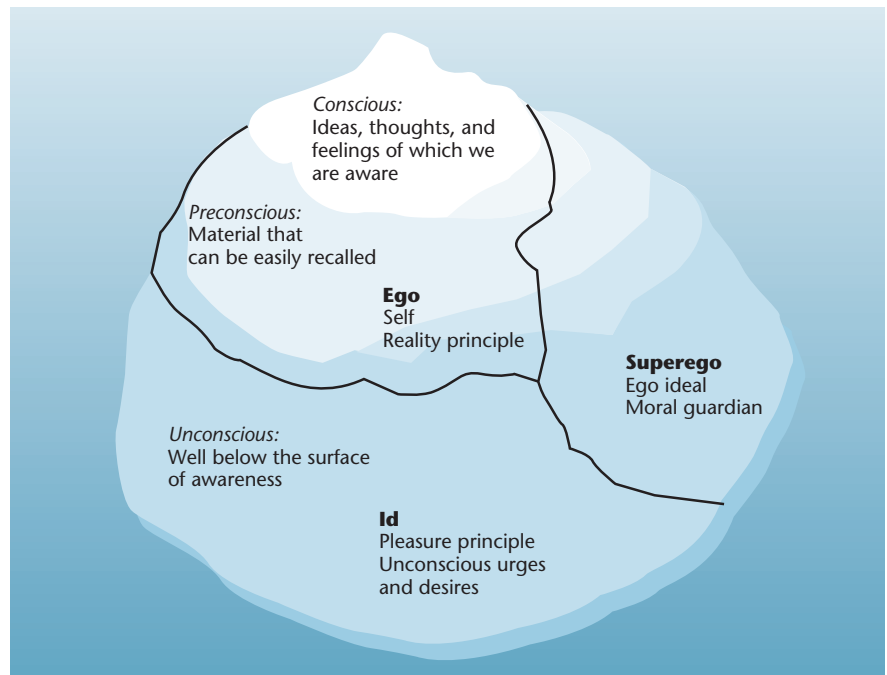


Figure 10–1
The structural relationship formed by the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*.

Freud's conception of personality is often depicted as an iceberg to illustrate how the vast workings of the mind occur beneath its surface. Notice that the *ego* is partly conscious, partly unconscious, and partly preconscious; it derives knowledge of the external world through the senses. The *superego* also works at all three levels. But the *id* is an entirely unconscious structure.

Source: Adapted from *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* by Sigmund Freud, 1933. New York: Carlton House.

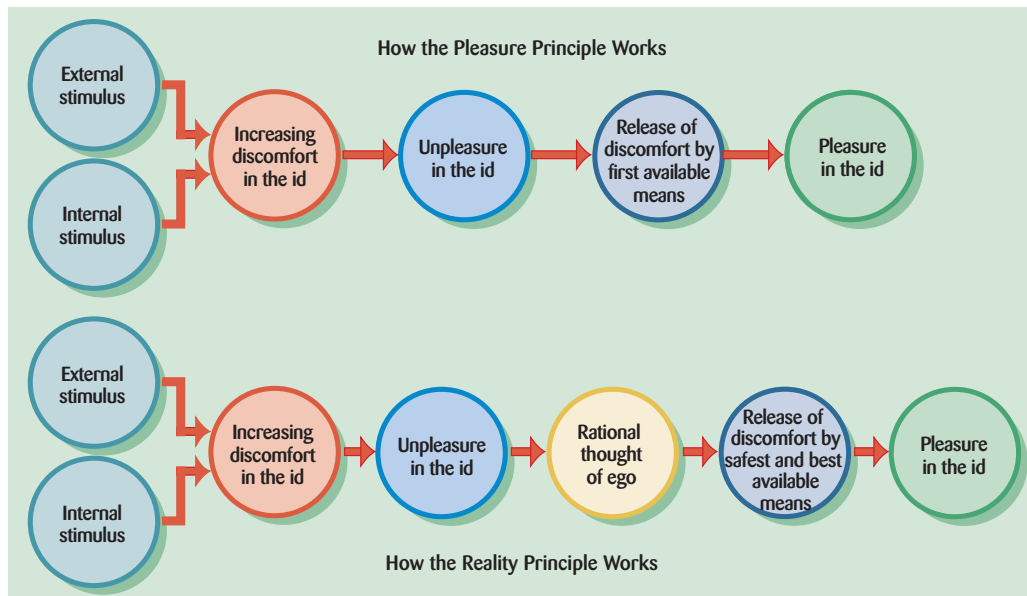


Figure 10-2
How Freud conceived the workings of the pleasure and reality principles.

Note that according to the reality principle, the ego uses rational thought to postpone the gratification of the id until its desires can be satisfied safely.

fixation According to Freud, a partial or complete halt at some point in the individual's psychosexual development.

oral stage First stage in Freud's theory of personality development, in which the infant's erotic feelings center on the mouth, lips, and tongue.

anal stage Second stage in Freud's theory of personality development, in which a child's erotic feelings center on the anus and on elimination.

phallic stage Third stage in Freud's theory of personality development, in which erotic feelings center on the genitals.

Oedipus complex and Electra complex According to Freud, a child's sexual attachment to the parent of the opposite sex and jealousy toward the parent of the same sex; generally occurs in the phallic stage.

latency period In Freud's theory of personality, a period in which the child appears to have no interest in the other sex; occurs after the phallic stage.

genital stage In Freud's theory of personality development, the final stage of normal adult sexual development, which is usually marked by mature sexuality.

to immature forms of sexuality and to certain characteristic personality traits. Let's look more closely at the psychosexual stages that Freud identified and their presumed relationship to personality development.

In the **oral stage** (birth to 18 months), infants, who depend completely on other people to satisfy their needs, relieve sexual tension by sucking and swallowing; when their baby teeth come in, they obtain oral pleasure from chewing and biting. According to Freud, infants who receive too much oral gratification at this stage grow into overly optimistic and dependent adults; they are likely to lack confidence and to be gullible. Those who receive too little gratification may turn into pessimistic and hostile people later in life who are sarcastic and argumentative.

During the **anal stage** (roughly 18 months to 3½ years), the primary source of sexual pleasure shifts from the mouth to the anus. Just about the time children begin to derive pleasure from holding in and excreting feces, toilet training takes place, and they must learn to regulate this new pleasure in ways that are acceptable to their superego. In Freud's view, if parents are too strict in toilet training, some children throw temper tantrums and may live in self-destructive ways as adults. Others are likely to become obstinate, stingy, and excessively orderly. If parents are too lenient, their children may become messy, unorganized, and sloppy.

When children reach the **phallic stage** (after age 3), they discover their genitals and develop a marked attachment to the parent of the opposite sex while becoming jealous of the same-sex parent. In boys, Freud called this the **Oedipus complex**, after the character in Greek mythology who killed his father and married his mother. Girls go through a corresponding **Electra complex**, involving possessive love for their father and jealousy toward their mother. Most children eventually resolve these conflicts by identifying with the parent of the same sex. However, Freud contended that fixation at this stage leads to vanity and egotism in adult life, with men boasting of their sexual prowess and treating women with contempt, and with women becoming flirtatious and promiscuous. Phallic fixation may also prompt feelings of low self-esteem, shyness, and worthlessness.

At the end of the phallic period, Freud believed, children lose interest in sexual behavior and enter a **latency period**. During this period, which begins around the age of 5 or 6 and lasts until age 12 or 13, boys play with boys, girls play with girls, and neither sex takes much interest in the other.

At puberty, the individual enters the last psychosexual stage, the **genital stage**. Sexual impulses reawaken and, ideally, the quest for immediate gratification of these desires yields to mature sexuality in which postponed gratification, a sense of responsibility, and caring for others all play a part.

How Personality Develops Freud's theory of personality development focuses on the way in which we satisfy the sexual instinct during the course of life. As infants mature, their libido becomes focused on various sensitive parts of the body during sequential stages of development. If a child is deprived of pleasure (or allowed too much gratification) from the part of the body that dominates a certain stage, some sexual energy may remain permanently tied to that part of the body, instead of moving on in normal sequence to give the individual a fully integrated personality. This is called **fixation** and, as we shall see, Freud believed that it leads

Freud is certainly not without his critics. As we will see, even members of Freud's own psychoanalytic school did not completely endorse his emphasis on sexuality. Contemporary psychodynamic theorists tend to put greater emphasis on the ego and its attempts to gain mastery over the world. Finally, some critics have suggested that male and female personality development occur in very different ways, and that Freud's male-centered theory sheds little if any light on female personality development (Zeedyk & Greenwood, 2008).

Carl Jung

How did Carl Jung's view of the unconscious differ from that of Freud?

Carl Jung (1875–1961) agreed with many of Freud's tenets, including his emphasis on the role of the unconscious in human behavior, but he expanded the role of the unconscious. Jung contended that libido represents *all* life forces, not just pleasure-seeking. And where Freud viewed the id as a “cauldron of seething excitations” that the ego has to control, Jung saw the unconscious as the ego's source of strength and vitality. He also believed that the unconscious consists of the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The **personal unconscious** includes our repressed thoughts, forgotten experiences, and undeveloped ideas, which may enter consciousness if an incident or a sensation triggers their recall.

ENDURING ISSUES

Diversity–Universality Universal Human Archetypes

The **collective unconscious**, Jung's most original concept, comprises memories and behavior patterns that are inherited from past generations and therefore are shared by all humans. Just as the human body is the product of millions of years of evolution, so too, according to Jung, is the human mind. Over millennia, it has developed “thought forms,” or collective memories, of experiences that people have had in common since prehistoric times. He called these thought forms **archetypes**. Archetypes appear in our thoughts as mental images. Because all people have mothers, for example, the archetype of “mother” is universally associated with the image of one's own mother, with Mother Earth, and with a protective presence.

Jung felt that specific archetypes play special roles in shaping personality. The **persona** (an archetype whose meaning stems from the Latin word for “mask”) is the element of our personality that we project to other people—a shell that grows around our inner self. For some people, the public self so predominates that they lose touch with their inner feelings, leading to personality maladjustments. ■

Jung also divided people into two general attitude types—introverts and extraverts. **Extraverts** turn their attention to the external world. They are “joiners” who take an active interest in other people and in the events going on around them. **Introverts** are more caught up in their own private worlds. They tend to be unsociable and lack confidence in dealing with other people. Everyone, Jung felt, possesses some aspects of both attitude types, but one is usually dominant.

Jung further divided people into *rational individuals*, who regulate their actions by thinking and feeling, and *irrational individuals*, who base their actions on perceptions, whether through the senses (sensation) or through unconscious processes (intuition). Most people exhibit all four psychological functions: thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting. Jung felt, however, that one or more of these functions is usually dominant. Thus, the thinking person is rational and logical, and decides on the basis of facts. The feeling person is sensitive to his or her surroundings, acts tactfully, and has a balanced sense of values. The sensing type relies primarily on surface perceptions and rarely uses imagination or deeper understanding. And the intuitive type sees beyond obvious solutions and facts to consider future possibilities.



According to Carl Jung, we all inherit from our ancestors collective memories or “thought forms” that people have had in common since the dawn of human evolution. The image of a motherlike figure with protective, embracing arms is one such primordial thought form that stems from the important, nurturing role of women throughout human history. This thought form is depicted here in this Bulgarian clay figure of a goddess that dates back some six or seven thousand years.

personal unconscious In Jung's theory of personality, one of the two levels of the unconscious; it contains the individual's repressed thoughts, forgotten experiences, and undeveloped ideas.

collective unconscious In Jung's theory of personality, the level of the unconscious that is inherited and common to all members of a species.

archetypes In Jung's theory of personality, thought forms common to all human beings, stored in the collective unconscious.

persona According to Jung, our public self, the mask we wear to represent ourselves to others.

extraverts According to Jung, people who usually focus on social life and the external world instead of on their internal experience.

introverts According to Jung, people who usually focus on their own thoughts and feelings.



A contemporary representation from U.S. culture of the Jungian archetype of the Wise Old Man can be seen in Albus Dumbledore (from the movies based on J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series).



Source: © 2000, Mike Twohy from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.



22-time Grammy Award winner Stevie Wonder, who cultivated particularly acute auditory abilities, illustrates what Alfred Adler referred to as *compensation*.

compensation According to Adler, the person's effort to overcome imagined or real personal weaknesses.

While Freud emphasized the primacy of the sexual instincts, Jung stressed people's rational and spiritual qualities. And while Freud considered development to be shaped in childhood, Jung thought that psychic development comes to fruition only during middle age. Jung brought a sense of historical continuity to his theories, tracing the roots of human personality back through our ancestral past; yet he also contended that a person moves constantly toward self-realization—toward blending all parts of the personality into a harmonious whole.

Alfred Adler

What did Alfred Adler believe was the major determinant of personality?

Alfred Adler (1870–1937) disagreed sharply with Freud's concept of the conflict between the selfish id and the morality-based superego. To Adler, people possess innate positive motives and they strive for personal and social perfection. One of his earliest theories grew out of personal experience: As a child, Adler was frail and almost died of pneumonia at the age of 5. This early brush with death led him to believe that personality develops through the individual's attempt to overcome physical weaknesses, an effort he called **compensation**.

Adler later modified and broadened his views, contending that people seek to overcome *feelings* of inferiority that may or may not have a basis in reality. He thought that such feelings often spark positive development and personal growth. Still, some people become so fixated on their feelings of inferiority that they become paralyzed and develop what Adler called an **inferiority complex**. Later in his life, Adler again shifted his theoretical emphasis in a more positive direction suggesting that people strive both for personal perfection and for the perfection of the society to which they belong.

The emphasis Adler placed on positive, socially constructive goals and on striving for perfection is in marked contrast to Freud's pessimistic vision of the selfish person locked into eternal conflict with society. Because of this emphasis, Adler has been hailed by many psychologists as the father of humanistic psychology (Cain, 2002), a topic we will explore in greater depth later in this chapter.

Karen Horney

What major contributions did Karen Horney make to the psychodynamic perspective?

Karen Horney (1885–1952), another psychodynamic personality theorist greatly indebted to Freud, nevertheless took issue with some of his most prominent ideas, especially his analysis of women and his emphasis on sexual instincts. Based on her experience as a practicing therapist in Germany and the United States, Horney concluded that environmental and social factors are the most important influences in shaping personality; and among these, the most pivotal are the human relationships we experience as children (W. B. Smith, 2007).

In Horney's view, Freud overemphasized the sex drive, resulting in a distorted picture of human relationships. Horney believed that sexuality does figure in the development of personality, but nonsexual factors—such as the need for a sense of basic security and the person's response to real or imagined threats—play an even larger role. For example, all people share the need to feel loved and nurtured by their parents, regardless of any sexual feelings they might have about them. Conversely, parents' protective feelings toward their children emerge not only from biological forces but also from the value that society places on the nurturance of children.

For Horney, *anxiety*—an individual’s reaction to real or imagined dangers—is a powerful motivating force. Whereas Freud believed that anxiety usually emerges from unconscious sexual conflicts, Horney stressed that feelings of anxiety also originate in a variety of nonsexual contexts. For example, in childhood anxiety arises because children depend on adults for their very survival. Insecure about receiving continued nurturance and protection, children develop inner protections, or defenses, that provide both satisfaction and security. They experience more anxiety when those defenses are threatened.

In adulthood, anxiety and insecurity can lead to neurotic lifestyles that may help to deal with emotional problems and ensure safety but only at the expense of personal independence (Horney, 1937). Some people develop an overriding need to give in or submit to others and feel safe only when receiving their protection and guidance. Others deal with basic feelings of insecurity and anxiety by adopting a hostile and domineering manner. Still others withdraw from other people, as if saying “If I withdraw, nothing can hurt me.” In contrast, well-adjusted people deal with anxiety without becoming trapped in neurotic lifestyles because their childhood environment enabled them to satisfy their basic emotional needs.

ENDURING ISSUES

Stability–Change Is Biology Destiny?

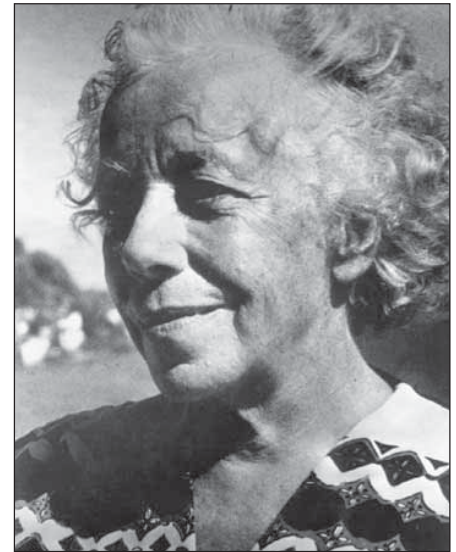
Horney’s conviction that social and cultural forces are far more important than biological ones had a profound effect on her views of human development. For example, in contrast to Freud’s view that personality is largely formed by the end of childhood, Horney believed that adults can continue to develop and change throughout life by coming to understand the source of their basic anxiety and trying to eliminate neurotic anxiety. Horney also opened the way to a more constructive and optimistic understanding of male and female personality. She emphasized that culture, rather than anatomy, determines many of the characteristics that differentiate women from men. For example, if women feel dissatisfied with their gender or men are overly aggressive, the explanation is likely to be found in their social status and social roles, not in their anatomy; and fortunately, social status and social roles can be changed. Indeed, she was a forerunner of contemporary thinkers who believe that we can change culture and society and, in the process, transform human relationships (Gilman, 2001). ■

Erik Erikson

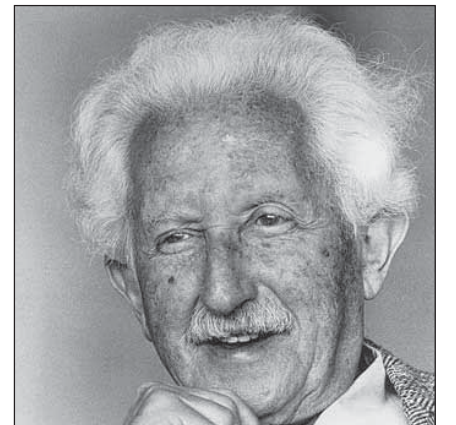
Erikson’s theory focused less on unconscious conflict and more on what factors?

Like Horney, Erik Erikson—a psychodynamic theorist who studied with Freud in Vienna—took a socially oriented view of personality development. While Erikson agreed with much of Freud’s thinking on sexual development and the influence of libidinal needs on personality, he put much greater emphasis on the quality of parent–child relationships. According to Erikson, only if children feel competent and valuable, in their own eyes and in society’s view, will they develop a secure sense of identity. In this way, Erikson shifted the focus of Freud’s personality theory to ego development.

Whereas Freud’s stages of personality development ended with adolescence, Erikson believed that personality continues to develop and change throughout life. But in contrast to Horney, he believed that the various stages of life present a variety of different challenges. Success in dealing with early challenges lays the groundwork for effective adjustment at later stages. Conversely, failure to resolve early crises makes later adjustment more difficult. In Chapter 9 (“Life-Span Development”) we explored each of Erikson’s stages in considerable detail. **Figure 10–3** provides a concise comparison of Erikson’s and Freud’s stages of personality development.



Karen Horney, a psychotherapist during the first half of the 20th century, disagreed with Freud’s emphasis on sexual instincts. She considered environmental and social factors, especially the relationships we have as children, to be the most important influences on personality.



Erik Erikson, another psychodynamic theorist, also stressed the importance of parent–child relationships for shaping personality. His eight-stage theory of personality development is still influential today.

inferiority complex In Adler’s theory, the fixation on feelings of personal inferiority that results in emotional and social paralysis.

Erikson's stages of personality development

| Stage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Oral | Basic trust vs. mistrust | | | | | | | |
| Anal | | Autonomy vs. shame, doubt | | | | | | |
| Phallic | | | Initiative vs. guilt | | | | | |
| Latency | | | | Industry vs. inferiority | | | | |
| Genital | | | | | Identity vs. role confusion | | | |
| Young adulthood | | | | | | Intimacy vs. isolation | | |
| Adulthood | | | | | | | Generativity vs. stagnation | |
| Maturity | | | | | | | | Ego integrity vs. despair |

Figure 10–3
Erikson's eight stages of personality development.

Each stage involves its own developmental crisis, whose resolution is crucial to adjustment in successive stages. The first five of the eight stages correspond to Freud's stages of personality development.

Source: Figure, "Erickson's Stages of Personality Development" from *Childhood and Society* by Erik H. Erikson. Copyright 1950, © 1963 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Renewed 1978, 1991 by Erik H. Erikson. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. and Random House Ltd., UK.

A Psychodynamic View of Jaylene Smith

How would a psychodynamic theorist view the personality of Jaylene Smith?

According to Freud, personality characteristics such as insecurity, introversion, and feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness often arise from fixation at the phallic stage of development. Thus, had Freud been Jaylene's therapist, he would probably have concluded that Jay has not yet effectively resolved her Electra complex. Working from this premise, he would have hypothesized that Jay's relationship with her father was either very distant and unsatisfying or unusually close and gratifying. We know, of course, that it was the latter.

In all likelihood, Freud would also have asserted that at around age 5 or 6, Jay had become aware that she could not actually marry her father and do away with her mother, as he would say she wished to do. This possibility might account for the fact that fights between Jay and her mother subsided when Jay was about 6 or 7 years of age. Moreover, we know that shortly thereafter, Jay began to experience "strong feelings of loneliness, depression, insecurity, and confusion." Clearly, something important happened in Jay's life when she was 6 or 7.

Finally, the continued coolness of Jay's relationship with her mother and the unusual closeness with her father would probably have confirmed Freud's suspicion that Jay has still not satisfactorily resolved her Electra complex. Freud would have predicted that Jay would have problems making the progression to mature sexual relationships with other men. Jay, of course, is very much aware that she has problems relating to men, at least when these relationships get "serious."

And what does Erikson's theory tell us about Jaylene Smith's personality? Recall that for Erikson, one's success in dealing with later developmental crises depends on how effectively one has resolved earlier crises. Because Jay is having great difficulty in dealing with intimacy (Stage 6), he would have suggested that she is still struggling with problems from earlier developmental stages. Erikson would have looked for the source of these problems in the quality of Jay's relationship with others. We know that her mother subtly communicated her own frustration and dissatisfaction to her children and spent little time on "nonessential" interactions with them.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT...

Psychoanalysis

Freud's original theory was based on case studies of his patients; and the literature on psychoanalysis consists mainly of case studies—descriptions of individual cases of psychopathology, probable causes, and their treatment. Today, however, psychological science depends increasingly on experimental evidence and biological explanations for mental phenomena. Review the five basic concepts of psychodynamic theory described by Westen on page 336 and think about what kinds of evidence might convince you that they are indeed correct. What evidence would lead you to conclude that they are not in fact correct?

These feelings and behavior patterns would not have instilled in a child the kind of basic trust and sense of security that Erikson believed are essential to the first stage of development. In addition, her relationship with her mother and brothers continued to be less than fully satisfactory. It is not surprising, then, that Jay had some difficulty working through subsequent developmental crises. Although she developed a close and caring relationship with her father, Jay was surely aware that his affection partly depended on her fulfilling the dreams, ambitions, and goals that he had for her.

Evaluating Psychodynamic Theories

How do modern psychologists view the contributions and limitations of the psychodynamic perspective?

Freud’s emphasis on the fact that we are not always—or even often—aware of the real causes of our behavior has fundamentally changed the way people view themselves and others. Freud’s ideas have also had a lasting impact on history, literature, and the arts (Krugler, 2004). Yet, Freud was a product of his time and place. Critics who contend his theory reflects a sexist view of women have pointed out that he was apparently unable to imagine a connection between his female patients’ sense of inferiority and their subordinate position in society. Psychodynamic views have also been criticized as lacking a scientific basis in that they are based largely on retrospective (backward-looking) accounts of a limited sample of individuals who have sought treatment, rather than on research with “healthy” individuals.

Although it is often difficult to translate psychodynamic personality theories into hypotheses that can be tested experimentally (Cloninger, 2003; Holt, 2003), Freud’s theory has received limited confirmation from research (Leichsenring, 2005). For example, people with eating disorders often have oral personalities (J. Perry, Silvera, & Rosenvinge, 2002). Orally fixated people generally eat and drink too much, tend to mention oral images when interpreting inkblot tests, and also seem to depend heavily on others, as Freud predicted (Fisher & Greenberg, 1985). Moreover, research confirms an association between specific personality types in childhood and later development of psychological problems. For example, a child with an inhibited temperament is more likely to develop social anxiety disorder as an adult (Gladstone, Parker, Mitchell, Wilhelm, & Malhi, 2005). The effectiveness of psychoanalysis as a therapy has also been cited as evidence in support of Freud’s theories (Leichsenring, 2005). Still, as we shall see in Chapter 13, “Therapies,” psychoanalysis does not seem to be any more or less effective than therapies based on other theories (J. A. Carter, 2006).


Freud’s theories have clearly expanded our understanding of personality, or they would not still be so vigorously debated today, more than 100 years after he proposed them. Whatever their merit as science, psychodynamic theories attempt to explain the root causes of all human behavior. The sheer magnitude of this undertaking helps to account for their lasting attractiveness.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Match the following Jungian terms with the appropriate definition.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. persona | a. typical mental image or mythical representation |
| 2. collective unconscious | b. memories and behavior patterns inherited from past generations |
| 3. archetype | c. aspect of the personality by which one is known to other people |
| 4. According to Alfred Adler, a person with a fixation on or belief in a negative characteristic has an _____. They may try to overcome their perceived weakness through _____. | |
| 5. Horney believed that _____ is a stronger source of emotional disturbance than sexual urges. | |

Answers: 1. c. 2. b. 3. a. 4. inferiority complex; compensation. 5. anxiety.

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APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- An angry parent imagines hitting a child for misbehaving, but decides instead to discuss the misbehavior with the child and to point out why the behavior was wrong. After hearing the child's explanation for the behavior, the parent feels guilty for having been so angry. The parent's anger and fantasy are the result of the _____; the decision to discuss the problem is the result of the _____; and the guilt derives from the _____.
 - ego; superego; id
 - id; ego; superego
 - ego; id; superego
 - id; superego; ego
- John is a young adult. According to Erikson, the major challenge he faces is _____, which will be followed in middle adulthood by the crisis of _____.
 - intimacy vs. isolation; integrity vs. despair
 - intimacy vs. isolation; generativity vs. stagnation
 - identity vs. role confusion; intimacy vs. isolation
 - identity vs. role confusion; integrity vs. despair
 - identity vs. role confusion; initiative vs. guilt

Answers: 1. b. 2. b.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain how humanistic personality theories differ from psychodynamic theories. Distinguish Rogers' concept of *actualizing tendency* and *self-actualizing tendency*, *conditional* versus *unconditional positive regard*, and what it means to be a *fully functioning person*.
- Summarize the contributions and limitations of the humanistic perspective.

HUMANISTIC PERSONALITY THEORIES

What are the major ways that humanistic personality theory differs from psychodynamic theories?

Freud believed that personality grows out of the resolution of unconscious conflicts and developmental crises. Many of his followers—including some who modified his theory and others who broke away from his circle—also embraced this basic viewpoint. But in the theory of Alfred Adler, we glimpsed a very different view of human nature. Adler focused on forces that contribute to positive growth and a move toward personal perfection. For these reasons, Adler is sometimes called the first *humanistic* personality theorist.


Humanistic personality theory emphasizes that we are positively motivated and progress toward higher levels of functioning—in other words, there is more to human existence than dealing with hidden conflicts. Humanistic psychologists believe that life is a process of opening ourselves to the world around us and experiencing joy in living. They stress people's potential for growth and change as well as the ways they experience their lives right now, rather than dwelling on how they felt or acted in the past. Finally, humanists also believe that given reasonable life conditions, people will develop in desirable directions (Cloninger, 2003; Criswell, 2003). Adler's concept of striving for perfection laid the groundwork for later humanistic personality theorists such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. We discussed Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs leading to self-actualization in Chapter 8, "Motivation and Emotion." We now turn to Rogers's theory of self-actualization.

Carl Rogers

According to Rogers, how can thinking of yourself as self-assured help you to become so?

One of the most prominent humanistic theorists, Carl Rogers (1902–1987), contended that men and women develop their personalities in the service of positive goals. According to Rogers, every organism is born with certain innate capacities, capabilities, or potentialities—"a sort of genetic blueprint, to which substance is added as life progresses" (Maddi, 1989, p. 102).

humanistic personality theory Any personality theory that asserts the fundamental goodness of people and their striving toward higher levels of functioning.

The goal of life, Rogers believed, is to fulfill this genetic blueprint, to become the best of whatever each of us is inherently capable of becoming. Rogers called this biological push toward fulfillment the **actualizing tendency**. Although Rogers maintained that the actualizing tendency characterizes all organisms—plants, animals, and humans—he noted that human beings also form images of themselves, or *self-concepts*. Just as we try to fulfill our inborn biological potential, so, too, we attempt to fulfill our self-concept, our conscious sense of who we are and what we want to do with our lives. Rogers called this striving the **self-actualizing tendency**. If you think of yourself as “intelligent” and “athletic,” for example, you will strive to live up to those images of yourself.  [Simulate on MyPsychLab](#)

When our self-concept is closely matched with our inborn capacities, we are likely to become what Rogers called a **fully functioning person**. Such people are self-directed: They decide for themselves what it is they wish to do and to become, even though their choices may not always be sound ones. Fully functioning people are also open to experience—to their own feelings as well as to the world and other people around them—and thus find themselves “increasingly willing to be, with greater accuracy and depth, that self which [they] most truly [are]” (Rogers, 1961, pp. 175–176).

According to Rogers, people tend to become more fully functioning if they are brought up with **unconditional positive regard**, or the experience of being treated with warmth, respect, acceptance, and love regardless of their own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. But often parents and other adults offer children what Rogers called **conditional positive regard**: They value and accept only certain aspects of the child. The acceptance, warmth, and love that the child receives from others then depend on the child’s behaving in certain ways and fulfilling certain conditions. In the process, self-concept comes to resemble the inborn capacity less and less, and the child’s life deviates from the genetic blueprint.

When people lose sight of their inborn potential, they become constricted, rigid, and defensive. They feel threatened and anxious, and experience considerable discomfort and uneasiness. Because their lives are directed toward what other people want and value, they are unlikely to experience much real satisfaction in life. At some point, they may realize that they don’t really know who they are or what they want.

A Humanistic View of Jaylene Smith

How would humanistic theorists view the development of Jaylene Smith’s personality?

Humanistic personality theory would focus on the discrepancy between Jay’s self-concept and her inborn capacities. For example, Rogers would point out that Jay is intelligent and achievement-oriented but nevertheless feels that she doesn’t “deserve to be a doctor,” worries about whether she will ever be “truly happy,” and remembers that when she was 13, she never was able to be herself and really express her feelings, even with a good friend. Her unhappiness, fearfulness, loneliness, insecurity, and other dissatisfactions similarly stem from Jay’s inability to become what she “most truly is.” Rogers would suspect that other people in Jay’s life made acceptance and love conditional on her living up to their ideas of what she should become. We know that for most of her life, Jay’s father was her primary source of positive regard. Very possibly, he conditioned his love for Jay on her living up to his goals for her.

Evaluating Humanistic Theories

What have humanistic theories contributed to our understanding of personality?

The central tenet of most humanistic personality theories—that the overriding purpose of the human condition is to realize one’s potential—is difficult if not impossible to verify scientifically. The resulting lack of scientific evidence and rigor is one of the major criticisms

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actualizing tendency According to Rogers, the drive of every organism to fulfill its biological potential and become what it is inherently capable of becoming.

self-actualizing tendency According to Rogers, the drive of human beings to fulfill their self-concepts, or the images they have of themselves.

fully functioning person According to Rogers, an individual whose self-concept closely resembles his or her inborn capacities or potentials.

unconditional positive regard In Rogers’s theory, the full acceptance and love of another person regardless of his or her behavior.

conditional positive regard In Rogers’s theory, acceptance and love that are dependent on another’s behaving in certain ways and on fulfilling certain conditions.

of these theories. In addition, some critics claim that humanistic theories present an overly optimistic view of human beings and fail to take into account the evil in human nature. Others contend that the humanistic view fosters self-centeredness and narcissism, and reflects Western values of individual achievement rather than universal human potential.

Nonetheless, Maslow and especially Rogers did attempt to test some aspects of their theories scientifically. For example, Rogers studied the discrepancy between the way people perceived themselves and the way they ideally wanted to be. He discovered that people whose real selves differed considerably from their *ideal* selves were more likely to be unhappy and dissatisfied.

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CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Indicate whether the following are true (T) or false (F).

- _____ Humanistic personality theory emphasizes that we are motivated by conflicts, whereas psychodynamic personality theory emphasizes positive strivings.
- _____ The goal of life, Rogers believed, is to become the best person that we can inherently become.
- _____ Our self-concept is our inborn biological potential.
- _____ When people lose sight of their inborn potential, they are unlikely to experience much satisfaction.

Answers: 1. (F), 2. (T), 3. (F), 4. (T)

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Barbara was brought up with unconditional positive regard. According to Rogers, she is likely to
 - be vain and narcissistic.
 - feel she is valued regardless of her attitudes and behavior.
 - have self-concepts that do not correspond very closely to her inborn capacities.
 - Both (b) and (c) are true.
- Your friend has always known that she wants to be a doctor. When you ask her how she knows that, she says, "That's just who I am. It's what I want to do with my life." Rogers calls the push toward fulfilling this sense of who she is
 - being fully functioning.
 - engaging in a compensatory process.
 - expressing a high need for achievement.
 - the self-actualizing tendency.

Answers: 1. b, 2. d

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Compare and contrast the trait theories of Cattell and Eysenck and the current five-factor model of personality. Briefly summarize the research evidence on the usefulness and universality of the five-factor model, the stability of personality traits over time and across situations, and the biological basis of personality traits.
- Summarize the contributions and limitations of the trait perspective.

TRAIT THEORIES

What is the key focus of trait theories?

The personality theories that we have examined so far all emphasize early childhood experiences; and all attempt to explain the varieties of human personality. Other personality theorists focus on the present, describing the ways in which already-developed adult personalities differ from one another. These *trait theorists* assert that people differ according to the degree to which they possess certain **personality traits**, such as dependency, anxiety, aggressiveness, and sociability. We infer a trait from how a person behaves. If someone consistently throws parties, goes to great lengths to make friends, and travels in groups, we might safely conclude that this person possesses a high degree of sociability.

Our language has many words that describe personality traits. Gordon Allport, along with his colleague H. S. Odbert (1936), found nearly 18,000 dictionary entries that might refer to personality traits. However, only about 2,800 of the words on Allport and Odbert's

personality traits Dimensions or characteristics on which people differ in distinctive ways.

list concern the kinds of stable or enduring characteristics that most psychologists would call personality traits; and when synonyms and near-synonyms are removed, the number of possible personality traits drops to around 200—which is still a formidable list. Psychologist Raymond Cattell (1965), using a statistical technique called **factor analysis**, found that those 200 traits tend to cluster in groups. Thus, a person who is described as persevering or determined is also likely to be thought of as responsible, ordered, attentive, and stable and probably would not be described as frivolous, neglectful, and changeable. On the basis of extensive research, Cattell originally concluded that just 16 traits account for the complexity of human personality; later he suggested that it might be necessary to add another 7 traits to the list (Cattell & Kline, 1977).

Other theorists thought that Cattell used too many traits to describe personality. Eysenck (1976) argued that personality could be reduced to three basic dimensions: *emotional stability*, *introversion–extraversion*, and *psychoticism*. According to Eysenck, *emotional stability* refers to how well a person controls emotions. On a continuum, individuals at one end of this trait would be seen as poised, calm, and composed, whereas people at the other end might be described as anxious, nervous, and excitable. *Introversion–extraversion* refers to the degree to which a person is inwardly or outwardly oriented. At one end of this dimension would be the socially outgoing, talkative, and affectionate people, known as *extraverts*. *Introverts*—generally described as reserved, silent, shy, and socially withdrawn—would be at the other extreme. Eysenck used the term *psychoticism* to describe people characterized by insensitivity and uncooperativeness at one end and warmth, tenderness, and helpfulness at the other end.

ENDURING ISSUES

Nature–Nurture Is Personality Inherited?

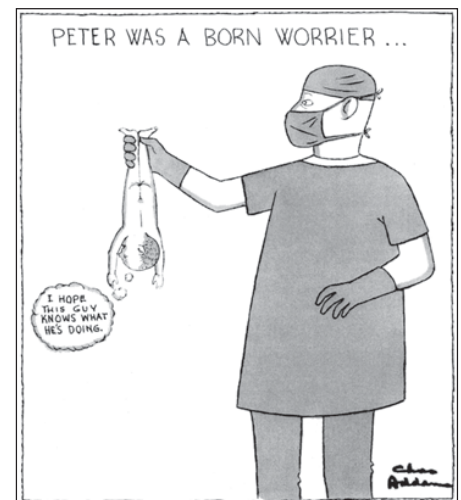
For Allport, traits—or “dispositions,” as he called them—are literally encoded in the nervous system as structures that guide consistent behavior across a wide variety of situations. Allport also believed that while traits describe behaviors that are common to many people, each individual personality comprises a unique constellation of traits. While few psychologists today would deny the influence of the environment in shaping personality, recent evidence substantiating the importance of genetic factors to the development of specific personality traits supports Allport’s hunch that at least some personality traits are encoded biologically (Rushton, Bons, & Hur, 2008). ■

The Big Five

What five basic traits describe most differences in personality?

As listed in **Table 10–1**, contemporary trait theorists have boiled down personality traits to five basic dimensions: *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, *conscientiousness*, *emotional stability*, and *culture* (Costa & McCrae, 2006; McCrae et al., 2008). There is a growing consensus today that these **Big Five** personality dimensions, also known as the *five-factor model*, capture the most salient dimensions of human personality (Costa & McCrae, 2006; De Raad, 1998), although there is some disagreement about whether the fifth dimension should be called “culture” or “openness to experience” or “intellect.” Recently, each of the Big Five traits has been shown to have at least six *facets*, or components, as shown in **Table 10–1** (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007; Jang, Livesley, McCrae, Angleitner, & Riemann, 1998).

One survey of the literature found that the Big Five dimensions of personality may have some important real-world applications—particularly as they relate to employment decisions (Bentley-Reed, 2006; Guohua & Jiliang, 2005). For example, one study (Conte & Gintoft, 2005) found that the dimensions of extraversion and conscientiousness were reliable predictors of performance in sales. In another study, the measures of agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability predicted employee burnout (Zeng & Shi, 2007). The Big



Source: © Tee and Charles Addams Foundation

factor analysis A statistical technique that identifies groups of related objects; it was used by Cattell to identify clusters of traits.


Big Five Five traits or basic dimensions currently considered to be of central importance in describing personality.

Table 10-1 THE “BIG FIVE” DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY

| Traits | Facets of Each Big Five Trait |
|--|--|
| Extraversion | Warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking, positive emotions |
| Agreeableness | Trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, tender mindedness |
| Conscientiousness/Dependability | Competence, order, dutifulness, achievement-striving, self-discipline, deliberation |
| Emotional Stability | Anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, vulnerability |
| Openness to Experience/Culture/Intellect | Fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, values |

Source: Adapted Table 3, p. 1560 in “Heritability of Facet-Level Traits in a Cross-Cultural Twin Sample: Support for a Hierarchical Model of Personality” by K. L. Jang, W. J. Livesley, R. R. McCrae, A. Angleitner, & R. Reimann, *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 74 (1998), 1556–65. Copyright © 1998 by American Psychological Association.

Five personality traits have also been shown to be useful in predicting the job performance of police officers (Schneider, 2002). In addition, research has shown that absenteeism in the workplace is related to the conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism scales (Conte & Jacobs, 2003). Thus, the Big Five dimensions of personality show promise as reliable predictors of job performance, especially when other criteria (such as technical skills and experience) are also considered (Conte & Gintoft, 2005; R. Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996).

The Big Five personality traits have also proved useful in describing and predicting behavior across a wide range of age groups and social settings. For instance, one 9-year longitudinal study of grade-school children demonstrated the validity and consistency of the Big Five personality traits throughout childhood (Asendorpf & Van-Aken, 2003). Other studies have shown the Big Five can reliably predict alcohol consumption, grade point average and academic motivation among college students (Paunonen, 2003; Komaraju, Karau, & Schmeck, 2009).  [Explore on MyPsychLab](#)

 **Explore** the Five Factor Model at www.mypsyhlab.com

Are the Big Five Personality Traits Universal? Most studies of the Big Five have been conducted in the United States. Would the same five personality dimensions be evident in other cultures? The answer appears to be yes. P. T. Costa and McCrae (1992) developed a test to measure the Big Five personality dimensions that has since been translated into numerous languages including German, Portuguese, Hebrew, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. McCrae and Costa (1997) then compared the results from the various questionnaires in an effort to determine whether the same Big Five personality dimensions would emerge. The results from the six foreign cultures were virtually identical to the data from American samples: The Big Five personality dimensions were clearly evident. As the authors noted, “The structure found in American volunteers was replicated in Japanese undergraduates and Israeli job applicants. A model of personality rooted in English-language trait adjectives could be meaningfully applied not only in a closely related language like German, but also in such utterly distinct languages as Chinese and Korean” (p. 514). Other researchers have reached the same conclusions using quite different techniques (Mlacic & Goldberg, 2007; Salgado, Moscoso & Lado, 2003; John Williams, Satterwhite, & Saiz, 1998).

Surprisingly, many of these same personality traits apparently exist in a number of species besides humans. For example, studies have found that the Big Five, with the two added factors of dominance and activity, could be used to rate and describe personality characteristics in species including gorillas, chimpanzees, rhesus and vervet monkeys, hyenas, dogs, cats, and pigs (Gosling & John, 1999; King, Weiss, & Farmer, 2005)!

Do the Big Five Have a Genetic Basis? Recent evidence shows that not only the Big Five but also many of their individual facets are strongly influenced by heredity (W. Johnson & Krueger, 2004; Livesley, Jang, & Vernon, 2003). Although some early theorists (Eysenck, 1947) suggested that physiological mechanisms underlie basic personality traits, only recently has solid evidence from twin studies begun to support this idea (Luciano, Wainwright, Wright, & Martin, 2006; Jang, Livesley, McCrae, Angleitner, & Riemann, 1998; Rushton, Bons, & Hur, 2008). For example, Jang and colleagues (1998, 2002) tested almost 1,000 sets of twins from Germany and Canada on the 30 facets of the Big Five. They concluded that genetic effects accounted for a substantial portion of the differences between people's scores on 26 of the 30 facet scales. In addition, the genetic and environmental influences were similar for the Canadian and German samples.

Researchers have also confirmed that genetic factors play a significant role in shaping abnormal and dysfunctional personality traits. In one study comparing 128 pairs of identical and fraternal twins on both normal and abnormal personality traits, the influence of genetic factors was found to slightly outweigh the influence of the environment. In addition, the pattern of genetic and environmental influence was similar for both the abnormal traits and the normal ones (Markon, Krueger, Bouchard, & Gottesman, 2002). Other studies have confirmed that genetic factors also contribute to the personality traits that predispose individuals toward alcohol abuse (Mustanski, Viken, Kaprio, & Rose, 2003), eating disorders (Mazzeo & Bulik, 2009), depression, marijuana dependence, aggression and antisocial personality disorder (Alia-Klein et al., 2008; Forsman, Lichtenstein, Andershed, & Larsson, 2008; Fu et al., 2002).

What are the implications of these findings? There are several, although it is important to keep in mind that saying a particular trait such as extraversion has a genetic component does *not* mean that researchers have found a *gene* for extraversion. Nor are they likely to, because genes represent a code for specific proteins, not complex personality traits. It does mean, however, that the Big Five traits and their facets may be hardwired into the human species rather than being cultural artifacts. Many genes—perhaps thousands of them—surely work in combination to account for such complex traits. Though the precise role that genes play in personality is still far from clear, most psychologists would agree that biological factors contribute significantly to the development of most personality traits (Livesley et al., 2003).

A Trait View of Jaylene Smith

How would trait theorists describe Jaylene Smith's personality?

A psychologist working from the trait perspective would infer certain traits from Jay's behavior. Since Jay chose at an early age to become a doctor, did well academically year after year, and graduated first in her medical-school class, it seems reasonable to infer a trait of determination or persistence to account for her behavior. Taking the Big Five perspective, it seems that Jaylene's personality is high in conscientiousness but perhaps low in emotional stability and extraversion. These relatively few traits provide a thumbnail sketch of what Jay is like. It is likely that there is some biological basis for her unique personality.

Evaluating Trait Theories

What major contributions have trait theories made to our understanding of personality?

Traits are the language that we commonly use to describe other people, such as when we say someone is shy or insecure or arrogant. Thus, the trait view of personality has considerable commonsense

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT...

Cultural Universals

Is it fair to conclude that the Big Five are in fact universal traits? To answer this question, think about the following questions:

- What types of cultures have so far been studied? What do all of these cultures have in common? What types of cultures have not been studied?
- How would researchers determine whether the Big Five traits are in fact the most important ones in the cultures they have studied? Might other, equally important, traits not be measured? Did the researchers explore what personality traits are important in various cultures or simply confirm that people in a variety of cultures recognize the Big Five traits?
- What do we have to know in order to say that something is universal?

appeal. Moreover, it is scientifically easier to study personality traits than to study such things as self-actualization and unconscious motives. But trait theories have several shortcomings (Costa & McCrae, 2006; Maher & Gottesman, 2005). First, they are primarily descriptive: They seek to describe the basic dimensions of personality, but they generally do not try to explain causes. As you can see from the trait view of Jaylene Smith, trait theory tells us little about why she is the way she is.

In addition, some critics argue that it is dangerous to reduce human complexity to just a few traits (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Moreover, although the Big Five model is well supported by research, some disagreement remains among psychologists about whether a five-factor model is the best way to describe the basic traits of personality (De Raad, 2000; Lubinski, 2000; Mershon & Gorsuch, 1988).

The issue of consistency in human behavior has long intrigued personality theorists who are interested in the interaction between personality traits and the social environment. In the view of these theorists, behavior is a product of the person *and* the situation (Mischel, 2004; Mischel, Shoda, & Mendoza-Denton, 2002). That interaction is the focus of cognitive–social learning theorists, whom we will consider next.

ENDURING ISSUES

Stability–Change How Stable Is Personality Over Time?

Some psychologists question whether traits describe and predict behavior very well over time. Are “agreeable” people at age 20 still agreeable at age 60? As we saw in Chapter 9, “Life-Span Development,” numerous research studies have shown that temperament remains quite stable over time. Similarly, the Big Five dimensions of personality show considerable stability during early childhood and appear to be “essentially fixed by age 30” (McCrae & Costa, 1994, p. 173; Asendorpf & Van-Aken, 2003). Though to some extent adults can vary their behavior to fit the situations in which they find themselves, in general it seems that when it comes to personality traits, “You can’t teach old dogs new tricks.” ■

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Eysenck stated that personality could be reduced to three basic dimensions: _____, _____, and _____.
2. There is evidence that suggests that personality is almost entirely due to environmental factors. Is this statement true (T) or false (F)?

Answers: 1. emotional stability, introversion–extraversion, psychoticism. 2. F

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Peter is competent, self-disciplined, responsible, and well organized. In terms of the Big Five model of personality, he is high in
 - a. agreeableness.
 - b. conscientiousness.
 - c. emotional stability.
 - d. intellect.
2. Sherry is warm, assertive, energetic, and enthusiastic. According to the Big Five model of personality, she is high in
 - a. extraversion.
 - b. agreeableness.
 - c. emotional stability.
 - d. openness to experience.

Answers: 1. b. 2. a.

cognitive–social learning theories

Personality theories that view behavior as the product of the interaction of cognitions, learning and past experiences, and the immediate environment.

expectancies In Bandura’s view, what a person anticipates in a situation or as a result of behaving in certain ways.

performance standards In Bandura’s theory, standards that people develop to rate the adequacy of their own behavior in a variety of situations.

self-efficacy According to Bandura, the expectancy that one’s efforts will be successful.

locus of control According to Rotter, an expectancy about whether reinforcement is under internal or external control.

COGNITIVE–SOCIAL LEARNING THEORIES

How do personal and situational factors combine to shape behavior?

In contrast to personality trait theories, **cognitive–social learning theories** hold that expectancies and values guide behavior. This set of personal standards is unique to each one of us, growing out of our own life history. Our behavior is the product of our cognitions (how we think about a situation and how we view our behavior in that situation), our learning and past experiences (including reinforcement, punishment, and modeling), and the immediate environment.

Expectancies, Self-Efficacy, and Locus of Control

How does locus of control affect self-efficacy?

Albert Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997) asserts that people evaluate a situation according to certain internal **expectancies**, such as personal preferences, and this evaluation affects their behavior. Environmental feedback that follows the actual behavior, in turn, influences future expectancies. These experience-based expectancies lead people to conduct themselves according to unique **performance standards**, individually determined measures of excellence by which they judge their own behavior. Those who succeed in meeting their own internal performance standards develop an attitude that Bandura calls **self-efficacy** (Bandura & Locke, 2003). For example, two young women trying a video game for the first time may experience the situation quite differently, even if their scores are similarly low. One with a high sense of self-efficacy may find the experience fun and be eager to gain the skills necessary to go on to the next level, whereas the one with a lower sense of self-efficacy may be disheartened by getting a low score, assume she will never be any good at video games, and never play again.

In our example, the two young women approach the experience with different expectancies. To Rotter (1954), **locus of control** is an especially prevalent expectancy by which people evaluate situations. People with an *internal locus* of control are convinced they can control their own fate. They believe that through hard work, skill, and training, they can find reinforcements and avoid punishments. People with an *external locus* of control do not believe they control their fate. Instead, they are convinced that chance, luck, and the behavior of others determine their destiny and that they are helpless to change the course of their lives.

Both Bandura and Rotter have tried to combine personal variables (such as expectancies) with situational variables in an effort to understand the complexities of human behavior. Both theorists believe that expectancies become part of a person's *explanatory style*, which, in turn, greatly influences behavior. Explanatory style, for example, separates optimists from pessimists. It is what causes two beginners who get the same score on a video game to respond so differently. Moreover, studies have shown that a pessimistic explanatory style negatively impacts physical health, academic and career achievement, and many aspects of mental health including depression and anxiety disorders. Conversely, having a positive explanatory style appears to serve as a “protective factor” enhancing an individual's experience of well-being (K. K. Bennett & Elliott, 2005; Wise & Rosqvist, 2006).

In a now-famous study, researchers tracked 99 students from the Harvard graduation classes of 1939 to 1944. The men were interviewed about their experiences and underwent physical checkups every 5 years. When researchers analyzed the men's interviews for signs of pessimism or optimism, they found that the explanatory style demonstrated in those interviews predicted the state of an individual's health decades later. Those men who were optimists at age 25 tended to be healthier at age 65, whereas the health of the pessimists had begun to deteriorate at about age 45 (C. Peterson, Vaillant, & Seligman, 1988). Another study looked at insurance agents in their first 2 years on the job (Seligman & Schulman, 1986). Explanatory style predicted which agents would become excellent agents and which would quit the company (three-fourths of all agents quit within 3 years). Optimists sold 37% more insurance than pessimists in the first 2 years and persisted through the difficulties of the job.


LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain how cognitive–social learning theories of personality differ from other theories. Be sure to include *expectancies, performance standards, self-efficacy, and locus of control* in your explanation.
- Summarize the contributions and limitations of the cognitive–social learning perspective.



According to cognitive–social learning theorists, people who meet their own internal standards of performance develop a sense of self-efficacy, a confidence that they can meet their goals.

 **Watch** Locus at
www.mypsychlab.com

How Consistent Are We? We have seen that trait theorists tend to believe that behavior is relatively consistent across situations. “Agreeable” people tend to be agreeable in most situations most of the time. In contrast, cognitive–social learning theorists believe that our actions are influenced by the people around us, and by the way we think we are supposed to behave in a given situation. According to this latter view, although underlying personality is relatively stable, behavior is likely to be more inconsistent than consistent from one situation to another.  **Watch on MyPsychLab**

If behavior is relatively inconsistent across situations, why does it *appear* to be more consistent than it actually is? Why is the trait view of personality so compelling? One explanation is that, since we see a person only in those situations that tend to elicit the same behavior, we tend to assume that their behavior is similar across a wide range of situations. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that people need to find consistency and stability even in the face of inconsistency and unpredictability. We therefore see consistency in the behavior of others even when there is none (Mischel, 2003; Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

A Cognitive–Social Learning View of Jaylene Smith

How would cognitive–social learning theorists describe the factors that shaped Jaylene Smith’s personality?

Jaylene developed extraordinarily high performance standards, no doubt because her father’s goals for her were so high. Although she has succeeded academically and professionally, in the face of such high performance standards it is understandable that she might harbor some feelings of low self-efficacy, pessimism, insecurity, and uncertainty. She might have been genetically predisposed toward shyness and introversion, but it is also likely that she was rewarded for spending much time by herself studying. Moreover, long hours of studying helped her to avoid the discomfort that she felt being around other people for long periods. Reinforcement may also have shaped Jay’s self-discipline and her need to achieve academically.

In addition, at least some aspects of Jaylene’s personality were formed by watching her parents and brothers and by learning subtle lessons from these family interactions. As a young child, she observed that some people deal with conflict by means of outbursts. That might help to explain her aggressive behavior with boyfriends. Moreover, as Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy would predict, Jay surely noticed that her father, a successful medical researcher, enjoyed and prospered in both his career and his family life, whereas her mother’s two jobs as homemaker and store manager left her frustrated and tired. This contrast may have contributed to Jay’s interest in medicine and to mixed feelings about establishing a close relationship that might lead to marriage.

Evaluating Cognitive–Social Learning Theories

What contributions have cognitive–social learning theories made to our understanding of personality, and what are their limitations?

Cognitive–social learning theories of personality seem to have great potential. They put mental processes back at the center of personality, and they focus on conscious behavior and experience. We can define and scientifically study the key concepts of these theories, such as self-efficacy and locus of control; that is not true of the key concepts of psychodynamic and humanistic theories. Moreover, cognitive–social learning theories help explain why people behave inconsistently, an area in which trait approaches fall short. Cognitive–social learning theories of personality have also spawned useful therapies that help people recognize and change a negative sense of self-efficacy or explanatory style. In particular, as we will see in Chapter 13, “Therapies,” these therapies have helped people overcome depression. Self-efficacy theory has also been embraced by management theorists because of its practical

implications for work performance. Many studies, conducted over more than 20 years, have shown a positive correlation between self-efficacy and performance in workplaces, schools, and clinical settings.

It is still too early to say how well cognitive–social learning theories account for the complexity of human personality. Some critics point out that hindsight allows us to explain any behavior as the product of certain cognitions, but that doesn’t mean those cognitions were the *causes*—or at least the sole causes—of the behavior.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. In Bandura’s view, the belief that people can control their own fate is known as _____.
2. According to cognitive–social learning theorists, _____ is what separates optimists from pessimists.

Answers: 1. self-efficacy. 2. explanatory style.

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Rey Ramos grew up in the South Bronx, an urban ghetto where young males are more likely to go to jail than they are to graduate from high school. He said, “My father always said you can’t change anything; destiny has everything written for you. But, I rebelled against that, and I told him I was going to make my own destiny.” According to cognitive–social learning theories of personality, which of the following is most descriptive of Rey?
 - a. He has an internal locus of control.
 - b. He has a low sense of self-efficacy.
 - c. He is compensating for feelings of inferiority.
 - d. He has an external locus of control.
2. You introduce a friend to a new video game. On her first try, she doesn’t do well but she says, “This is fun. I have to climb that ladder more quickly to escape the bombs. Let me try again!” According to Bandura, her optimism reflects
 - a. positive internal expectancies.
 - b. environmental feedback.
 - c. external locus of control.
 - d. a low sense of self-efficacy.

Answers: 1. a. 2. a.

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PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

How do psychologists measure personality?

In some ways, testing personality is much like testing intelligence. In both cases, we are trying to measure something intangible and invisible. And in both cases, a “good test” is one that is both *reliable* and *valid*: It gives dependable and consistent results, and it measures what it claims to measure. (See Chapter 7, “Cognition and Mental Abilities.”) But there are special difficulties in measuring personality. ✳ **Explore** on **MyPsychLab**

Because personality reflects *characteristic* behavior, we are not interested in someone’s *best* behavior. We are interested in *typical* behavior. Further complicating the measurement process, such factors as fatigue, a desire to impress the examiner, and fear of being tested can profoundly affect a person’s behavior in a personality-assessment situation. For the intricate task of measuring personality, psychologists use four basic tools: the personal interview, direct observation of behavior, objective tests, and projective tests. The tools most closely associated with each of the major theories of personality are shown in the “**Summary Table: Theories of Personality**” and are discussed next.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Compare and contrast direct observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and objective and projective tests of personality. Indicate which approaches to personality assessment are preferred by psychodynamic, humanistic, trait, and cognitive–social learning theorists.
- Describe the three major objective tests of personality and the two major projective tests. Include a summary of their reliability and validity.

The Personal Interview

What are the purposes of structured and unstructured interviews?

An interview is a conversation with a purpose: to obtain information from the person being interviewed. Interviews are often used in clinical settings to learn, for example, why someone is seeking treatment and to help diagnose the person's problem. Such interviews are generally *unstructured*—that is, the interviewer asks the client questions about any issues that arise and asks follow-up questions whenever appropriate. The interviewer may also pay attention to the person's manner of speaking, poise, or tenseness when certain topics are raised.

When conducting systematic research on personality, investigators more often rely on *structured* interviews (van-Iddekinge, Raymark, Eidson, & Attenweiler, 2004). In these interviews, the order and content of the questions are fixed, and the interviewer adheres to the set format. Although less personal, this kind of interview allows the interviewer to obtain comparable information from everyone interviewed. Generally speaking, structured interviews elicit information about sensitive topics that might not come up in an unstructured interview.

Direct Observation

What are the advantages and limits of the observational method?

Another way to find out how a person usually behaves is to observe that person's actions in everyday situations over a long period. Behaviorists and social learning theorists prefer this method of assessing personality because it allows them to see how situation and environment influence behavior and to note a range of behaviors.

In *direct observation*, observers watch people's behavior firsthand. Systematic observation allows psychologists to look at aspects of personality (e.g., traits, moods, or motives) as they are expressed in real life (Ozer & Reise, 1994). Ideally, the observers' unbiased accounts of behavior paint an accurate picture of that behavior, but an observer runs the risk of misinterpreting the true meaning of an act. For example, the observer may think that children are being hostile when they are merely protecting themselves from the class bully. Direct observation is expensive and time-consuming, and there is always the possibility that the presence of the observer will affect people's behavior.

Objective Tests

Why are objective tests preferred by trait theorists?

To avoid depending on the skills of an interviewer or the interpretive abilities of an observer in assessing personality, psychologists devised **objective tests**, or personality inventories. Generally, these are written tests that are administered and scored according to a standard procedure. The tests are usually constructed so that the person merely chooses a "yes" or

objective tests Personality tests that are administered and scored in a standard way.

SUMMARY TABLE

THEORIES OF PERSONALITY

| Theory | Roots of Personality | Methods of Assessing |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Psychodynamic | Unconscious thoughts, feelings, motives, and conflicts; repressed problems from early childhood. | Projective tests, personal interviews. |
| Humanistic | A drive toward personal growth and higher levels of functioning. | Objective tests, personal interviews. |
| Trait | Relatively permanent dispositions within the individual that cause the person to think, feel, and act in characteristic ways. | Objective tests. |
| Social Learning | Determined by past reinforcement and punishment as well as by observing what happens to other people. | Interviews, objective tests, observations. |

“no” response, or selects one answer among many choices. Objective tests are the most widely used tools for assessing personality, but they have two serious drawbacks. First, they rely entirely on self-report. If people do not know themselves well, cannot be entirely objective about themselves, or want to paint a particular picture of themselves, self-report questionnaire results have limited usefulness (Bagby & Marshall, 2005; Marshall, De Fruyt, Rolland, & Bagby, 2005). In fact, some research indicates that peers who know you well often do a better job characterizing you than you do yourself (Funder, 1995). Second, if people have previously taken personality questionnaires, their familiarity with the test format may affect their responses to it. (See “Applying Psychology: Evaluating Your Personality.”)

APPLYING PSYCHOLOGY

Evaluating Your Personality

The following scales provide a way for you to assess your own personality on the Big Five personality traits. It will examine the extent to which others agree with your assessment, the extent to which your behavior is consistent across a range of situations, and the extent to which your personality has been stable over time. The adjectives correspond to the six facets for each of the Big Five traits. (See **Table 10–1**.)

For each of the adjectives, indicate the extent to which you think it applies to you. If you write your answers on a separate sheet of paper, you can then ask others to do the same and compare their answers to your own. Friends, close relatives, and others who know you well are likely to provide the most useful information. You also might try to get ratings from people who see you in different situations—perhaps some people who see you only in class, some who see you only in informal social situations, and others who have known you for a very long time in a wide variety of situations. That will give you an opportunity to see the extent to which different situations cause you to behave in different ways; in turn, this

could lead others, who see you only in those situations, to conclude that your *personality* is different than perhaps it really is.

You might also fill out the form, or have others fill it out, as you were in the past, and compare that with how you are today. It would be interesting to speculate on the reasons for any significant changes over time.

Use the following scales to rate yourself on each adjective:

1. Very true of me
2. Often true of me
3. Sometimes true of me
4. Seldom true of me
5. Almost never true of me

Extraversion

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outgoing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Sociable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Forceful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Energetic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Adventurous | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Enthusiastic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Agreeableness

| | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forgiving | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not demanding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Warm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not stubborn | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Modest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Sympathetic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Conscientiousness

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficient | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Organized | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Responsible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Thorough | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Self-disciplined | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Deliberate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Emotional Stability

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tense | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Irritable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Depressed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Self-conscious | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Moody | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not self-confident | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Openness

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Curious | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Imaginative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Artistic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Wide interests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Excitable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Unconventional | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Because of their interest in accurately measuring personality traits, trait theorists favor objective tests. Cattell, for example, developed a 374-question personality test called the **Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire**. The 16PF (as it is usually called) provides scores on each of the 16 traits originally identified by Cattell. More recently, objective tests such as the **NEO-PI-R** have been developed to assess the Big Five major personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 2006). The NEO-PI-R yields scores for each trait and its six facets. For each of over 200 questions, the test taker indicates to what degree he or she disagrees with the statement made. The primary use of the test is to assess the personality of a normal adult, although recent studies suggest it may also prove useful in some clinical settings (Bagby, Sellbom, Costa, & Widiger, 2008).

Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire

Objective personality test created by Cattell that provides scores on the 16 traits he identified.

NEO-PI-R

An objective personality test designed to assess the Big Five personality traits.

Table 10–2 THE 10 CLINICAL SCALES OF THE MMPI-2

| Clinical Scale | Symbol | Description |
|------------------------|--------|--|
| Hypochondriasis | Hs | Excessive concern with physical health and bodily function, somatic complaints, chronic weakness |
| Depression | D | Unhappiness, loss of energy, pessimism, lack of self-confidence, hopelessness, feeling of futility |
| Hysteria | Hy | Reacts to stress with physical symptoms such as blindness or paralysis; lacks insights about motives and feelings |
| Psychopathic Deviation | Pd | Disregard for rules, laws, ethics, and moral conduct; impulsiveness, rebellious toward authority figures, may engage in lying, stealing and cheating |
| Masculinity-Femininity | Mf | Adherence to nontraditional gender traits, or rejection of the typical gender role |
| Paranoia | Pa | Suspiciousness, particularly in the area of interpersonal relations, guarded, moralistic, and rigid; overly responsive to criticism |
| Psychasthenia | Pt | Obsessiveness and compulsiveness, unreasonable fears, anxious, tense, and high-strung |
| Schizophrenia | Sc | Detachment from reality, often accompanied by hallucinations, delusions, and bizarre thought processes; often confused, disorganized |
| Hypomania | Ma | Elevated mood, accelerated speech, flight of ideas, overactivity, energetic, and talkative |
| Social Introversion | Si | Shy, insecure, and uncomfortable in social situations; timid, reserved, often described by others as cold and distant |

The most widely used and thoroughly researched objective personality test is the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2)** (Dorfman & Leonard, 2001; Hoelzle & Meyer, 2008). Originally developed as an aid in diagnosing psychiatric disorders, the MMPI-2 remains in use as an effective diagnostic tool (Egger, Delsing, & DeMey, 2003) and for detecting *malinger*ing, or faking a psychiatric disorder (Kucharski, Johnsen, & Procell, 2004; Walters et al., 2008). Respondents are asked to answer “true,” “false,” or “cannot say” to such questions as “Once in a while I put off until tomorrow what I ought to do today,” “At times I feel like swearing,” and “There are people who are trying to steal my thoughts and ideas.” Some of the items repeat very similar thoughts in different words: For example, “I tire easily” and “I feel weak all over much of the time.” This redundancy provides a check on the possibility of false or inconsistent answers. **Table 10–2** shows the 10 clinical scales that are assessed by the MMPI-2.

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2) The most widely used objective personality test, originally intended for psychiatric diagnosis.

projective tests Personality tests, such as the Rorschach inkblot test, consisting of ambiguous or unstructured material.

Rorschach test A projective test composed of ambiguous inkblots; the way people interpret the blots is thought to reveal aspects of their personality.

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) A projective test composed of ambiguous pictures about which a person is asked to write a complete story.

Projective Tests

What do projective tests try to measure?

Owing to their belief that people are often unaware of the determinants of their behavior, psychodynamic theorists tend to discount self-report–based objective personality tests. Instead, they prefer **projective tests** of personality. Most projective tests consist of simple ambiguous stimuli. After looking at an essentially meaningless graphic image or at a vague picture, the test taker explains what the material means. Alternatively, the person may be asked to complete a sentence fragment, such as “When I see myself in the mirror, I . . .” The tests offer no clues regarding the “best way” to interpret the material or to complete the sentence.

Projective tests have several advantages. Because they are flexible and can even be treated as games or puzzles, people can take them in a relaxed atmosphere, without the tension and self-consciousness that sometimes accompany objective tests. Often, the patient doesn't even know the true purpose of the test, so responses are less likely to be faked. Some psychologists believe that the projective test can uncover unconscious thoughts and fantasies, such as latent sexual or family problems. In any event, the accuracy and usefulness of projective tests depend largely on the skill of the examiner in eliciting and interpreting responses.

The **Rorschach test** is the best known and one of the most frequently used projective personality tests (I. B. Weiner, 2006). It is named for Hermann Rorschach, a Swiss psychiatrist who in 1921 published the results of his research on interpreting inkblots as a key to personality. (See **Figure 10-4**.) Each inkblot design is printed on a separate card and is unique in form, color, shading, and white space. People are asked to specify what they see in each blot. Test instructions are minimal, so people's responses will be completely their own. After interpreting all the blots, the person goes over the cards again with the examiner and explains which part of each blot prompted each response. There are different methods of interpreting a person's responses to the blots on the Rorschach test, some of which produce more valid results than others (Masling, 2002; Viglione & Taylor, 2003).

Somewhat more demanding is the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**. It consists of 20 cards picturing one or more human figures in deliberately ambiguous situations. (See **Figure 10-5**.) A person is shown the cards one by one and asked to write a complete story about each picture, including what led up to the scene depicted, what the characters are doing at that moment, what their thoughts and feelings are, and what the outcome will be.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT...

Projective Tests

Critics of projective tests say that it is the clinician whose personality is actually revealed by the tests, because the clinician's report is itself an interpretation of an ambiguous stimulus (the client's verbal response).

1. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. How might this potential source of error be reduced?
3. What are the real or potential advantages to using projective tests?



Figure 10-4
Inkblots used in the Rorschach projective test.





Figure 10-5
A sample item from the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).


In the photo, the person is making up a story to explain the scene in the painting. The examiner then interprets and evaluates the person's story for what it reveals about her personality.

Source: Reprinted by permission of the publishers from Henry A. Murray, *Thematic Apperception Test*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1943 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, © 1971 by Henry A. Murray.

Although various scoring systems have been devised for the TAT (Aranow, Weiss, & Rezikoff, 2001), examiners usually interpret the stories in the light of their personal knowledge of the storyteller. One key in evaluating the TAT is determining who the test taker identifies with—the story’s hero or heroine, or one of the minor characters. The examiner then determines what the attitudes and feelings of the character reveal about the storyteller. The examiner also assesses each story for content, language, originality, organization, consistency, and recurring themes such as the need for affection, repeated failure, or parental domination.

Both the Rorschach and the TAT may open up a conversation between a clinician and a patient who is reluctant or unable to talk about personal problems. Both tests may also provide insight into motives, events, or feelings of which the person is unaware. However, because projective tests are often not administered in a standard fashion, their validity and reliability, especially in cross-cultural settings, have been called into question (Hofer & Chasiotis, 2004). As a result, their use has declined since the 1970s. Still, when interpreted by a skilled examiner, these tests can offer insight into a person’s attitudes and feelings.  [Simulate on MyPsychLab](#)

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CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- _____ tests require people to fill out questionnaires, which are then scored according to a standardized procedure.
- In _____ tests of personality, people are shown ambiguous stimuli and asked to describe them or to make up a story about them.

Answers: 1. objective. 2. projective.

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- You are consulting a psychologist who asks you to take a personality test. She shows you pictures of people and asks you to write a complete story about each picture. The test is most likely the
 - Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.
 - Rorschach Test.
 - Thematic Apperception Test.
 - NEO-PI-R.
- “They are often not administered in a standard fashion, they are seldom scored objectively, but when interpreted by a skilled examiner, they can provide insight into a person.” To what does this quotation most likely refer?
 - structured interviews
 - objective personality tests
 - projective personality tests
 - the NEO-PI-R and the MMPI-2

Answers: 1. c. 2. c.

KEY TERMS

Studying Personality
personality, *p.* 335

Psychodynamic Theories
unconscious, *p.* 336
psychoanalysis, *p.* 336
libido, *p.* 336

id, *p.* 337
pleasure principle, *p.* 337
ego, *p.* 337
reality principle, *p.* 337
superego, *p.* 337
ego ideal, *p.* 337
fixation, *p.* 338

oral stage, *p.* 338
anal stage, *p.* 338
phallic stage, *p.* 338
Oedipus complex and Electra
complex, *p.* 338
latency period, *p.* 338
genital stage, *p.* 338

personal unconscious, *p.* 339
collective unconscious,
p. 339
archetypes, *p.* 339
persona, *p.* 339
extraverts, *p.* 339
introverts, *p.* 339

compensation, *p.* 340
 inferiority complex, *p.* 340

Humanistic Personality Theories

humanistic personality theory, *p.* 344
 actualizing tendency, *p.* 345
 self-actualizing tendency, *p.* 345

fully functioning person, *p.* 345
 unconditional positive regard, *p.* 345
 conditional positive regard, *p.* 345

Trait Theories

personality traits, *p.* 346
 factor analysis, *p.* 347
 Big Five, *p.* 347

Cognitive–Social Learning Theories

cognitive–social learning theories, *p.* 351
 expectancies, *p.* 351
 performance standards, *p.* 351
 self-efficacy, *p.* 351
 locus of control, *p.* 351

Personality Assessment

objective tests, *p.* 354

Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, *p.* 355
 NEO-PI-R, *p.* 355
 Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2), *p.* 356
 projective tests, *p.* 356
 Rorschach test, *p.* 357
 Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), *p.* 357

CHAPTER REVIEW

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STUDYING PERSONALITY

What do psychologists mean when they talk about personality?

Personality refers to an individual's unique pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that persists over time and across situations. Key to this definition is the concept of distinctive differences among individuals and the concept of personality's stability and endurance.

PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES

What ideas do all psychodynamic theories have in common?

Psychodynamic theories of personality consider behavior to be the transformation and expression of psychic energy within the individual. Often these psychological dynamics are **unconscious** processes.

When Freud proposed that the sexual instinct is the basis of behavior, how was he defining “sexual instinct”?

According to Freud, personality is made of three structures. The **id**, the only personality structure present at birth, operates in the unconsciousness according to the **pleasure principle**. The **ego**, operating at the conscious level according to the **reality principle**, controls all conscious thinking and reasoning. The **superego** acts as the moral guardian or conscience helping the person function in society by comparing the ego's actions with the **ego ideal** of perfection. Freud used the term *sexual instinct* to refer to the desire for virtually any form of pleasure. As infants mature, their **libido**, or energy generated by the sexual instinct, becomes focused on sensitive parts of the body. A **fixation** occurs if a child is deprived of or receives too much pleasure from the part of the body that dominates one of the five developmental stages—**oral**, **anal**, **phallic**, **latency**, and **genital**. During the phallic stage, strong attachment to the parent of the opposite sex and jealousy of the parent of the same sex is termed the **Oedipus complex** in boys and the **Electra complex** in girls. Next the child enters the latency period, characterized by a lack of interest in sexual behavior. Finally, at puberty, the individual enters the genital stage of mature sexuality.

How did Carl Jung's view of the unconscious differ from that of Freud?

Freud saw the id as a “cauldron of seething excitations,” whereas Jung viewed the unconscious as the ego's source of strength. Jung believed that the unconscious consisted of the **personal unconscious**, encompassing an individual's repressed thoughts, forgotten experiences, and undeveloped ideas; and the **collective unconscious**, a subterranean river of memories and behavior patterns flowing to us from previous generations. Certain universal thought forms, called **archetypes**, give rise to mental images or mythological representations and play a special role in shaping personality. Jung used the term **persona** to describe that part of personality by which we are known to other people, like a mask we put on to go out in public.

What did Alfred Adler believe was the major determinant of personality?

Adler believed that people possess innate positive motives and strive toward personal and social perfection. He originally proposed that the principal determinant of personality was the individual's attempt to **compensate** for actual physical weakness, but he later modified his theory to stress the importance of *feelings* of inferiority, whether or not those feelings are justified. Adler concluded that strivings for superiority and perfection, both in one's own life and in the society in which one lives, are crucial to personality development.

What major contributions did Karen Horney make to the psychodynamic perspective?

For Horney, *anxiety*—a person's reaction to real or imagined dangers or threats—is a stronger motivating force than the sexual drive, or libido. Overly anxious adults may adopt one of three maladaptive coping strategies—moving toward people (submission), moving against people (aggression), and moving away from people (detachment). By emphasizing that culture and not anatomy determines many of the personality traits that differentiate women from men and that culture can be changed, Horney became a forerunner of feminist psychology.

Erikson's theory focused less on unconscious conflict and more on what factors?

Erikson argued that the quality of the

parent–child relationship affects the development of personality because, out of this interaction, the child either feels competent and valuable and is able to form a secure sense of identity or feels incompetent and worthless and fails to build a secure identity. Erikson proposed that each person moves through eight stages of development, each involving a more successful versus a less successful adjustment.

How would a psychodynamic theorist view the personality of Jaylene Smith? Freud would probably conclude that Jay had not successfully resolved her Electra complex. Erikson might suggest that Jay has problems achieving intimacy (Stage 6) because she had failed to develop satisfactory relations with other people earlier in her life.

How do modern psychologists view the contributions and limitations of the psychodynamic perspective? Psychodynamic theories have had a profound impact on the way we view ourselves and others, but some of Freud’s theories have been criticized as unscientific and culture bound, based on the anecdotal accounts of troubled individuals. As a therapy, **psychoanalysis** has been shown to be beneficial in some cases but no more so than are other therapies.

HUMANISTIC PERSONALITY THEORIES

What are the major ways that humanistic personality theory differs from psychodynamic theories? Freud and many of his followers believed that personality grows out of the resolution of unconscious conflicts and developmental crises from the past. **Humanistic personality theory** emphasizes that we are positively motivated and progress toward higher levels of functioning; and it stresses people’s potential for growth and change in the present.

According to Rogers, how can thinking of yourself as self-assured help you to become so? Rogers contended that every person is born with certain innate potentials and the **actualizing tendency** to realize our biological potential as well as our conscious sense of who we are. A **fully functioning person** is one whose self-concept closely matches the person’s inborn capabilities, and is encouraged when a child is raised in an atmosphere characterized by **unconditional positive regard**.

How would humanistic theorists view the development of Jaylene Smith’s personality? Humanistic theorists would focus on the difference between Jay’s self-concept and her actual capacities. Her inability to become what she “most truly is” would account for her anxiety, loneliness, and general dissatisfaction. Rogers would suspect that throughout Jay’s life, acceptance and love came from satisfying other people’s ideas of what she should become.

What have humanistic theories contributed to our understanding of personality? There is a lack of scientifically derived evidence for humanistic theories of personality. In addition, these theories are criticized for taking too rosy a view of human nature, for fostering self-centeredness, and for reflecting Western values of individual achievement.

TRAIT THEORIES

What is the key focus of trait theories? Trait theorists reject the notion that there are just a few distinct personality types. Instead, they insist that each person possesses a unique constellation of fundamental **personality traits**, which can be inferred from how the person behaves.

What five basic traits describe most differences in personality? Recent research suggests that there may be just five overarching and universal personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience (also called culture or intellect). Research shows these traits have some real world applications and are strongly influenced by heredity.

How would trait theorists describe Jaylene Smith’s personality? Trait theorists would probably ascribe Jaylene’s high achievements to the traits of determination or persistence. Sincerity, motivation, intelligence, anxiety, and introversion would also describe Jay. In terms of Big Five factors, she would be considered high in conscientiousness, but low in emotional stability and extraversion.

What major contributions have trait theorists made to our understanding of personality? Trait theories are primarily descriptive and provide a way of classifying personalities, but they do not explain why someone’s personality developed as it did. Unlike psychodynamic and humanistic theories, however, trait theories are relatively easy to test experimentally, and research confirms the value of the five-factor model, referred to as the “**Big Five**,” in pinpointing personality. Also, although most personality theories assume that behavior is consistent across situations and over a lifetime, a number of psychologists believe that situational variables have a significant effect on behavior.

COGNITIVE–SOCIAL LEARNING THEORIES

How do personal and situational factors combine to shape behavior? **Cognitive–social learning theories** of personality view behavior as the product of the interaction of cognitions, learning and past experiences, and the immediate environment.

How does one’s locus of control affect self-efficacy? Albert Bandura maintains that certain internal **expectancies** determine how a person evaluates a situation and that this evaluation has an effect on the person’s behavior. These expectancies prompt people to conduct themselves according to unique **performance standards**, individually determined measures of excellence by which they judge their behavior. According to Rotter, people with an internal **locus of control**—one type of expectancy—believe that they can control their own fate through their actions. Those who succeed in meeting their own internal performance standards develop an attitude that Bandura calls **self-efficacy**.

How would cognitive–social learning theorists describe the factors that shaped Jaylene Smith’s personality? These theorists would assert that Jaylene acquired extraordinarily high performance standards that almost inevitably left her with feelings of low self-efficacy, insecurity and uncertainty. She probably learned to be

shy because she was rewarded for the many hours she spent alone studying. Reinforcement would also have shaped her self-discipline and high need to achieve. By watching her parents, Jay could have learned to respond to conflicts with aggressive outbursts.

What contributions have cognitive–social learning theories made to our understanding of personality, and what are their limitations? Cognitive–social learning theories avoid the narrowness of trait theories, as well as the reliance on case studies and anecdotal evidence that weakens psychodynamic and humanistic theories. They also explain why people behave inconsistently, an area where the trait theories fall short. Cognitive–social learning theories have also spawned therapies that have been effectively used to treat depression.

PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

How do psychologists measure personality? Psychologists use four different methods to assess personality: the personal interview, direct observation of behavior, **objective tests**, and **projective tests**. Factors such as a desire to impress the examiner, fatigue, and fear of being tested can profoundly affect the reliability and validity of such tests.

What are the purposes of structured and unstructured interviews? During an unstructured interview, the interviewer asks questions about any issues that arise and poses follow-up questions where appropriate. In a structured interview, the order

and the content of the questions are fixed, and the interviewer does not deviate from the format. Structured interviews are more likely to be used for systematic research on personality because they elicit comparable information from all interviewees.

What are the advantages and limits of the observational method? Direct observation of a person over a period of time, which enables researchers to assess how situation and environment influence behavior, has the advantage of not relying on people's self-reported behavior. However, the observer runs the risk of misinterpreting the meaning of a given behavior.

Why are objective tests preferred by trait theorists? Objective tests ask respondents to answer “yes–no” questions about their own behavior and thoughts. Cattell's **Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)** provides scores on 16 basic personality traits, whereas the **NEO-PI-R** reports scores for each of the Big Five traits and their associated facets. The **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2)**, originally developed as an aid to diagnose mental disorders, includes questions that measure the truthfulness of a person's response.

What do projective tests try to measure? Psychodynamic theorists, who believe that much behavior is determined by unconscious processes, tend to discount tests that rely on self-reports. They are more likely to use projective tests consisting of ambiguous stimuli that can elicit an unlimited number of interpretations based on these unconscious processes. Two such tests are the **Rorschach Test** and the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**.