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Why You Are Who You Are

Investigations into Human Personality
Course Guidebook

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Professor Leary has published 14 books and more than 250 scholarly articles and chapters on topics dealing with social motivation, emotion, and self-relevant thought. He has been particularly interested in the ways in which people's emotions, behaviors, and self-views are influenced by their concerns with other people's perceptions and evaluations of them and in the dysfunctional effects of excessive self-preoccupation. Professor Leary is the author of *The Curse of the Self: Self-Awareness, Egotism, and the Quality of Human Life*; *Social Anxiety*; and *Self-Presentation: Impression Management and Interpersonal Behavior* and is the coeditor of *The Oxford Handbook of Hypo-egoic Phenomena*. He was the founding editor of the journal *Self and Identity* as well as the editor of *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. Professor Leary blogs regularly on personality and social psychology for psychologytoday.com.

Professor Leary received the 2010 Lifetime Career Award from the International Society for Self and Identity and was the corecipient of the 2015 Scientific Impact Award from the Society of Experimental Social Psychology. He is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Association for Psychological Science, and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. In 2015, Professor Leary served as the president of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.

Professor Leary's other Great Course is *Understanding the Mysteries of Human Behavior*.■

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WHY YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE:

Investigations into Human Personality

To live effective and satisfying lives, people need to understand both themselves and the people with whom they interact, whether they are family members, friends, romantic partners, people at work, or neighbors. Yet human beings don't come with a manual that explains how people work or why they turn out the way they do. This course offers an intriguing and engaging excursion into the nuances of the human personality based on decades of research in psychology and other behavioral sciences.

The course starts with a look at the nature of personality and the fundamental psychological characteristics that contribute to differences in how people think, feel, and behave. In addition to exploring the basic traits that underlie personality, you will examine differences in the motives that energize people's behavior as well as general tendencies to experience certain emotions rather than others.

Personality is also shaped by how people think and what they believe, so this course will focus on cognitive differences among people, including ways in which your beliefs about yourself, other people, and how the world works channel your life in particular directions. You will also learn about aspects of personality that involve personal values and moral character as well as traits that relate to how people interact and get along with others.

Having examined ways that people differ from one another in their traits, motives, emotions, styles of thinking, beliefs, values, and behavior, you will turn to learning about the processes that influence personality development. Starting with evolutionary mechanisms that underlie characteristics that you share with most other people, you will then investigate the role that the brain, neurotransmitters, hormones, and bodily rhythms play in personality. You will also explore the effects of genes on personality characteristics and the complicated ways in which people's genes and environments can interact in personality development.

You will dive into the processes by which personal experiences and learning affect how people turn out as well as how the culture in which people grow up affect their personality. You will also explore how nonconscious processes operating outside of awareness influence personality and learn about people's ability to manage their own personality by intentionally regulating their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Along the way, the course will address questions about the degree to which personality can change over time and whether it is important for people to behave authentically with how they really are.

Most of this course focuses on normal variations in personality, but a few lectures are devoted to personalities that are so dysfunctional that they are regarded as psychological disorders. The course concludes with traits at the other end of the spectrum—personality characteristics that underlie psychological adjustment and well-being. ■

A close-up, soft-focus photograph of a woman's face, showing her eyes, nose, and a slight smile. She has light brown hair and is looking towards the camera.

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

LECTURE 1

Every day, we see countless differences between ourselves and other people in what we think and feel and how we behave. Although we all share some basic psychological characteristics as human beings, we also show incredible diversity in our personalities. Not only is it fascinating to try to understand our own personalities—what we're like and how we got that way—but the quality of our lives depends in part on how well we can figure out what's going on with other people. By taking this course, you will gain new insights into the nature of personality that might help you better understand yourself and at least some other people.


PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

- ◆ As psychologists use it, the term “personality” involves those psychological characteristics that give people a distinct and somewhat stable and predictable style of responding to the world.
- ◆ Nobody acts the same way all the time. Well-adjusted people are flexible enough to accommodate to the demands of the situations in which they find themselves. However, as we look at your behaviors across different situations and over time, we can see that you have certain tendencies—to view things in certain ways, to have certain emotional reactions, to be motivated by particular things, and to behave in particular ways.
- ◆ Some of your tendencies you share with virtually all other human beings; they’re part of human nature. Even though those characteristics aren’t unique to you, they’re important in understanding some aspects of your personality. You have consistent tendencies in how you react that are universal human traits.
- ◆ But you also have many personality characteristics that make you different from many other people. To what extent are you outgoing and extraverted versus quiet and introverted? Are you generally an organized or disorganized person? Are you a morning person or an evening person? How much self-control do you usually have? People differ on these kinds of personality characteristics, and those differences help create the kind of person you are and the kind of life you lead.
- ◆ Little differences in people’s personalities can make big differences in their lives. Psychologists who study personality want to understand those differences in people’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
- ◆ A basic assumption of psychology is that to understand people fully—to understand why they think what they think, feel what they feel, and do what they do—we have to focus both on their personal psychological characteristics and on the nature of the situation they are in at the moment.

- ◆ All thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are influenced both by people's internal psychological characteristics—their personalities—and by the features of the situations in which they find themselves.
- ◆ Wherever you go, you carry with you a large, complex set of psychological characteristics—traits, beliefs, emotional tendencies, motivations, values, and other attributes—that predispose you to respond in certain ways.
- ◆ But how you act also depends on the particular situation you are in at the time, not only the physical environment but also the social context. For example, you'll react differently depending on the number of other people who are present, who they are, and what kind of relationship they have with you. And your behavior is affected by social norms and the role that you're in at the time and by whether you think that certain actions will be rewarded in some way or whether they'll be punished.
- ◆ Historically, these 2 sets of factors that influence behavior—those inside the person and those in the environment or situation—have been studied by 2 different groups of researchers. The field of personality psychology has focused mostly on internal psychological traits and processes, and the field of social psychology has focused mostly on social, situational determinants of behavior.
- ◆ This division of labor has never made much sense. All behavior is a function of the person and the environment, so we should be studying both sets of factors together.
- ◆ This course will focus mostly on people's personal characteristics—all the stuff going on inside us that makes us who we are psychologically. However, what goes on inside us and what goes on around us are difficult to separate, and the fact that human behavior is influenced by so many factors from within and without is what makes the study of human behavior such a challenging and captivating endeavor.
- ◆ And it's not just the sheer number of factors involved; it's that they are constantly changing and that they often interact to affect our behavior. Some parts of our personalities don't make much difference until some situational factor pushes a button that kicks some aspect of personality into gear.

PSYCHOLOGY AS A SCIENCE

- ◆ Many people have trouble seeing psychology as a science in the same way that they see, for example, physics, chemistry, or biology as sciences. For many people, psychology somehow seems too loose to be scientific.
- ◆ There are a few reasons for that. The first is the sheer number of factors that influence any particular behavior. The second is that many of those factors are difficult to measure and study. Behavioral scientists usually can't isolate all of the variables that are influencing a research participant at any given time.
- ◆ Every participant who walks into a psychological study comes with a complex personality that's based on years and years of influences that we can't possibly know about or measure. That's not like a chemist studying some chemical compound, where every sample of that compound is essentially the same.
- ◆ That's doesn't mean that psychology doesn't adhere to scientific principles. Our conclusions in psychology are based on careful, systematic research that's aimed toward understanding how personality works, and we know a great deal about many psychological processes.
- ◆ We can even predict how people will act in specific situations. But there's much more error in our predictions than there is in the physical sciences, because the objects of our research—the people we study—are so different from each other in so many different ways and they are constantly changing in ways that physical objects usually don't.

A photograph of a meteorological station. A silver metal pole is the central structure. At the top, there is a wind direction sensor (a large, flat, dark plate) and a wind speed sensor (two small black cups). Below these, there is a rain gauge (a cylindrical white container with a black top and bottom). To the left of the pole, there is a sensor with a white, louvered, dome-shaped top. A yellow cable runs from the rain gauge down the pole. The background shows a hazy mountain range under a cloudy sky. The image is framed by magenta geometric shapes in the corners.

Psychological science is like the science of weather forecasting. Meteorology deals with many dynamic, interacting systems that unfold over time, much like human behavior as people live their lives. And, like weather forecasting, psychology is fundamentally probabilistic.

PROPORTION OF VARIABILITY

- ◆ Although all behavior is a function of the characteristics of the person and of the situation, from the earliest days of behavioral science, researchers have debated which of these influences is most important in understanding human behavior: Is your behavior influenced more strongly by your personality or by the situation that you're in at the time? As in many such debates, there have been extreme voices on both sides, and as in most such debates, the best answer is that it depends.
- ◆ The degree to which personality is important in understanding a particular behavior depends on the strength of the situation that a person is in. A strong situation is one in which situational pressures are so strong that there's little or no room for personality to play a role. A strong situation, for example, is attending church—almost everyone acts the same by sitting quietly and attentively. In contrast, an example of a weak situation is going to the beach, where people participate in all kinds of different activities.
- ◆ In part, whether personality or situational factors are most important in what people do depends on the strength of the situation that they're in. But it also depends on the person's personality, because the degree to which people are responsive to situational influences is itself a personality characteristic—that is, people differ in the degree to which their behavior is affected by situational pressures. Some people are generally more affected by situational requirements, and other people are affected more by their internal, psychological dispositions.



- ◆ Knowing that individuals prioritize situational and personality influences differently, can we definitively say which one is more important overall in affecting human behavior?
- ◆ To gauge the relative impact of these influences, researchers have turned to statistical analyses that tell us the proportion of variability in behavior that can be accounted for by personality versus situational influences. This concept of proportion of variability tells us how strongly related a particular personality characteristic is to behaviors or emotions or to other characteristics.
- ◆ If we look at any particular behavior—for example, the behavior of becoming angry—we see a great deal of variability in how often different people get angry and in how angry they tend to get. Some people rarely get angry and others get angry virtually every day; most of us fall somewhere in between. What accounts for these differences, or this variability, in the tendency to become angry?
- ◆ Some variability in anger can be accounted for by the different situations that people find themselves in or by personality differences that make people more or less likely to get angry than others.
- ◆ To estimate the total variability that we observe in anger, or any reaction, researchers use a proportion that can range from 0 to 1. You can think of it as a percentage that runs from 0% to 100% of the variability in a behavior, where 0% would indicate no observable variability across people and 100% would indicate that all observable variability in a behavior is due to the variable being studied.
- ◆ It turns out that across most of the behaviors and emotions that have been studied, the proportion of variability in behavior that is accounted for by situational versus personality influences is about equal. Of course, it depends on the strength of the situation, but in general, personality is about as relevant to understanding people's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors as situations are. Personality characteristics and situational factors account for about the same amount of variability we see in people's reactions overall.

THE INTERACTION OF PERSONALITY AND SITUATIONAL FACTORS

- ◆ The effects of personality and situations on behavior are more complex than just the fact that situations and personality factors affect behavior. Personality and situational factors often interact to influence how people respond. When personality and situations interact, how a particular situation affects people's reactions depends on their personality. A single situation can have different effects on different kinds of people.
- ◆ For example, consider the causes of delinquent behavior in teenage boys. On one hand, we know that situational factors affect delinquency. A boy who happens to live in a crime-ridden neighborhood and who has friends who are involved in crime is more likely to become a juvenile offender than boys who live in neighborhoods with less crime. That's a situational effect.
- ◆ At the same time, boys with certain personalities have a higher tendency to behave badly than boys with other personalities. For example, we know that boys who are highly impulsive—who have trouble controlling themselves—are more likely to get into trouble than less impulsive boys are. That's a personality effect.
- ◆ But situations and personality can interact so that the effects of the situation on delinquent behavior differ depending on boys' personalities.
- ◆ In a study that tested how impulsivity and the quality of neighborhoods are related to delinquent behavior, researchers found that impulsivity predicted delinquency as expected, but only for boys who lived in poor neighborhoods. In other words, being in a poor neighborhood was related to higher delinquency only for boys who were already impulsive; nonimpulsive boys in poor neighborhoods were no more likely to be juvenile offenders



than nonimpulsive boys in better neighborhoods. In addition, being impulsive was not associated with greater delinquency for boys who grew up in better neighborhoods.

- ◆ This is an example of a person-by-situation interaction because the situational effects of living in a poor neighborhood increased juvenile offending only for boys with a certain personality. The situation didn't have much of an effect on boys who were low in impulsivity.

Suggested Reading

Funder, *The Personality Puzzle*, chap. 1.

Ozer and Benet-Martinez, "Personality and the Prediction of Consequential Outcomes."

Questions to Consider

1. Psychologists assume that behavior is influenced both by features of the situation in which people find themselves (such as norms, social roles, and other people) and by aspects of people's personalities. Make a list of 5 things you have done today (any 5 behaviors will do) and think about the degree to which each of those actions was influenced by the situation you were in versus your personality.
2. What 4 characteristics best describe you? (If none of the 4 characteristics that you list is an undesirable trait that you'd prefer not to have, add a negative characteristic to the list as well.) In what ways would your life have been different if you had possessed the opposites of each of these characteristics? (For example, if you are an extravert, how would life have been different if you had been introverted?)

KEY TRAITS: EXTRAVERSION AND NEUROTICISM

LECTURE 2



To understand people's personalities, it makes sense to start with the most important characteristics—the ones that best help us to understand their behavior and that relate most strongly to important outcomes in their lives. This lecture and the following one will focus on the 5 most important personality traits before turning to other characteristics. As you will learn in this lecture, extraversion and neuroticism are the most important, most informative traits in the human personality.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

- ◆ Human personality is characterized by 5 basic personality traits, known as the big five. Many other traits exist, but these 5 have become recognized as the most important traits for understanding people's personalities and behavior.
- ◆ As psychologists use it, the term “personality trait” is an internal, psychological characteristic that involves the tendency to respond in a particular way.
- ◆ Think about your own behavior: Do you tend to be outgoing or more reserved in social situations? You probably aren't either one all the time; sometimes you're more outgoing, and sometimes you're more reserved. But if we followed you around and watched you in many different situations, we'd probably find that you show a tendency to lean one way or the other.
- ◆ The fact that you show a particular tendency in how you respond across situations suggests that you possess some psychological characteristic, or perhaps a set of characteristics, that predisposes you to react in one way or another. So, we would say that you have a trait that predisposes you to tend to be outgoing or reserved.
- ◆ By definition, the concept of a trait implies that a person will show a certain degree of consistency in his or her thoughts, feelings, or behaviors across different situations. If you have a particular trait, we should be able to see a tendency for you to respond in a particular way across different situations.
- ◆ Of course, even when people have a trait, they don't act the same way all the time. Different situations call for different kinds of behaviors, and people who act exactly the same way all the time don't adapt to the demands of specific situations. No matter how outgoing you usually are, you must sometimes be reserved, and no matter how reserved you usually are, situations sometimes require you to be sociable.

- ◆ The concept of trait also implies a certain degree of consistency over time in how people tend to respond. People's personality traits can and do change over time, at least within limits. But over the short term, we see stability in their traits. If you tend to be outgoing this month, we aren't likely to find that you have become consistently reserved a few months from now. It can happen—for example, if people experience a traumatic event—but under normal circumstances, personality shows a good deal of stability over time.



As you learn about different traits in this course, think about where you might fall along whatever trait dimension is being discussed. Are you low, medium, or high on the trait?

- ◆ It helps to think of any given trait as a dimension or continuum that ranges from low to high. And people are spread out along that continuum from those who are very low on the trait to those who are very high on the trait.
- ◆ People's scores on most traits are normally distributed. In other words, if we look at people's scores, we usually find that they show a classic, bell-shaped—or normal—distribution in which most people score toward the middle, with fewer and fewer people having more extreme scores as we move away from the middle.
- ◆ In contrast to a personality *trait*, which can be visualized as a continuum, when we talk about a personality *type*, we are categorizing people into a small number of discrete categories or groups, sometimes only 2 groups. So, instead of giving you a score on a continuous measure of a trait, we could simply classify you as being low or high in that trait.
- ◆ For example, we could classify you as a dominant or submissive person, as depressed or not depressed, or as an extravert versus an introvert. In each case, we have classified you as a type of person—a dominant person or an introvert, for example—by putting you in a category.



The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is used to help people understand their own personality, particularly in work organizations to help employees understand how they differ from their coworkers. It basically tells you what type of person you are on 4 characteristics: extravert versus introvert, sensing versus intuition, thinking versus feeling, and judging versus perceiving. After people take the Myers-Briggs, they get a 4-letter code—such as ISTJ or INFP or ESTP—that tells them which of 16 types they are.

- ◆ Personality researchers almost never talk about types because true personality types almost never exist; there are not many psychological characteristics in which people naturally and cleanly fall into one category or another. Instead, people vary from one another across all levels of a trait continuum.

EXTRAVERSION

- ◆ From the beginning of the scientific study of personality, everyone has agreed that the most important trait is extraversion. The trait of extraversion underlies more of people's behavior—and more of the differences that we see among people—than any other trait.
- ◆ A psychological scientist might say that extraversion accounts for more variability in human behavior than any other trait. We can understand more about why people do what they do if we know how extraverted they are than by knowing about any other characteristic.

- ◆ When we talk about the trait of extraversion, we're talking about a dimension that runs from being very low in extraversion at one end to being very high in extraversion at the other. In everyday language, we often use the label "introvert" to describe people who are low in extraversion, but personality researchers generally talk about low versus high extraversion rather than about introverts and extraverts.
- ◆ Partly, that's to avoid thinking of extraversion and introversion as if they're personality types. Most personality characteristics are continuous traits rather than categorical types, and that's true of extraversion. In addition, we usually don't contrast introverts with extraverts to avoid the suggestion that introversion is somehow the opposite of extraversion, which it isn't. Introverts simply fall in the lower tail of the normal distribution of extraversion scores.
- ◆ For example, introverts may like social interactions less than extraverts do, but they don't necessarily dislike interacting with other people at all. And introverts may be less assertive than extraverts are, but they aren't necessarily nonassertive or submissive.
- ◆ Extraversion has a number of interrelated features, but its central characteristic is sociability. The higher that people score in extraversion, the more they enjoy interacting with other people. Compared to people who are low in extraversion, people who are high in extraversion are more gregarious, enjoy social gatherings more (including large parties), and seek out opportunities to interact with other people more often.
- ◆ When they're in social situations, people who are high in extraversion are more talkative than people who are low in extraversion are. People who are high in extraversion are so highly motivated to interact with other people that when they're alone for a long time, they sometimes go on a search just for somebody to talk to.
- ◆ Although sociability is the key feature of extraversion, people who are low versus high in extraversion also differ in other ways. For example, people who are high in extraversion tend to be more assertive and dominant than people who are lower in extraversion. They are also more energetic and active, and they like to stay busier than less extraverted people do.



- ◆ High extraverts also tend to be somewhat more upbeat and cheerful than people who are low in extraversion, but researchers don't completely understand why extraverts tend to experience more positive emotions.
- ◆ One possibility is that, physiologically, high extraverts are more sensitive to rewards than people who are lower in extraversion. It seems that extraverts are more oriented toward having rewarding experiences and have a lower threshold for experiencing pleasure. Because they are more focused on rewards, people high in extraversion may tend to behave in ways that promote their own happiness more than low extraverts do.
- ◆ Another possible explanation is that given how much of life requires interacting with other people, those who really enjoy interacting with others will be happier in the course of everyday life than people who don't enjoy interacting as much.

NEUROTICISM

- ◆ The second most important trait of the big five is usually called neuroticism, but because this word has such negative connotations, many researchers now call it emotional stability.
- ◆ The central feature of neuroticism (or emotional stability) is the degree to which people experience negative emotions. People who are higher in neuroticism tend to experience negative emotions more frequently than people who are low in neuroticism, and their negative emotions tend to be more intense and last longer. Some people simply experience unpleasant emotions—such as anxiety, sadness, anger, guilt, and regret—more than other people do. In fact, some researchers call this trait negative emotionality.
- ◆ Although the defining feature of neuroticism involves negative emotionality, people who are high in neuroticism also display a general sense of insecurity and vulnerability. People who are high in neuroticism are more afraid of things that don't bother other people very much, and they tend to worry more about bad things that might happen in the future. As they walk through life, they focus on the possible risks ahead—risks involving their physical safety, possible failures, public embarrassments, rejections, and so on. So, they try to avoid situations that look risky or threatening.
- ◆ People who are high in neuroticism also tend to overreact to ordinary kinds of hassles and frustrations. They get bent out of shape more easily than people low in neuroticism.



- ◆ They're also less satisfied with their lives. This makes sense: If you tend to experience negative emotions frequently, everything seems less satisfying. At the other end of the continuum, people who are very low in neuroticism walk through life with a certain amount of equanimity and tend to be more satisfied with life.
- ◆ Not surprisingly, then, people who score higher in neuroticism need more emotional support from other people, so they often tend to be somewhat needy and dependent.
- ◆ High neuroticism is not only distressing for people, but it's also associated with a number of negative outcomes. For example, neuroticism predicts more conflict and lower satisfaction in people's marriages and other close relationships. The more people experience negative emotions, the more volatile their relationships tend to be. And the romantic partners of people who are high in neuroticism are less satisfied with their relationships. It's more difficult to live with a partner who's high in negative emotionality.



- ◆ People high in neuroticism also experience a greater number of health problems. They have a higher mortality rate, and they're particularly likely to get heart disease. Not only does a high level of stress create certain medical problems directly, but negative emotions can compromise the immune system in a way that makes it more difficult for the body to deal with whatever problem the person has. The connection is so strong that some psychologists have called neuroticism a major public health problem.
- ◆ Neuroticism has a strong genetic component. Some people are born with brains that respond more strongly to negative events, so they react more easily to threats of various kinds.

- ◆ But children can also learn to be neurotic to some extent. When parents are anxious or angry or upset a lot, their children learn to view high emotionality as normal, and they don't observe their parents using effective coping strategies.
- ◆ On top of that, parents who openly express their own fears and concerns and who are overprotective can lead their children to perceive the world as a dangerous and unhappy place. And worse, parents who are neglectful, rejecting, or abusive can cause their children to be chronically fearful and vulnerable.

Suggested Reading

Cain, *Quiet*.

Lahey, "Public Health Significance of Neuroticism."

Questions to Consider

1. The concept of a personality trait implies that people show a certain degree of consistency in how they respond across different situations. Yet people must behave flexibly (and, thus, inconsistently) to adapt to particular situations, so no one acts the same way all of the time. In thinking of your own personality, can you identify traits on which you behave very consistently across different situations and traits on which you are more inconsistent?
2. Using what you have learned about extraversion and neuroticism, suggest at least 5 ways that each of these traits can impact people's lives. How might people's lives unfold differently depending on where they stand on extraversion and neuroticism?

ARE YOU AGREEABLE? CONSCIENTIOUS? OPEN?

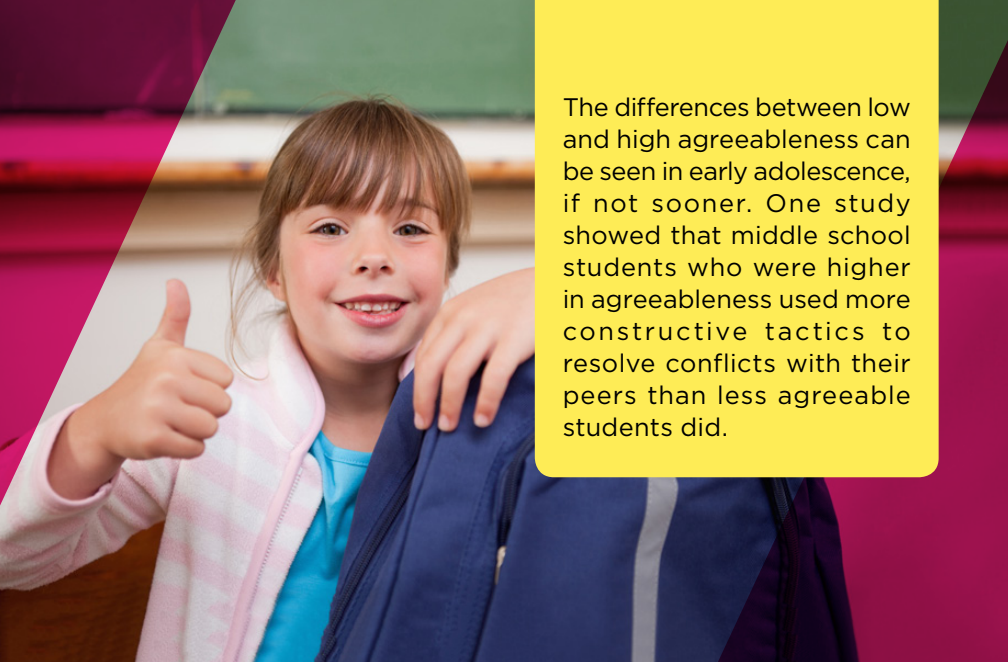
LECTURE 3

For many years, the 2 traits you learned about in the previous lecture—extraversion and neuroticism—received the bulk of attention from personality researchers, until consensus emerged that there are, in fact, 5 major traits. This lecture will examine the 3 other traits—agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness—along with a sixth trait that has started getting attention.



AGREEABLENESS

- ◆ Once we move beyond the traits of extraversion and neuroticism, the third most important trait is agreeableness, which involves the degree to which people generally have a positive or negative orientation toward other people.
- ◆ At the low end of the agreeableness dimension are people who simply aren't very nice. They are often unpleasant—even to the point of being antagonistic and hostile at times—and they tend to be inconsiderate and critical, even callous. At the high end of the agreeableness continuum are people who tend to be pleasant, kind, sympathetic, and helpful.
- ◆ Like most traits, agreeableness is normally distributed, so most people fall in the middle, with a mixture of positive and negative interpersonal characteristics. We can be very nice at times, but we can also be somewhat disagreeable.
- ◆ Agreeable people tend to have a more positive and optimistic view of human nature. They tend to believe that most people are basically honest and decent, so they trust other people more. People low in agreeableness have less positive views of other people, so they're less trusting.
- ◆ When they experience conflicts with other people, highly agreeable people try to resolve the conflict in ways that are acceptable to everyone involved. So, agreeable people value negotiation more highly, and they are averse to using power or force to get other people to do what they want. Along the same lines, agreeable people are generally more cooperative and less competitive in their dealings with other people.
- ◆ Agreeable people are more helpful than less agreeable people are, whether we are talking about helping family members, friends, or complete strangers. Highly agreeable people are even more likely to donate their money and time when other people are in need.



The differences between low and high agreeableness can be seen in early adolescence, if not sooner. One study showed that middle school students who were higher in agreeableness used more constructive tactics to resolve conflicts with their peers than less agreeable students did.

- ◆ On the other hand, people low in agreeableness tend to be more prejudiced. They're not only more prejudiced toward traditional targets of prejudice—such as certain races, ethnic groups, and homosexuals—but also toward members of other stigmatized groups, such as people who are overweight.
- ◆ Two characteristics seem to tie all of this together. First, agreeable people place a higher value on their relationships with other people. They're more motivated to have pleasant, close relationships, so they're more willing to do things that maintain those relationships. For example, they make a greater effort to tolerate frustrations caused by other people rather than getting angry or lashing out.
- ◆ In addition, research suggests that agreeable people are more empathic. They're more likely to see the world through other people's eyes, and they experience greater distress when other people are suffering. So, more agreeable people are more likely to treat other people nicely and to be kind and altruistic.


- ◆ That doesn't mean that less agreeable people never have empathy for others. But they don't automatically empathize with other people as easily as highly agreeable people do.
- ◆ Research shows that people who are higher in agreeableness are regarded as nice people, are liked more, and are more popular within their social groups. And they have more satisfying friendships and romantic relationships, including more successful marriages. In part, that's because they simply get along better with other people.
- ◆ They also bring out better behavior in other people. Their agreeable style elicits more pleasant and agreeable behavior from the people they interact with. Highly agreeable people create different social environments than less agreeable people do, and their agreeableness affects the behavior of other people.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

- ◆ The fourth member of the big five is the trait of conscientiousness, which reflects the degree to which people are responsible and dependable. Conscientiousness comes down to whether people usually do what they should and whether they try to do it well.
- ◆ Responsibly doing what one should depends on a number of separate characteristics, and most of these underlying attributes are part of conscientiousness. For example, it's difficult to do things conscientiously without being organized and orderly, and conscientious people are more organized than less conscientious people are.
- ◆ Conscientiousness also involves industriousness and persistence. Conscientious people work harder because getting things done and doing them well takes effort. And they are more likely to persist when tasks become difficult, boring, or unrewarding.
- ◆ A final component of conscientious is being able to make yourself do what needs to be done and to be able to resist the urge to do something else instead—particularly if the alternative is more fun than

what you're supposed to do. So, a key feature of conscientiousness is impulse control and a high level of self-discipline. Impulsive people who don't control themselves well have a pretty hard time being conscientious.

- ◆ Being consistently conscientious might not always be fun, but it does have payoffs. For example, conscientious people are healthier and live longer than less conscientious people. Research shows that conscientious people are less likely to smoke, use drugs, abuse alcohol, and become obese, and they're more likely to exercise, practice safe sex, and drive safely. It's also related to using smoke alarms in your house, seeing a doctor regularly, and following doctors' orders when you're sick.

A photograph of a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, driving a car. She is looking down at a white smartphone in her left hand, while her right hand is on the steering wheel. The car's interior, including the dashboard and rearview mirror, is visible. The background shows a blurred view of trees and a road. A yellow text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Conscientiousness is related to how many traffic citations and car accidents people have.

- ◆ Higher conscientiousness is also associated with greater success in school, at work, and in close relationships. All other things being equal, conscientious students get higher grades and conscientious employees make more money. At work, low conscientiousness is associated with absenteeism, stealing from your employer, and lower productivity on the job.
- ◆ In close relationships, people are more satisfied with their relationship the higher their partner is in conscientiousness. In fact, conscientious people are less likely to get divorced than less conscientious people are.
- ◆ Conscientious people hold up their end of the relationship better and are less likely to break the rules by being selfish or cheating or being violent or doing other things that damage relationships. Because they're more organized, orderly, and dependable, conscientious people give their partners fewer reasons to be dissatisfied. And their self-control may also help conscientious people hold their tongue when things are better left unsaid.
- ◆ Part of the reason why some people behave more conscientiously than other people do is because they're motivated to behave that way. They have a desire to be organized, to be dependable, to do things carefully, and to follow rules. In fact, highly conscientious people are sometimes motivated to be organized, orderly, and careful even when it doesn't matter.
- ◆ But in many arenas of life, it does matter, and conscientious people are motivated by both the realization that responsible behavior often produces benefits and by the fear of negative consequences that often result when people are not conscientious. So, they organize their lives, set goals, and pursue those goals. Less conscientious people are simply less motivated to behave in these conscientious ways.



OPENNESS

- ◆ The fifth and final trait of the big five is openness, which is sometimes called openness to experience. The term “openness” as it applies to this trait should be interpreted as something like receptivity, as in the sense of being “open” to trying a new experience or being receptive to a new idea.
- ◆ The trait of openness involves the degree to which people are generally open or receptive to all kinds of things. We’re not talking about interpersonal openness—being open in how you interact with other people—but rather an intellectual and experiential openness or receptivity to new things.
- ◆ People who score high in openness are more intellectually curious and imaginative than people who score low, which reflects an openness to new ideas. Open people are less dogmatic and more intellectually humble. They hold their beliefs less strongly, and they’re open to considering new ideas and thinking about the world in new ways. They also enjoy trying new things.
- ◆ They’re also more flexible in their behavior. They’re willing to try new ways of doing things, and they’re less concerned about doing things a certain way just because we’ve always done them that way. As a result of being open to new ideas, experiences, and ways of doing things, people who are high in openness live somewhat less traditional and conventional lives. They don’t feel a strong need to conform to social expectations.
- ◆ People who are low in openness show less of each of these tendencies. They are less inherently curious, are more certain that their personal beliefs are correct, usually don’t like to try new things just for the sake of having a new experience, tend to be more conventional, and tend to be more set in their ways.



- ◆ Because openness is normally distributed, most people show a mixture of these characteristics: They like a certain amount of novelty but not too much, will try new things now and then, are dogmatic about some of their beliefs but open about others, and so on. But many people fall toward one extreme or the other, and your reaction to the descriptions of these extremes should tell you which way you lean: Open people admire openness, while less open people find high openness a little troubling.
- ◆ Research shows that people tend to gravitate into friendships and romantic relationships with people who have roughly the same level of openness as they do. This effect is not strong compared to many other things that bring people together, but it is there.
- ◆ Openness seems to be beneficial in people's relationships. Because openness involves a willingness to consider that one might be wrong and being open to other views, people who are more open tolerate differences of opinion better than those who are less open. So, open people have fewer conflicts with other people than less open people do.
- ◆ Studies have also shown that people who are high in openness, like those who are high in agreeableness, are less likely to be prejudiced than people low in openness. This is because they are more open to different cultures, belief systems, ideas, and kinds of people.
- ◆ Open people tend to report that their relationships with other people are more satisfying. They tend to get along with people better, and other people tend to like them more.



Parents who are low in openness emphasize unquestioning obedience and deference to the parent's authority. They expect their children to follow their rules, and they don't tolerate the child's objections.

Parents who are higher in openness are more willing to listen to the child's perspective and are more tolerant of behavior that isn't exactly what the parent had wanted. In fact, open parents sometimes actively encourage their children to express their opinions and even to disagree with them.

- ◆ People who score higher in openness tend to enjoy aesthetic experiences more than people who are lower in openness. They're higher in what researchers call aesthetic sensitivity. People higher in openness enjoy sensory experiences, such as art, music, and beautiful scenery, more than people low in openness do, and they report feeling more absorbed and emotionally moved by these kinds of experiences. They even report that they get chills or goosebumps more often when they see beautiful things or hear beautiful music.

When researchers have studied the personalities of dogs and of chimpanzees, they find the same big five traits, plus a sixth trait that reflects how dominant they are.



HONESTY-HUMILITY

- ◆ Research has recently uncovered what is perhaps the sixth fundamental trait, and some researchers have started including it in their studies alongside measures of the big five. This trait is generally referred to as honesty-humility.
- ◆ At the high end of this trait continuum are people who tend to be consistently honest, generous, fair, faithful, and humble; at the low end of this continuum are people who tend to be deceitful, manipulative, greedy, sly, and arrogant.
- ◆ This sixth trait involves differences in people's tendency to be self-centered and selfish. At the high end are people who, although they look out for their own interests as we all do, do so in a way that considers other people. So, they're honest, generous, and fair, and they keep their commitments.
- ◆ The humility part comes in because selfishness often involves thinking that you are better than other people and thus entitled to get what you want by whatever means necessary. It's difficult to be consistently honest, generous, and fair if you arrogantly think you're better than everyone else. So, people who score high on this dimension also tend to be humble.
- ◆ At the low end of this sixth trait are exceptionally selfish and self-centered people—people who are often deceitful, manipulative, greedy, and sly to get what they want. In fact, very low scorers show signs of psychopathy, which involves almost total indifference to the well-being of other people.
- ◆ The researchers who first described this sixth factor called it the HEXACO model, the letters in which refer to the 6 traits: H for honesty-humility, E for emotionality (the neuroticism factor), X for extraversion, A for agreeableness, C for conscientiousness, and O for openness.

Suggested Reading

Morell, "A Kingdom of Characters."

Westerhoff, "The 'Big Five' Personality Traits."

Questions to Consider

1. Rate where you think you fall on each of the big five traits—extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness—on a 5-point scale (1 - very low, 2 - moderately low, 3 - average, 4 - moderately high, 5 - very high). Does thinking about where you fall on these traits help you understand anything about your behavior or emotions?
2. Several websites provide an opportunity for you to complete a measure of the big five traits and obtain feedback on how you score relative to other people. Most of the measures take less than 10 minutes to complete. These sites come and go, but searching the web for "big five personality test" will give you several options for learning where you stand on the big five. (Many of these sites are free, so avoid those that require you to pay a fee.)

If you decide to complete one of these online measures of the big five, consider a few questions as you think about your scores: How well do your scores on the measure correspond to your ratings in question 1 above? (In other words, how accurately did you guess where you would fall on each trait?) Are you surprised by any of your scores?

BASIC MOTIVES UNDERLYING BEHAVIOR

LECTURE 4

Many fundamental questions in psychology involve motivation, an internal state that directs behavior either toward or away from specific goals or specific outcomes. Psychologists have studied many specific motives, but the bulk of research on personality differences in motivation has focused on 3: the motive to interact with other people, or affiliation motivation; the motive to achieve and be successful, or achievement motivation; and the motive to influence and exert power over other people, or power motivation. The strength of these 3 motives play an important role in fashioning people's personalities and account for a good deal of variation in how people tend to behave.



AFFILIATION MOTIVATION

- ◆ Affiliation motivation involves the degree to which people desire to be with and interact with other people. People differ a great deal in how much they enjoy affiliating with others. You probably know some people who like to be with other people as often and as much as they possibly can. They not only enjoy social interactions, but they become unhappy when they can't have the amount of social contact that they would like.
- ◆ And you probably know other people who are motivated to be with other people much less often. It's not that they necessarily dislike other people; they simply are not as drawn to interacting with other people just for the sake of interaction. They're content to spend much more time by themselves. Because personality differences in affiliation motivation are normally distributed, most people are somewhere in the middle.

On first glance, affiliation motivation might seem like extraversion. But affiliation motivation is about the degree to which people are motivated to affiliate and not the degree to which they actually interact with other people, which would describe extraversion.

People high in affiliation motivation do tend to be somewhat extraverted, but many people are highly motivated to affiliate yet hold back from interacting with others because they lack confidence or are afraid of being rejected.



- ◆ In general, people who are higher in affiliation spend more time interacting with and communicating with other people. They tend to have more social interactions in a given day, and their interactions tend to last longer. They're also more likely to visit friends, call people on the phone, and send letters, emails, and text messages than people who are lower in affiliation motivation.
- ◆ When they are by themselves, people higher in affiliation motivation are more likely to wish that other people were around. In fact, after a period of solitude, people high in affiliation motivation may go on a search to find someone to interact with. Even shy people would like to be with other people but are often reluctant to seek out other people; it's particularly distressing to be shy if you're high in affiliation motivation.
- ◆ Because people high in affiliation motivation are motivated to interact with and form social connections with other people, they want other people to want to interact with and form connections with them. They can't fulfill their desire for affiliation if other people don't want to interact with them. So, they tend to be highly sensitive to other people's reactions and concerned with what other people think of them.
- ◆ People low in affiliation motivation are not indifferent to how they are viewed by others; they are simply less concerned because they aren't as motivated to interact with other people anyway.
- ◆ Because they value social interactions so much, people higher in affiliation tend to behave in ways that will lead other people to want to interact with them. They're more agreeable, and they're more willing to go along with what other people want to do. They prefer to avoid situations in which they must compete with other people, presumably because competition often makes interactions with other people more distant and tense.
- ◆ At very high levels, affiliation motivation tends to be associated with social insecurity and dependency. People who are very highly motivated to affiliate with others sometimes seem a bit too clingy and dependent. They need people too much.

- ◆ People who are higher in affiliation motivation generally prefer to work with other people rather than to work alone, and they prefer to work with other people who are also high in affiliation motivation. For people who are low in affiliation motivation, it's annoying to work with someone who wants to interact all the time. Things tend to go more smoothly when people work with others who are about their own level of affiliation motivation.



- ◆ This preference also plays out in close relationships, such as dating relationships, marriages, and other committed partnerships. Research shows that couples who are relatively matched in their level of affiliation motivation tend to have happier relationships. Not only do people like their partner to interact at the level at which they themselves feel comfortable, but as a couple, they're more likely to enjoy similar activities.

ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION

- ◆ Achievement motivation is the motive to be competent and to perform at a high level, whether that is with regard to professional success, doing well in school, or being a successful athlete. You can think of achievement motivation as the priority that people place on achievement relative to other motives that they might have.
- ◆ Researchers have designed some pretty good measures of achievement motivation over the years. Some of these measures are self-report questionnaires with rather straightforward questions that tap into the importance that a person places on achievement.

- ◆ Other measures of achievement motivation are projective tests, in which people are asked to tell a story about an ambiguous picture in which it's not clear what's actually happening in the scene. Different people will tell stories with different themes. People who are high in achievement motivation tend to tell more stories with themes about achievement and success than people low in achievement motivation.
- ◆ These projective tests also show us that people who are higher in achievement motivation tend to “see” achievement themes in ordinary daily events. As they go through life, they're more likely to see the world in terms of achievement. So, people low versus high in achievement motivation actually see the world somewhat differently.
- ◆ Like most traits, achievement motivation is normally distributed. Most people are moderate in achievement motivation: Achievement is important to them at times, but they balance their desire to achieve against other things in life, such as their family, social life, leisure activities, and health.
- ◆ At the high end of the distribution, though, some people put such an exceptionally high value on achievement that it usually trumps other motives and goals. At the low end are people who generally don't care how well they do or how successful they are. Other things are more important.
- ◆ People high in achievement motivation have a more energetic approach to their work, whether it's their job, schoolwork, or practicing some skill they want to learn. They're hard workers, and they tend to stay on whatever task they're doing longer than people who are lower in achievement motivation.



- ◆ People who are higher in achievement motivation tend to work more hours—on the job or in school, for example—because that's how one achieves: by doing more than other people. People on the low end of the continuum tend to work just hard enough to get by. They certainly don't want to fail, but they aren't particularly motivated to do really well.
- ◆ People who are high in achievement motivation not only work more, but they also work at a greater intensity, with more focus and energy. But they usually work harder and more intensely mainly on tasks that have implications for achievement or accomplishment. They don't necessarily work harder than anybody else when achievement is not involved, such as when doing laundry or going to the grocery store.
- ◆ Research shows that people with higher achievement motivation prefer to have a job in which they have a good deal of control over how well the job is done. For achievement-oriented people, it's not very motivating to work on a task that's so clear-cut or so mundane that one can't really achieve.
- ◆ People high in achievement motivation generally prefer tasks that are moderately difficult rather than very difficult. This is because there's a downside to taking on very challenging tasks: Your chance of succeeding is low. And people high in achievement motivation want to succeed. So, when they have a choice, people high in achievement motivation prefer tasks that are at the upper edge of their level of ability but that they feel reasonably certain that they will accomplish—tasks that are challenging but doable.
- ◆ People who are motivated to achieve are, in fact, more successful than those who are less motivated to achieve. They do better in school, and they do better in jobs in which how hard they work contributes to success. They tend to attain higher status in their professions, and they tend to earn more money. But they don't do better in positions in which they can't achieve more by working harder. Achievement motivation is beneficial only when a person's success is based on effort.

About 40% of the variability that we see in how achievement-oriented different people are has some sort of genetic basis. Achievement motivation is also affected by how children are raised. Parenting styles that stress self-control and that emphasize waiting for rewards predict achievement motivation; achievement motivation is also predicted by the degree to which parents emphasize effort rather than ability when they praise and criticize their children.



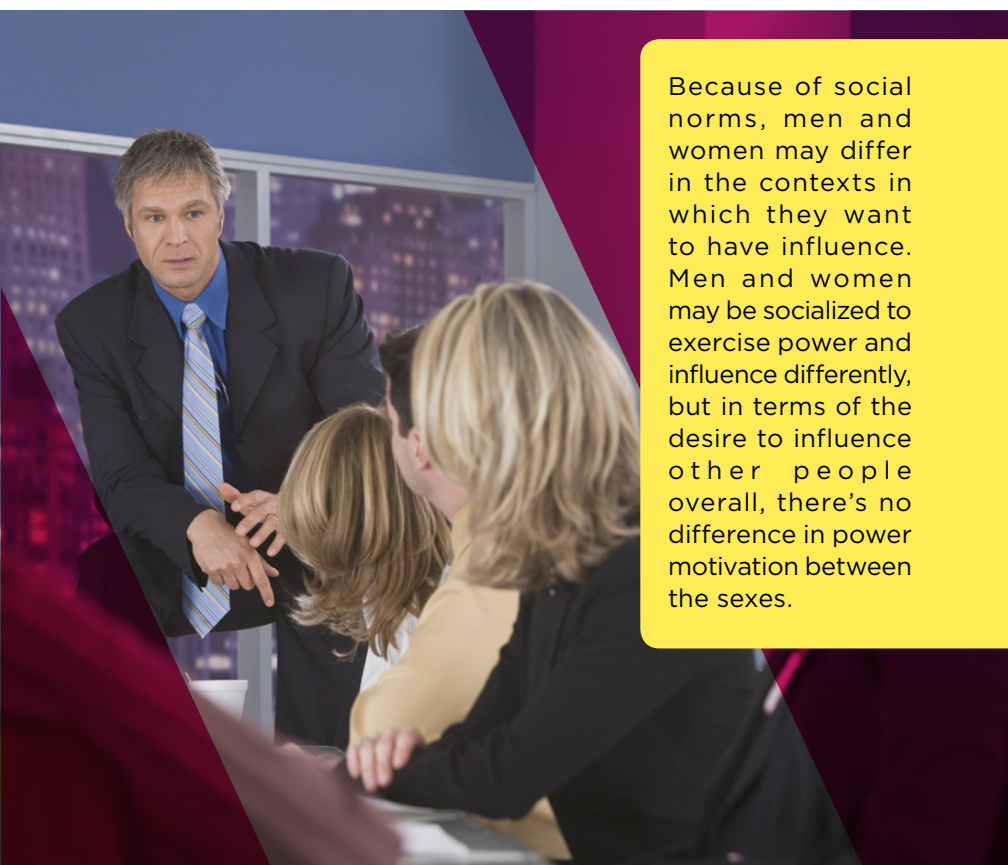
- ◆ Having at least a certain amount of achievement motivation has benefits for people, but there are downsides to being excessively achievement-oriented. In the 1950s, 2 cardiologists who were studying the personality characteristics of people with heart disease found that a high percentage of their heart patients displayed a particular sort of hard-driving, achievement-oriented personality called type A, which involves being aggressively involved in a chronic, incessant struggle to achieve more and more in less and less time. The trick is figuring out how to be high in achievement motivation without falling off the cliff into being type A.

POWER MOTIVATION

- ◆ Power motivation involves the degree to which people are motivated to influence and control other people. Although domineering, controlling people are certainly high in power motivation, some people who are high in power motivation exercise their influence in less dominant ways. So, don't think of power motivation as simply dominance. The central question concerns how much a person likes to influence or control the actions of other people.
- ◆ You can identify people who are high in power motivation by the paths they take in life. For example, they belong to more groups and organizations (because joining groups offers opportunities to influence other people), and they hold more offices in those organizations. And even when they are not in a formal position of authority, other group members rate people who are higher in power motivation as having higher status and influence in the group.
- ◆ Power-motivated people tend to end up in careers in which they are in charge of things. They're more likely to be managers, CEOs, and school principals. They're also more likely to be school teachers and members of the clergy because those jobs also involve influencing other people.
- ◆ When they're in a position of power, people high in power motivation tend to use a more directive style of leadership. They like to decide what the group should do and then convince everybody to go along.

There are other effective leadership styles that involve a more inclusive and democratic approach, but people who are high in power motivation want to call the shots.

- ◆ Interestingly, this more directive leadership style is not necessarily more effective. When a leader is high in power motivation, fewer ideas get discussed and other group members feel less free to offer suggestions and concerns. So, leaders high in power motivation sometimes cut themselves off from input from other people and end up being less effective than if they had exerted less influence over group decisions.
- ◆ For most characteristics—such as personality, values, and attitudes—people tend to prefer others who are somewhat similar to them. But this preference for similarity does not generally apply to people high in power motivation.

A photograph of a man in a dark suit, blue shirt, and striped tie, leaning over a table and pointing at a document. He is looking towards two women who are seated at the table, looking down at the document. The background shows a city skyline at night through a window. The image is partially obscured by a large yellow speech bubble on the right side.

Because of social norms, men and women may differ in the contexts in which they want to have influence. Men and women may be socialized to exercise power and influence differently, but in terms of the desire to influence other people overall, there's no difference in power motivation between the sexes.

- ◆ People who are high in power motivation tend to have friends who are lower in power motivation than they are. In marriages, power-motivated men have a preference for partners who are less motivated by power than they are. There's also evidence that employers who are high in power motivation prefer employees who are lower.

Suggested Reading

Reiss, "The Multifaceted Nature of Intrinsic Motivation."


Winter, "Things I've Learned about Personality from Studying Political Leaders at a Distance."

Questions to Consider

1. The 3 motives discussed in this lecture—affiliation motivation, achievement motivation, and power motivation—have received the greatest attention from personality researchers partly because affiliating with other people, striving for accomplishment and success, and influencing other people are central aspects of everyday life. In what way has your standing on motives for affiliation, achievement, and power—whether you are low, moderate, or high on each motive—influenced your own life?
2. Although motives for affiliation, achievement, and power are pervasive and important, people are also motivated by many other things. What are 2 other things that motivate what you do beyond motives for affiliation, achievement, and power?

INTRAPERSONAL MOTIVES

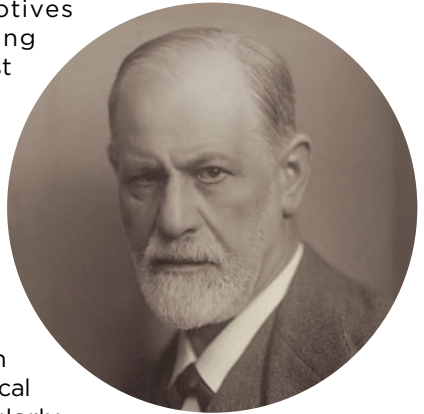
LECTURE 5



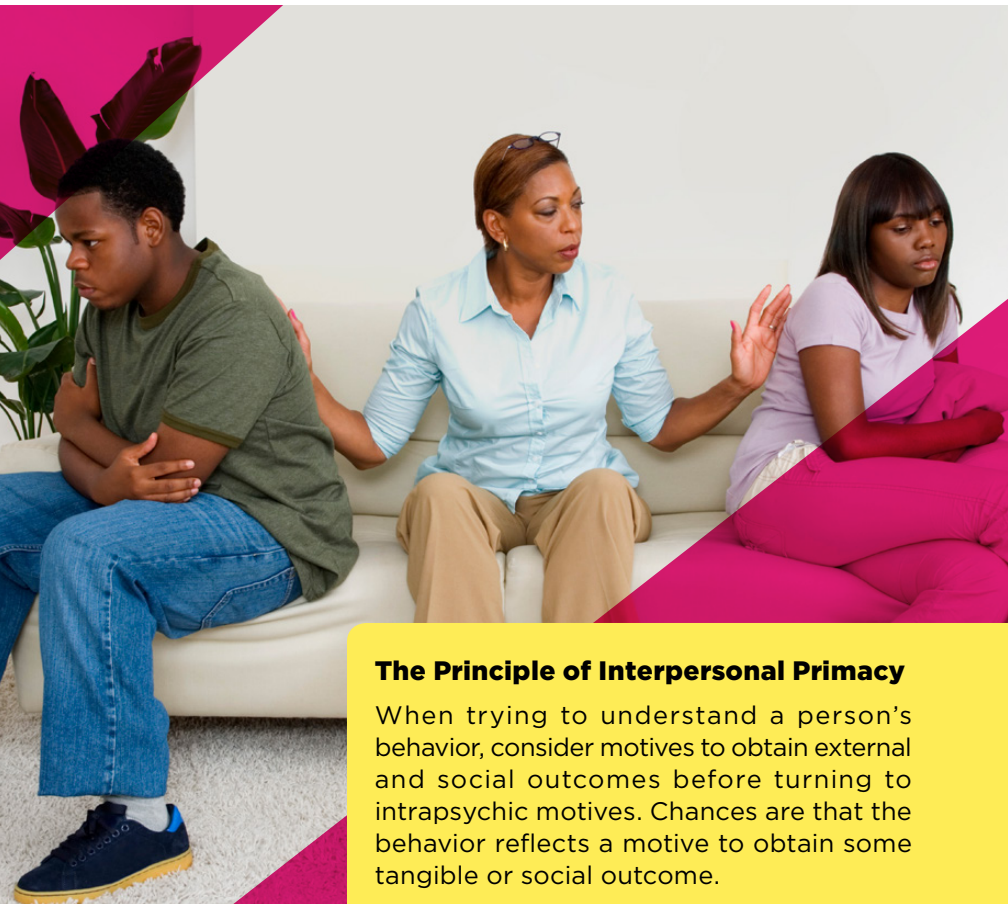
Some motives can be fulfilled only if people obtain the outcome or event that they're motivated to get, but a different set of motives is focused on maintaining certain psychological states. Instead of trying to obtain some external outcome, such as acceptance or approval, these motives focus on maintaining a desired psychological state inside the person, such as internal consistency, self-esteem, or authenticity—all of which will be addressed in this lecture. Because these motives involve the management of one's thoughts or emotions, or other psychological states, they are called intrapsychic motives (where "intrapsychic" means "within the mind"), or intrapersonal motives (motives that involve states within the person).

FREUD'S IDEAS ABOUT MOTIVATION

- ◆ The idea that intrapsychic motives are important in understanding personality and behavior was first championed by Sigmund Freud. In fact, Freud's entire theory of personality involves the ways in which people manage their intrapsychic motives, with a focus on processes that operate outside of conscious awareness.
- ◆ Freud was a physician, with a specialty in neurology. In his medical practice, Freud became particularly interested in patients who came in with physical problems that didn't seem to have any physical or medical basis. He had the insight that these disorders might have a psychological cause—that stress or trauma or some other psychological issue might be creating a physical problem. At the time, this was a novel and very important insight.
- ◆ Over the course of his career, Freud developed a theory of personality, known as psychoanalytic theory, to explain these symptoms, and he also developed a method of psychotherapy, called psychoanalysis, to try to treat them. Over time, psychoanalytic theory broadened to encompass much more than just the psychological causes of certain medical problems.
- ◆ The crux of Freud's theory was that personality can be understood as a person's way of dealing with basic instincts, especially instincts related to sex and aggression. Being a species of animal that lives in civilized society, we humans have many of the same urges and inclinations as other animals, but we are expected to restrain our animalistic urges and behave in a civilized fashion. In Freud's thinking, that conflict was a primary source of people's psychological problems.



- ◆ Most behavioral scientists don't put much stock in the details of Freud's theory, particularly the idea that sex and aggression lie at the root of personality. But some of them do resonate to the idea that a good deal of behavior may arise from intrapsychic processes that are trying to satisfy basic motives of one kind or another.
- ◆ And just as Freud explained behavior in terms of people's efforts to manage intrapsychic conflicts involving motives for sex and aggression, many researchers today explain behavior in terms of people's efforts to satisfy a variety of other intrapsychic motives.



The Principle of Interpersonal Primacy

When trying to understand a person's behavior, consider motives to obtain external and social outcomes before turning to intrapsychic motives. Chances are that the behavior reflects a motive to obtain some tangible or social outcome.

CONSISTENCY

- ◆ Several perspectives in psychology are based on the idea that people are motivated to maintain internal, psychological consistency—consistency among their various beliefs, between their attitudes and behavior, and between their views of themselves and other people's views of them.
- ◆ This is an intrapsychic motive in the sense that the motive is fulfilled as long as people can maintain consistency in their own mind. Nothing in particular has to happen in the outside world for the motive for psychological consistency to be fulfilled.
- ◆ One early theory of this sort was proposed by Prescott Lecky, who suggested that people possess a motive that he called striving for unity, by which he meant unity or consistency among people's thoughts about themselves. According to Lecky, this motive leads people to process information about themselves in a way that maintains internal consistency.
- ◆ For example, people tend to resist, or distort, or maybe even deny information that is inconsistent with their ideas about themselves. And they do this to maintain psychological unity in their self-image. Essentially, Lecky said that we have a motive to maintain an internally consistent personality, and our behavior often reflects efforts to maintain that consistency.
- ◆ A similar idea appears in several other theories, including cognitive dissonance theory, which proposes that people have a motive to maintain consistency among their thoughts, and self-verification theory, which proposes that people are motivated to maintain their current views of themselves.
- ◆ Each of these theories involves an intrapsychic motive to maintain a certain sort of psychological consistency, and each one suggests that we can understand people's behavior and personality by considering this internal motive. But the idea that we have a basic intrapsychic motive to be internally consistent in our own mind has a few problems.

- ◆ Basic motives—such as those to influence other people and be accepted—almost certainly evolved as part of human nature because they provided some advantage to survival and reproduction throughout human evolution. A motive for consistency is not likely to be a basic, evolved motive that underlies a great deal of human behavior. Yet people do seem to prefer consistency.
- ◆ It turns out that people are motivated to behave consistently because other people expect them to. We want other people to be predictable and consistent, and we don't like people who are inconsistent and hypocritical.



Natural selection would presumably favor whatever action is beneficial at the time, without regard for whether that action is consistent with what you did yesterday, your thoughts, or your self-image. Evolution would not have cared whether organisms felt consistent inside—only whether they took actions that increased the likelihood of survival and reproduction.

- ◆ So, when people are motivated to be consistent, it's probably not because of some intrapsychic motive to maintain internal consistency or to avoid cognitive dissonance. Rather, it's probably because being consistent helps them maintain good social relationships and obtain rewards from other people.
- ◆ Research has shown that people strive to be consistent because of the social costs of being viewed as inconsistent: Being consistent is rewarded, and being inconsistent is punished. There doesn't seem to be a motive in the human personality that inherently pushes us toward consistency for its own sake.

SELF-ESTEEM

- ◆ Many theorists have suggested that people are motivated to behave in ways that maintain and increase their self-esteem. People are motivated to evaluate themselves positively. In fact, some writers have suggested that people have a basic need for self-esteem that motivates a great deal of their behavior.
- ◆ People certainly do prefer to behave in ways that make them feel good about themselves, and people who are low in self-esteem have more problems than people who are high in self-esteem. People low in self-esteem tend to be less happy, are less satisfied with life, do worse in school and at work, and have more problems, such as alcohol and drug use. So, maybe—the argument goes—people with low self-esteem have these kinds of problems because their internal need for self-esteem isn't being met.
- ◆ Like the motive for psychological consistency, this motive for self-esteem has usually been conceptualized as intrapsychic; it operates entirely inside a person's head, more or less irrespective of their actual outcomes. According to the intrapsychic approach to self-esteem, people are seeking to evaluate themselves positively, so they try to behave in ways that make them feel good about themselves. And they satisfy this internal motive when their self-esteem reaches some particular level.
- ◆ There's not much evidence that simply feeling good about oneself is inherently beneficial or that a desire for self-esteem motivates behavior. Instead, research suggests that people do not have a fundamental motive to seek self-esteem.



- ◆ As with the consistency motives, the desire for self-esteem seems to reflect an interpersonal process—with motives that are fulfilled only when outside conditions change or when other people behave in certain ways—rather than an intrapsychic one.
- ◆ Instead of being motivated to pursue self-esteem for its own sake, people appear to be motivated to be accepted by other people—to do things that increase their value to other people so that they will be socially accepted and obtain a variety of social rewards.
- ◆ But because most of the things people do that lead others to accept them are also things that make them feel good about themselves, there's a natural link between being valued and accepted by other people and having higher self-esteem. So, when people are accepted, their self-esteem increases. But the underlying motive appears to be an interpersonal motive to be accepted rather than an intrapsychic motive just to evaluate oneself positively.
- ◆ Anything that's a basic motive has to motivate behaviors that provide beneficial outcomes for people. But unlike the motive to be valued and accepted, which has clear benefits across many areas of life, just feeling good about yourself doesn't really do much other than make you feel good.
- ◆ This reinterpretation of the self-esteem motive helps us understand differences between people who have low versus high self-esteem better than the notion that people are inherently motivated to have high self-esteem.
- ◆ People who are higher in self-esteem tend to be happier and more satisfied with life than people who have low self-esteem, and they tend to be lower in depression, anxiety, and guilt. But this isn't because people need self-esteem to be happy and emotionally well adjusted, as some psychologists have suggested. Instead, it's because people who feel that they are valued and accepted by other people and who have characteristics that promote social acceptance and good relationships are understandably happier than people who don't think that others value and accept them as much as they would like.



- ◆ In addition, people who are higher in self-esteem do better in many areas of life than those who are lower in self-esteem. High self-esteem people tend to do better in school, are more successful at work, accomplish more, and have more satisfying relationships with other people.
- ◆ These findings have led some psychologists to conclude that people are motivated to pursue self-esteem because it somehow promotes achievement and success. But the causal arrow actually points in the other direction. Performing well, being successful, and having good relationships make people feel more valued and accepted, so they feel better about themselves.



AUTHENTICITY

- ◆ Many theorists—especially those coming from the humanistic perspective in psychology, such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow—believe that people have an intrapsychic motive to be authentic. In other words, they suggest that people have a motive to act congruently with their values, beliefs, motives, and personality dispositions. They also assume that being authentic leads people to be more psychologically adjusted than being inauthentic.
- ◆ In this view, authenticity is an intrapsychic motive in the sense that it's not aimed at achieving any tangible outcomes from the outside world. The focal goal of the authenticity motive is simply to behave congruently with one's true self.
- ◆ Although authenticity involves behaving consistently with who you really are, it's quite different from cognitive consistency. Cognitive consistency approaches, such as dissonance theory, propose that people are motivated to maintain consistent thoughts, whether or not those thoughts are accurate or authentic. In fact, cognitive dissonance theory hypothesizes that the motive for consistency is sometimes fulfilled by changing one's thoughts or behavior in a way that's less authentic.
- ◆ Authenticity is a difficult motive to study because it's very hard to know what people are truly like, so it's hard to know when they are being themselves. Even so, just as we did for cognitive consistency and self-esteem, we can raise questions about whether people have an intrapsychic motive to be authentic.
- ◆ The source of the motive to be authentic seems to come from outside the person—from the social world—rather than from some inherent, intrapsychic need to be authentic for its own sake.
- ◆ To get along with each other, we all have to have a reasonably clear picture of who we're dealing with—what other people are like, what they believe, and what their intentions are. And other people want to have a reasonably clear sense about us, too. People who seem disingenuous or hypocritical or dishonest are problematic; we don't know what to expect from them, whether to trust them, or how to respond.

- ◆ Because everybody needs to understand everybody else as well as possible, all of us are under a good deal of social pressure to be ourselves, to be honest, and to let other people know who we are and where we stand. Of course, nobody is genuine all the time—and we shouldn't be. Sometimes being honest would be rude and hurtful. But overall, people are supposed to be who and what they claim to be. So, all of us want other people to be authentic, and when we catch them being ingenuous, things fall apart.



To understand motivational aspects of personality, it's important to distinguish between motives that focus on obtaining things from the external world (and particularly desired outcomes from other people) and motives that focus on maintaining certain desired psychological states—that is, we must distinguish between intrapsychic and interpersonal motives.

Interpersonal motives are more important in understanding how people behave and feel than intrapsychic motives are; most human behavior is motivated to obtain actual outcomes that affect the quality of life rather than only to manage our internal thoughts and feelings.

Suggested Reading

Leary, Raimi, Jongman-Sereno, and Diebels, “Distinguishing Intrapsychic from Interpersonal Motives.”

Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, “Cognitive Dissonance.”

Questions to Consider

1. The primary theme of this lecture is that both psychologists and the public often attribute behavior to intrapsychic (or intrapersonal) motives to maintain certain psychological states when, in fact, the behavior is motivated by a desire to obtain certain tangible or social outcomes. Setting aside the fact that Freud led psychologists to focus on intrapsychic processes, why else do you think that many people overemphasize intrapsychic motives while overlooking the possibility that people are often motivated to obtain tangible and interpersonal outcomes?
2. Think of someone who behaves in a way that puzzles you. Use the principle of interpersonal primacy by asking yourself a few questions: What was the person trying to get by behaving as he or she did? What outcome, reaction, or goal was he or she trying to obtain? If you can't identify any plausible interpersonal motives, are there any intrapsychic motives that might be at play?

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONALITY

LECTURE 6



A big part of who you are depends on the kinds of emotions that you experience as you walk through life. People differ from each other in which emotions they experience, how much of the time they're in an emotional state, how strong their feelings are, and how long their emotions last. In this lecture on the emotional aspects of personality, you will learn about the general tendencies to experience positive and negative emotions.

EMOTIONS

- ◆ We experience emotions all the time without thinking very much about what's actually going on or why we feel whatever we're feeling. Emotions are controlled by very primitive systems in the brain that evolved to help animals deal quickly and automatically with threats and opportunities that they confront.
- ◆ Some emotions assist animals in dealing with threats and challenges to their well-being, both physical threats and social threats. Other emotions guide animals' behaviors in ways that help them capitalize on opportunities or benefits, whether those are physical benefits, such as finding food, or social benefits, such as bonding with another member of the species.
- ◆ Emotions are sometimes in reaction to perceived threats or opportunities that, in fact, might not be real. So, an animal might be frightened by a sound that doesn't actually reflect a threat. And, in the case of human beings, we have many emotional reactions that don't reflect actual threats or opportunities because we can conjure up all kinds of things in our minds that evoke strong emotions.
- ◆ When you think of having an emotion, you probably think mostly of the feelings that you get when you're sad or happy or angry. And every emotion does have a particular feeling state associated with it. But researchers who study emotion view emotions as more complex than just the feelings that you have.
- ◆ Each emotion is associated with a motive or an impulse to behave in a particular way, often called the emotion's action tendency. For example, the action tendency for fear is to get away from whatever it is you're afraid of—to avoid it if it's not already there or to get away from it if it's physically present.
- ◆ We don't always act on the urge. In fact, we often try to consciously override an emotion's action tendency. But if you observe yourself closely, the urge is still there.



- ◆ Differences in people's emotional tendencies not only mean that they feel differently inside as they go through life, but also that they behave differently. Emotional differences among people are accompanied by behavioral differences because the emotions involve motives to react in particular ways.

AFFECTIVITY

- ◆ The most basic emotional differences among people reflect 2 traits that are called positive affectivity and negative affectivity, which are the general tendencies to experience positive and negative emotions.
- ◆ People naturally assume that if a person tends to experience positive emotions a lot, then he or she probably doesn't experience many negative emotions, and vice versa. But this is not true. In fact, the traits of positive affectivity and negative affectivity are virtually unrelated to each other. How much you feel good is not inversely related to how much you feel bad. Positive affectivity and negative affectivity are relatively independent traits.
- ◆ Why wouldn't the tendency to experience positive and negative emotions be inversely related to each other? Most people reason that if people aren't in a positive state, then they must be in a negative state. And, if that's true, then the more you feel good, the less you should feel bad. But, in fact, most of the time we aren't in any emotional state—we aren't feeling anything, good or bad. Feeling more positive doesn't necessarily mean feeling less negative.
- ◆ In addition, people often assume that we have one big brain system that controls all of our emotions, positive and negative. But positive and negative emotions are, to an extent, managed by different parts of the brain, and they operate somewhat separately.
- ◆ You have certainly had times in which you experienced both positive and negative emotions at the same time. You can be both happy and sad about something because it has both positive and negative consequences. You might eagerly want something to happen (a positive emotion) but also be anxious about it (a negative emotion). So, the degree to which people experience positive emotions isn't very strongly related to the degree to which they experience negative emotions.

NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY

- ◆ People who are high in negative affectivity tend to experience more unpleasant emotional states than people who are low in negative affectivity. Negative affectivity can be viewed as the emotional component of the broader trait of neuroticism, which involves other features, such as a sense of vulnerability, pessimism, and self-consciousness that are not part of the conceptualization of negative affectivity.
- ◆ People who are high in negative affectivity not only experience negative emotions more often, but their emotional reactions are also stronger. So, upsetting events have a greater impact on people who are high in negative affectivity.
- ◆ Furthermore, the pervasive negative affect of people high in negative affectivity taints their judgments of other things. People high in negative affectivity tend to be less happy with their jobs, their friends, and even their marriages. They report less satisfaction with their lives overall than people who are lower in negative affectivity.



One study found that scores on a measure of negative affectivity strongly predicted ratings of marriage satisfaction. This suggests that a good chunk of unhappiness in marriage may be traceable to people's personalities rather than to anything in particular that's happening in the relationship.

- ◆ Negative affectivity is a pretty stable trait, even over long periods of time. One study showed that people who were high in negative affectivity as young adults were likely to remain high on the characteristic 20 years later. Even more striking, negative affectivity measured in adolescence predicted how satisfied people were with their jobs more than 30 years later.
- ◆ Negative affectivity has a strong genetic basis. Presumably, some people's brains are simply wired in a way that makes negative emotions more likely.
- ◆ Wherever you fall on negative affectivity—low, medium, or high—it's not going to change a great deal without some work on your part. It can change, but it takes intentional effort.

POSITIVE AFFECTIVITY

- ◆ People high in positive affectivity are upbeat, cheerful, and optimistic, and they tend to get excited and enthused more easily than people who are low in positive affectivity. They not only feel good in general, but they also tend to experience specific positive emotions—such as happiness, joy, pride, and inspiration—more often than people low in positive affectivity do.
- ◆ Just as people high in negative affectivity are less satisfied with their marriages and jobs, people higher in positive affectivity are more satisfied with most aspects of their lives. People who are higher in positive affectivity cope better with the problems they confront in life. They think about problems in more optimistic and problem-solving kinds of ways. But they also behave proactively in ways that promote positive emotions even when things are going well.



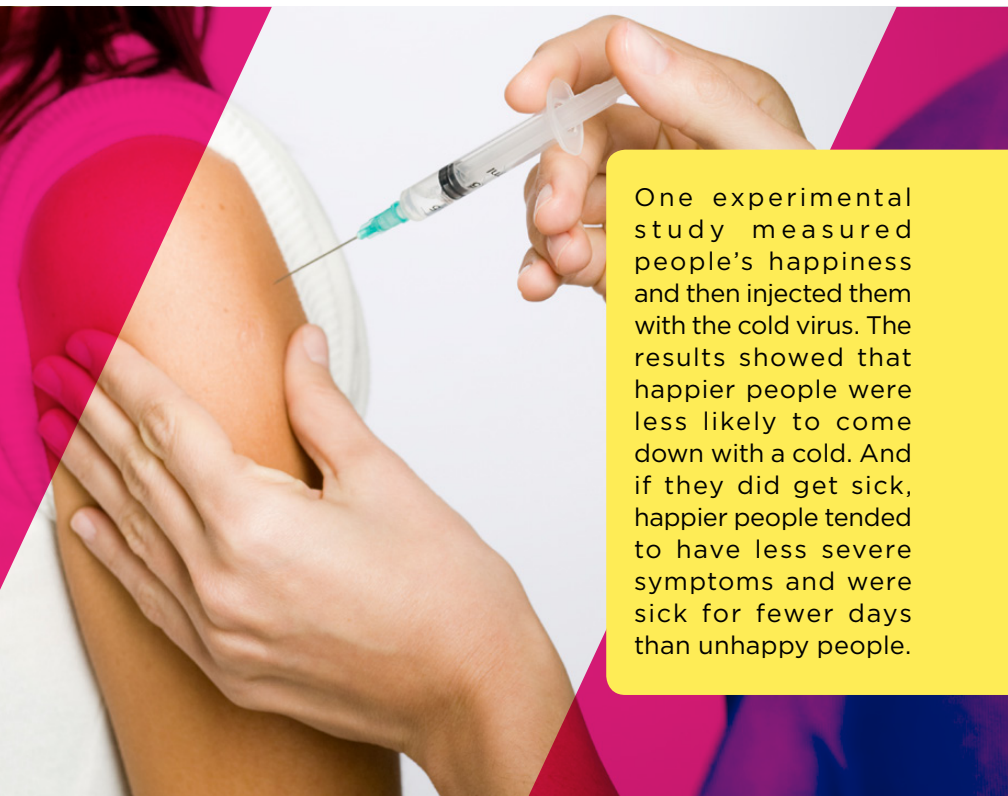


People high in positive affectivity tend to savor their positive emotions by paying conscious attention to pleasurable experiences. By doing so, they enhance and prolong their good feelings even in rather ordinary situations.

HAPPINESS

- ◆ In everyday life, people often think about their emotional lives in terms of how happy they are. People often use the term “happy” in 2 different ways: to refer to a momentary emotional experience (such as when you get the job you wanted) or to refer to something like a personal characteristic (some people are generally happier overall than other people are).
- ◆ Studies show that the degree to which people are happy overall is a function of 3 things:
 1. Dispositionally happy people score higher in positive affectivity than less happy people do. They experience positive emotions more often than people who are less happy, but they don't just experience more happiness. They have more of all positive emotions, such as gratitude, amusement, hope, joy, contentment, and pride.
 2. Happy people experience fewer negative emotions; they're lower in negative affectivity.
 3. Happy people think that their life is going well; they're satisfied and content with their life overall.
- ◆ Given that people's positive and negative emotions strongly depend on aspects of their personalities—and that their satisfaction with life is also related to their general tendencies to experience positive and negative affect—then their overall happiness is partly a function of their personality as well.
- ◆ This isn't how most people think about happiness. Most of us assume that our happiness depends on what happens to us in life and how our lives are going. And, in part, that's true. But a sizable portion of happiness, and unhappiness, is due to personality factors—to people's characteristic ways of responding emotionally and evaluating what happens to them.
- ◆ And it's not just positive and negative affectivity. Other traits also play a role. People high in extraversion tend to be happier than average. Highly agreeable people are also happier than less agreeable people, and people high in conscientiousness tend to be happier than less conscientious people. We have many personality dispositions that combine to influence how happy we tend to be, regardless of how our life is going at the moment.

- ◆ We've known for many years that negative emotions—such as anger, stress, depression, and loneliness—are bad for people's health, but researchers have discovered more recently that positive affectivity and happiness also contribute to good health.
- ◆ For example, happier people show a higher resistance to infectious illnesses and are less likely to develop coronary heart disease. Older adults who are higher in positive affectivity tend to live longer than older people who score lower in positive affectivity. The evidence for a link between unhappiness and cancer is mixed; some studies show a connection, but others don't.
- ◆ If we measure people's happiness and health at the same time, finding a relationship between happiness and health could reflect the fact that being healthy makes people happier, which is true but not very interesting. But controlled laboratory experiments and longitudinal studies that span across many years have provided compelling evidence that happiness actually causes people to be healthier.



One experimental study measured people's happiness and then injected them with the cold virus. The results showed that happier people were less likely to come down with a cold. And if they did get sick, happier people tended to have less severe symptoms and were sick for fewer days than unhappy people.

THE DISPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE MEASURE

- ◆ The Dispositional Attitude Measure assesses people's general tendency to like versus dislike various stimuli. Normally, psychologists measure people's attitudes toward particular things, such as capital punishment or cats. But researchers have recently discovered that people have a tendency to have attitudes for or against things in general.
- ◆ The tendency to have favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward many things is related to positive and negative affectivity. People who are lower in negative affectivity and higher in positive affectivity tend to have more favorable attitudes toward just about everything.
- ◆ This tendency to have favorable versus unfavorable attitudes also correlates with the trait of openness. People who score higher in openness have more positive attitudes toward most things than people who are lower in openness.
- ◆ When we like or dislike something, we have the sense that our reaction is based solely on the characteristics of whatever it is that we like or dislike. But our personality tendency to be a general liker or disliker also plays a role.
- ◆ Your dispositional attitude also has behavioral consequences. People who have more positive attitudes—who like more things—engage in more different activities in a given week than people who have less favorable attitudes. They don't spend more time doing things overall; they just spread their time across more different activities, presumably because they like more things.
- ◆ As a result, people with a positive dispositional attitude may end up somewhat more skilled at more different tasks because they try more activities. In contrast, people with a less positive dispositional attitude like fewer things, so they may engage in fewer activities. But when they find an activity they like, they invest more time in that particular activity and develop deeper knowledge and more skill in that activity compared to people who spread their interests around more.



Different experts agree that somewhere between 30% and 50% of the variability in happiness across people is due to people's personality characteristics rather than to the objective quality of their lives.

Suggested Reading

Friedman, "The Perks of Feeling So-So."

Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness*.

Questions to Consider

1. People naturally like experiencing pleasant emotions (such as happiness, excitement, and joy) and dislike experiencing negative emotions (such as fear, sadness, and guilt). In fact, most of us probably wish that we would never have a negative emotion again. If you could stop having negative emotions, would you? Or would the failure to experience negative emotions, although undoubtedly more pleasant, create a new set of problems?
2. This lecture noted that emotional reactions are accompanied action tendencies—motives or urges to behave in particular ways. Do you see links between the emotions that you experience and how you tend to behave when you experience those emotions?

DIFFERENCES IN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

LECTURE 7

People differ in their general tendencies to experience positive and negative emotions. In this lecture, you will learn about the fact that, in addition to the general tendency to feel good and bad, people also differ in the degree to which they experience specific emotions. These tendencies to experience particular emotions are an important part of personality. To understand why certain people experience particular emotions more than other people do, we have to know something about the causes of each specific emotion, and then we need to identify characteristics that predispose certain people to respond more frequently or intensely to those causes.



SOCIAL ANXIETY AND EMBARRASSABILITY

- ◆ Anxiety in general is caused by the appraisal that a threat of some kind may lie in your future. If the threat is right here, right now, we usually call the reaction fear, but there's not much difference between reactions to a future threat (which we call anxiety) and a current threat (which we call fear).

Cognitive Appraisal Theory

All emotions are fundamentally responses to perceived threats and opportunities. If that's true, then specific emotions must be about specific kinds of threats or opportunities.

The most widely accepted theory of emotion in psychology suggests that each emotion is evoked by a particular perception or interpretation—what psychologists call a cognitive appraisal.

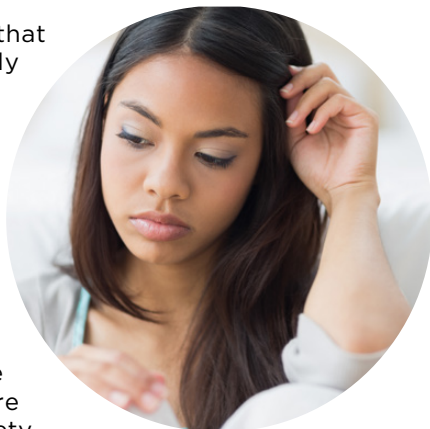
As we go through each day, we are constantly appraising, or assessing, the implications of the events we experience for our personal concerns. According to cognitive appraisal theory, the emotion that you experience depends on how you cognitively appraise the situation—how you assess its implications for you.

Thinking of emotions as the result of particular cognitive appraisals helps explain why people's emotional experiences differ.

- ◆ In any case, some people are obviously more anxious than others. Some people feel anxious a great deal of the time, in many different situations, whereas other people experience anxiety only rarely. This general tendency to experience anxiety is strongly related to neuroticism, as is the tendency to experience most negative emotions.
- ◆ Everyone occasionally feels awkward and anxious in certain kinds of social encounters, such as when meeting new people or performing in front of an audience. But some people experience social anxiety more often and intensely than other people do. This personality difference has important implications for people's lives.

- ◆ Fundamentally, social anxiety arises from a concern about how one is being perceived and evaluated by other people. As long as people think that they will make the kind of impression they would like to make—and, thus, be evaluated as they would like to be—they feel reasonably relaxed. But when they want others to see them in some desired way—as competent or attractive, for example—and don't think they're going to be seen that way, they experience social anxiety.

- ◆ The personal characteristics that make some people especially prone to social anxiety fall into 2 categories. One category involves attributes that lead people to be highly concerned with other people's impressions and evaluations of them. Everybody is concerned with what other people think of them from time to time, but people who are unusually motivated to make desired impressions are more likely to experience social anxiety.



- ◆ People who are simply more attuned to how they are coming across to other people worry more about how others view them. People differ in how much they think about how they're coming across to others. This personality characteristic is called public self-consciousness. The more that you think about your public image—the higher you are in public self-consciousness—the more likely you are to be socially anxious.
- ◆ People who are not only aware of being perceived and evaluated, but who are also worried about others evaluating them unfavorably—people who are high in fear of negative evaluation—are even more likely to be high in social anxiety. Given that social anxiety arises from a concern with others' impressions and evaluations, people who are more attuned to and concerned about their impressions will experience social anxiety more often.

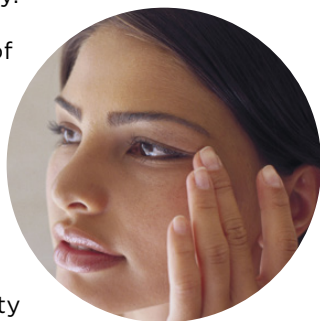


- ◆ The second category of characteristics that can make people anxious in social situations involves the degree to which they think they can make the kinds of impressions on others that they would like to make. People's judgments of their own social skills predict their tendency to be socially anxious. If you think that you have really good social skills that allow you to make desired impressions wherever you are, you probably won't be prone to social anxiety. But if you question your social skills, you're more likely to doubt that you'll make the impressions you want to make, and you'll be more likely to experience social anxiety.

- ◆ People with lower self-esteem also tend to be higher in social anxiety for much the same reason. People who are higher in self-esteem think that they have more socially valued characteristics and that they are more accepted by other people, so they assume that they make better impressions than low-self-esteem people do and, on average, feel less socially anxious.

- ◆ A closely related characteristic to social anxiety is embarrassability, which is how easily people get embarrassed. Everybody gets embarrassed now and then—but how often and how easily do you get embarrassed? It takes a lot to embarrass some people, whereas other people get embarrassed very easily.

- ◆ This difference matters, because fear of embarrassment often prevents people from trying new things or taking social risks. People who are higher in embarrassability are more afraid of doing things in which they might be embarrassed. It can put quite a constraint on people's behavior.



- ◆ Just as with social anxiety, embarrassability is higher among people who are afraid of being evaluated negatively. So, people who are more motivated by a desire for social approval tend to become embarrassed more easily, as do those who are more motivated to avoid social rejection.

ANGER AND HOSTILITY

- ◆ Some people have a hair trigger as far as anger is concerned; it doesn't take much to set them off. Other people are very slow to get angry, and as with most traits, most people fall somewhere in the middle.
- ◆ Researchers use the terms “hostility” and sometimes “anger-proneness” to refer to individual differences in the tendency to become angry. People who are high in hostility differ from those who are low in hostility on 2 interrelated reactions.
- ◆ Beyond simply becoming angry more often, hostile people also display a pattern of hostile thoughts and perceptions. People who are high in hostility tend to interpret other people's behavior as potentially hostile or threatening even when it's not.
- ◆ In addition, people who are high in hostility aren't just angrier, but they also have more aggressive urges. Some hostile people—probably those with low self-control—actually behave more aggressively. But even when they control their aggressive behaviors, hostile people often feel the urge to aggress. Fortunately, they don't always act on that urge, but hostile people often have to fight the action tendency that accompanies their anger.
- ◆ Not surprisingly, people who are high in hostility have more negative interactions with other people than less hostile people do. Hostility poses a particularly serious problem in close relationships. People who are higher in hostility have more conflicts with their romantic partners. Their negativity and irritability lead other people to react negatively, so they create an upward spiral of angry reactions in their partners and other people.
- ◆ Not only do they have more conflicts with other people, but their conflicts are more likely to spill over to new situations. They tend to harbor grudges and carry resentment, so once they are mad about one thing, situations can escalate. Studies of newlyweds show that marriage satisfaction declines more rapidly among people who have hostile partners.

- ◆ Hostility also contributes to people's health problems. Most notably, dispositional hostility is associated with high blood pressure and the risk of coronary heart disease. Not only are hostile people more likely to get heart disease, but they live a shorter amount of time after they're initially diagnosed.



Because their hostility tends to undermine the quality of their relationships and even drive people away, hostile people forfeit the support and goodwill that people normally get from their close relationships. Given that happy, supportive relationships lower stress and promote better physical health, hostile people can lose out on things that might normally buffer them against the effects of stress.

GUILT AND SHAME

- ◆ In everyday language, people often use the words “guilt” and “shame” interchangeably, but they are actually distinct emotions. And people who tend to experience a lot of guilt are somewhat different, in terms of their personality, from people who tend to experience shame.
- ◆ Guilt and shame both involve reactions to engaging in some kind of undesirable or bad behavior. The difference between them involves how people think about what they did. People feel guilty about behaving in a certain way, but they feel ashamed of themselves as a person for what they did. So, the same behavior can elicit either guilt or shame depending on how the person appraises it.
- ◆ Whether people focus on their bad behavior or on their bad self makes a big difference in how people react when they do bad things. When people feel guilty, their focus is on the behavior and undoing the harm that they caused. When people are ashamed, they focus on themselves and how awful they are instead of trying to fix things.
- ◆ We can see the difference between guilt and shame when we look at personality differences between people who tend to experience guilt—guilt-prone people—and people who tend to experience shame, or shame-prone people.
- ◆ Although some of the same characteristics that lead people to be prone to feeling guilty also lead people to feel ashamed, studies have shown that guilt-proneness and shame-proneness are sufficiently different to be considered 2 different personality characteristics. They are separate traits, and people can score low to high on each one.
- ◆ One thing that distinguishes guilt-prone from shame-prone people is their capacity for empathy—the ability to take other people’s perspectives and to feel bad when other people suffer. People who tend to feel guilty are higher in empathy than those who don’t feel guilty very much, whereas there’s no relationship between shame-proneness and how empathic people are.

- ◆ Guilt-prone people also tend to take greater responsibility for their actions. Shame-prone people show a paradoxical pattern in which behaving badly leads them to focus on what a bad and worthless person they are, yet they tend to become angry and blame other people as well. This might be a way for shame-prone people to deal with their negative views of themselves.
- ◆ Research has shown that people who are highly prone to guilt are less likely to engage in immoral and illegal actions than those who are less guilt-prone. But the tendency to experience shame is not related to more moral behavior: Shame-prone people don't behave any better than people who are not shame-prone.
- ◆ The tendency to experience shame is also associated with a number of undesirable psychological symptoms. Shame-prone people tend to have lower self-esteem, be more depressed and anxious, and experience more stress. The tendency to experience guilt isn't consistently linked with these kinds of problems. So, being high in guilt-proneness is less problematic than being high in shame-proneness.



AFFECT INTENSITY

- ◆ Two people may experience the same emotions equally often, but one person's emotional reactions are consistently stronger than the other person's are. This personality variable, called affect intensity, was discovered in the 1980s, when research showed that people who had the strongest positive moods on good days over several months also had the strongest negative moods on bad days.
- ◆ Emotions depend on how people think about things, and this is also true of how intensely people experience their emotions. People who are higher in affective intensity tend to personalize and generalize the things they experience more than people low in affect intensity do.
- ◆ One intriguing difference between people who are low and high in affect intensity involves their career choices: Some careers seem to attract people with higher versus lower affect intensity. For example, graduate students who are going into art score significantly higher in affect intensity than those going into science careers before they start graduate school.



- ◆ Affect intensity also has implications for how people react to advertisements, many of which use emotional appeals to get you to buy a product or donate to a cause. People who are higher in affect intensity are more responsive to advertisements that evoke good or bad emotions than people who are lower in affect intensity.
- ◆ Research shows that there's no relationship between affect intensity and happiness overall—probably because happiness reflects the proportion of positive and negative emotions that a person experiences over time. Happy people experience a higher ratio of positive to negative emotions than unhappy people do.

Suggested Reading

Bartz, "Sense and Sensitivity."

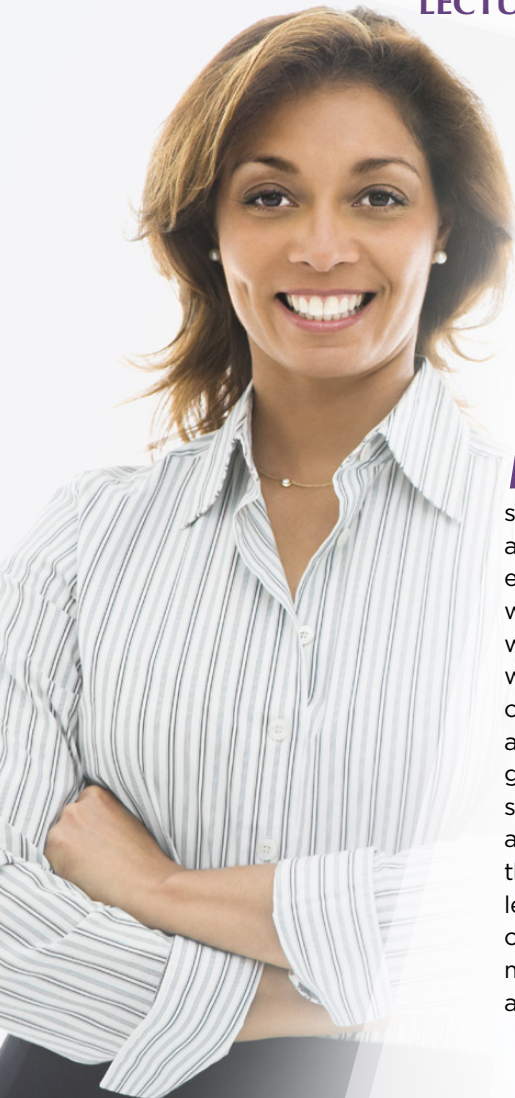
Cohen, Panter, and Turan, "Guilt Proneness and Moral Character."

Questions to Consider

1. Although they are subjectively unpleasant, social anxiety and embarrassment (as well as the mere possibility of embarrassment) are fundamentally beneficial. What role do these emotions play in protecting people's well-being?
2. Although both guilt and shame are reactions to undesirable behaviors, guilt seems to be a more beneficial emotion than shame. In what ways is it better to feel guilty rather than ashamed when you have done something bad? What do you think parents can do to guide their children to feel guilty rather than ashamed of their misbehaviors?

VALUES AND MORAL CHARACTER

LECTURE 8

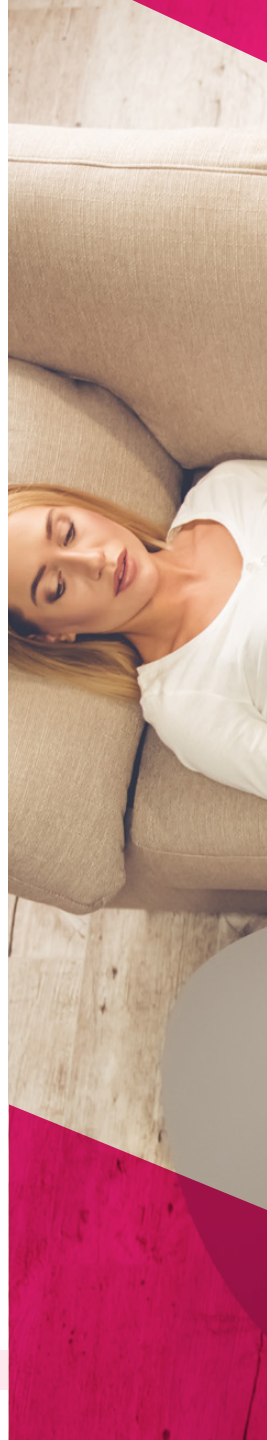



Moral character might not seem to be a very concrete or scientific construct, but it just comes down to aspects of personality that involve ethical and moral dimensions. When we talk about somebody's character, we're talking about the degree to which they tend to behave in ethical or unethical ways. For most personality traits, the question of moral goodness or badness doesn't make sense. But certain characteristics are almost universally judged in terms of their ethical or moral goodness. This lecture will examine moral aspects of personality from 4 angles: values, moral foundations, virtues, and character strengths.

STUDYING MORAL CHARACTER

- ◆ Early in the history of psychology, research on moral character was pretty common. But in the 1940s, research on the moral aspects of personality fell out of favor. The main reason why researchers lost interest in character was that it was difficult to find evidence of it in research; researchers had trouble demonstrating that people show consistent patterns of good or bad behavior.
- ◆ The idea of character suggests that some people are consistently more ethical or moral than other people are—that they do the right thing pretty consistently. But early research didn't support that idea.
- ◆ The studies that first raised this problem were conducted in the 1920s by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May, who put elementary school children in situations in which they would be tempted to lie, or cheat, or do other dishonest things to study the differences between children who behaved in ethical versus unethical ways.
- ◆ But across many studies, they found little evidence that some children were consistently honest whereas other children were consistently dishonest. There wasn't much evidence of the kinds of consistency that you would expect if honesty was something like a personality trait. So, Hartshorne and May concluded that whether people behave honestly or dishonestly has more to do with the particular situations they're in rather than with their personality.
- ◆ This was a very surprising finding, and it flies in the face of our everyday observations. We all know—or think we know—some people who lie and cheat more than most people, and we all know people who seem to be particularly ethical and upstanding. Of course, the liars and cheaters don't lie and cheat all the time, and the upstanding people might sometimes lie or cheat. But, on average, we have the sense that some people are generally more ethical than other people are.
- ◆ But despite our everyday observations, these findings discouraged researchers from trying to study moral character, and psychologists more or less abandoned research on character for many years. If character traits don't exist—or if they exert only a very weak effect on behavior—then there's not much sense studying them.

- ◆ But after a while, researchers realized a few things about character traits. The first is that most traits manifest only in specific situations; it's often misleading to think of a particular personality trait as operating across all situations.
- ◆ The problem with Hartshorne and May's results was not that the schoolchildren didn't show any consistency in their moral behaviors; it was that Hartshorne and May were looking for consistency across many different kinds of behaviors and situations, and that's not the way many traits work.
- ◆ For any character trait we might consider—for example, honesty—a person might be consistently honest with certain people, or in certain situations, but not with others. In Hartshorne and May's research, a child might cheat on tests but not lie to his parents or not cheat while playing games with his friends. Overall, it would look like he was inconsistent, but his honesty and dishonesty are situation-specific.
- ◆ Of course, some people are honest or dishonest in a larger number of situations than other people are. The people whom we regard as highly honest are those who are ethical in a greater variety of situations. But the consistency is not across different kinds of ethical behaviors; it's across certain situations for each of several behaviors.
- ◆ Once researchers realized that character is, to some extent, consistent across certain situations, they started taking an interest again. And the research on character shows just what research on other personality traits shows: People's behavior changes across the situations they are in and the roles they play, but people do show consistency within those situations and roles.



A high-angle photograph of a psychologist sitting on a light-colored wooden floor, facing a person lying on a beige sofa. The psychologist, wearing a white shirt and dark pants, is holding a clipboard and a pen, appearing to be conducting an interview or assessment. The person on the sofa is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and white sneakers, and is lying down with their hands resting on their lap. A small round table next to the sofa holds a glass of water and a book. The background is a solid magenta wall.

Psychologists often describe their findings in terms of the amount of variability in some behavior that's due to some other variable or set of variables. As we think about all of the variability that we see in people's ethical and unethical behaviors, about 30% to 40% of the variability that we observe in virtuous feelings and ethical behaviors is related to stable aspects of personality.

VALUES

- ◆ Values are the things that people think are most important across the various areas of their lives. Many taxonomies of values have been developed, but the field has now gravitated to a system of 10 basic values that were identified through the work of Shalom Schwartz:
 1. Power
 2. Security (involves the value that people place not only on safety and security but also on stability, harmony, and order—in their own lives, in their relationships with other people, and in society at large)
 3. Self-direction (being able to make your own decisions)
 4. Hedonism
 5. Tradition (having respect for the customs and ideas of your culture)
 6. Achievement
 7. Conformity (involves not doing things that might violate social norms or upset other people)
 8. Stimulation, or excitement
 9. Benevolence (taking care of people you know personally)
 10. Universalism (involves protecting the welfare of all people, whether you know them or not, as well as caring for animals and nature)
- ◆ These 10 values seem to be universal in the sense that you can find people in every culture who endorse them to varying degrees. These 10 basic values encompass most other moral values that we might think of, such as honesty, kindness, loyalty, and generosity.
- ◆ Every person's values are arranged in a hierarchy of importance, so 2 different people might make different decisions in exactly the same situation because their values are in a different order.

- ◆ A meta-analysis of 60 studies conducted in 13 different countries looked at the relationships between the 10 basic values and the big five personality traits. We can dispense with neuroticism because none of the 10 universal values are related to people's tendency to experience negative emotions.
- ◆ Extraversion correlated with 4 of the 10 values. People who are high in extraversion value stimulation and excitement more than people who are low in extraversion. Extraverts also score higher on values that relate to having power, status, and prestige, and they also value achievement more than introverts do. Extraverted people also value hedonism a little more than less extraverted people do.
- ◆ The trait of agreeableness relates to 2 values, both of which involve a concern for other people: benevolence and universalism. People who are higher in agreeableness value both benevolence and universalism more than less agreeable people do. Agreeableness is negatively related to the value that people place on power: People who are higher in agreeableness don't value having control, power, and status as much as less agreeable people do.
- ◆ Conscientious people tend to place a higher value on security (safety and order). Conscientious people score a little higher on the degree to which they value conformity—trying not to violate social norms or upset other people.
- ◆ People who are higher in openness tend to value self-direction more than people who are low in openness. People who are higher in openness also value tradition, conformity, and security less than people low in openness.

MORAL FOUNDATIONS

- ◆ In addition to considering people's values, another way to think about moral character is to look at what people think is moral versus immoral. Among researchers, there's a good deal of agreement that people judge whether a behavior is morally right or wrong based on one or more of 5 basic moral dimensions: care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity or sanctity.

- ◆ Two of these foundations of moral judgments are almost universal. The first one involves whether an action helped or harmed another person. Just about everybody thinks that unjustifiably harming other people—and maybe even other animals—is wrong and that being kind and caring is moral. People differ in how they think about what constitutes harm, but almost nobody thinks that hurting other people is generally more moral than helping them.
- ◆ The second universal moral foundation involves fairness. Virtually everybody would say that fairness and justice are moral and unfairness and injustice are immoral.
- ◆ People differ in the degree to which they use 3 other criteria to make moral judgments. Some people view each of these criteria as important considerations in judging morality, and other people think that they're irrelevant to whether a behavior is moral or immoral.
- ◆ The third moral foundation involves loyalty to the groups to which one belongs, such as one's family, team, or nation. Some people see loyalty in moral terms whereas other people don't—perhaps they see it as a social issue instead. And this leads to differences in how people react to those who do things that signal a lack of loyalty.
- ◆ Some people get very upset when their grown children decide not to follow family traditions or cultural practices. They see it as wrong, whereas other parents don't think about it in moral terms, even if they don't like it. This fourth moral foundation involves following cultural traditions and customs and obeying legitimate authority, such as parents, religious leaders, and government officials.
- ◆ The fifth foundation involves concerns about sanctity or spiritual purity. Some people regard certain actions as morally wrong, even if they don't hurt anybody, because the actions seem inherently dirty, impure, or immoral.
- ◆ We disagree with other people about the morality of many things—including same-sex marriage, flag burning, spanking children for not obeying their parents, abortion, and separation of church and state—and we often can't comprehend how other people can see things so differently from the way we do. But our inability to understand each other arises from the fact that we differ in the fundamental, underlying criteria that we use to make moral judgments.

The impasse that we often hit in moral and political discussions sometimes comes down to a basic difference in how people construe morality.

People who identify as liberal versus conservative tend to use the 5 moral foundations differently. In every country that's been studied, liberals primarily use only 2 of the foundations when they make moral judgments: the one that emphasizes caring for other people and avoiding harm and the one that involves the importance of fairness.

Conservatives, on the other hand, tend to endorse and use all 5 foundations—not only care and fairness, but also group loyalty, respect for authority and tradition, and physical and spiritual purity. So, people on the right sometimes judge things as wrong that people on the left don't even see as moral issues.



VIRTUES

- ◆ Still another way of approaching the relationship between morality and personality is through the concept of virtues. Throughout history, moral philosophers and religious teachers have emphasized a relatively small set of virtues that people should pursue—a set of core characteristics that most societies across the ages have used to define a “good” person.
- ◆ Common virtues that make almost everybody’s list include wisdom, courage, justice, temperance (which refers essentially to having control over oneself), and humanity (which involves treating other people well). We can probably agree that each of these characteristics is better than its opposite, and they clearly overlap with many of the values that were addressed previously.
- ◆ From the standpoint of studying these virtues, though, the problem is that they’re very broad and amorphous concepts. Each one can manifest in many different ways; for example, there are dozens of ways to be courageous. Virtues are much too broad to think of as personality traits. Yet it seems obvious that they are important considerations in understanding how and why people differ from each other in terms of morality.



CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- ◆ Since about the turn of the 21st century, psychologists have been trying to identify the aspects of personality—character strengths—that underlie virtuous behavior. What are the dimensions of personality that are associated with being what most people would regard as an ethical and admirable person?

- ◆ Many character strengths have been studied, including integrity, persistence, social intelligence, kindness, humility, prudence, self-control, bravery, and open-mindedness. The study of these characteristics is in its infancy, but if we want to understand virtue and moral character, we need to understand all of the individual characteristics that predispose people to behave in particularly good and bad ways.



- ◆ There's work underway to develop a classification system for identifying and describing these desirable, virtuous characteristics, much like the system that psychologists use to identify and describe psychological disorders. Many researchers argue that it's just as important to understand and facilitate positive, exemplary psychological characteristics as it is to diagnose and treat people with psychological problems.

Suggested Reading

Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

Smits, "Goody Two-Shoes."

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways do people's values influence their personalities? In thinking about yourself, do you see links between your most important values and how you tend to behave?
2. Consider this story used by psychologist Jonathan Haidt in his groundbreaking research on moral foundations:

A family's dog was killed by a car in front of their house. They had heard that dog meat was delicious, so they cut up the dog's body and cooked it and ate it for dinner. Nobody saw them do this. Was it *morally wrong* for the family to eat their dog?

If so, explain why you think it was morally wrong, as opposed to being merely disgusting or gross. If you don't think it was morally wrong, why wasn't it? How does your answer to this question reflect the criteria that you used to make this moral judgment?

TRAITS THAT SHAPE HOW YOU THINK

LECTURE 9

This lecture is about cognitive aspects of personality—characteristics that are related to people's styles of thinking and to some of people's fundamental beliefs. The lecture will focus on 4 cognitive characteristics that involve differences in the degree to which people seek information and try to understand things, make decisions and come to conclusions slowly versus quickly, recognize that their beliefs may be incorrect, and enjoy thinking and solving problems.



CURIOSITY

- ◆ At its core, curiosity reflects a motive to explore and to understand. Like most personality characteristics, curiosity lies on a continuum: Some people are very low in curiosity and don't seem to have much interest in learning about and understanding things, while some people are very high and can seem absurdly fascinated by almost everything. Most people lie somewhere in between—curious about some things but not about others.
- ◆ It matters where you fall on this continuum in terms of understanding your behavior and your life. Your level of curiosity not only relates to how you spend your time, but it also relates to the knowledge that you accumulate over time. Curious people expose themselves to a broader array of information, which can then influence their views of the world in ways that affect their lives.
- ◆ Curiosity also seems to promote memory. People remember things better that they approach with an air of curiosity. People's level of curiosity is also somewhat related to how well they do in school and the kinds of jobs they prefer.
- ◆ Research suggests that really curious people seem to possess 2 distinct characteristics: They are motivated to seek knowledge and to have new experiences that they can learn from, and they have a general openness to novelty and uncertainty.
- ◆ When you look at it in terms of these 2 distinct characteristics, people can differ in curiosity either because they differ in the degree to which they want to explore and understand or because they differ in their openness to new things, or both. People who are highest in curiosity are those who are both highly motivated to find out about a lot of things and not afraid to explore new experiences, ideas, and places.
- ◆ This explains why 2 of the personality traits that correlate most strongly with curiosity are openness and neuroticism. People who are generally more open to new experiences and ideas and ways of doing things are significantly more curious than people who are lower in openness. People who are high in openness are both more motivated to learn new things and more open to the new things that they might learn.

Usually, when people talk about curiosity, they're talking about epistemic curiosity, which focuses on gaining knowledge or understanding. But some researchers have also examined perceptual curiosity, which involves curiosity about sensory stimuli.

People who are high in perceptual curiosity are not trying to learn new intellectual information but are curious about things' sensory qualities, such as the way a fabric feels or the way a food tastes.

The tendency to be high in perceptual curiosity correlates with epistemic curiosity, but they're distinct characteristics.



- ◆ But neuroticism is negatively related to curiosity; people who score higher in neuroticism tend to be less curious. This is because even if they're interested in something at an intellectual level, they can be deterred from acting on their curiosity by worries and concerns.
- ◆ Research also shows that people who are generally high in positive emotionality tend to be more curious, but we don't know why. One possibility is that highly curious people live a more interesting and engaging life because they find interesting things wherever they go, so they're happier. Or maybe positive emotions make people more open and receptive to exploring.
- ◆ Although we usually think of curiosity as a private, personal pursuit of knowledge and experiences, curiosity also has implications for people's social behavior. Research shows that people who are more curious have more satisfying conversations and social relationships with other people.
- ◆ Curious people are generally more interested in other people and what they have to say, which fosters better social interactions. Furthermore, being curious gives people a larger repertoire of interesting things to talk about. They can contribute to a broader range of conversations because they have lots of little tidbits of information that they picked up along the way and find more topics interesting.

NEED FOR COGNITIVE CLOSURE

- ◆ Another personality characteristic that's negatively related to curiosity involves the degree to which people tolerate ambiguity. Some people tolerate ambiguity very well; they don't mind the complexity, uncertainty, and shades of gray in life. Other people don't. They want to be certain about things, and ambiguity is distressing to them. They want clear, concrete answers to questions.



- ◆ People's tolerance for ambiguity is related to the degree to which they want to reach conclusions and make decisions quickly. People who are high in tolerance for ambiguity don't mind not having answers or not making final decisions, and they may even prefer to let things remain undecided as long as possible before reaching closure.
- ◆ In contrast, people who have a low tolerance for ambiguity want answers immediately. They may make decisions quickly, sometimes even before they have enough information.
- ◆ Most people are somewhere in the middle: They hold out for enough information to make good decisions but don't like to wait too long before reaching a resolution.
- ◆ This characteristic is sometimes called the need for cognitive closure, which refers to making a decision quickly and then sticking with it. Having a high need for cognitive closure involves both an urgency to make decisions quickly and a reluctance to reconsider decisions that you've already made. For people who have a high need for cognitive closure, it's better to decide and close the issue rather than wait in a state of uncertainty.

Where Do You Stand on Cognitive Closure?

To see where you stand on need for cognitive closure, consider how much you agree with each of the following statements:

- › I dislike questions that can be answered in many different ways.
- › When I am confronted with a problem, I'm impatient to reach a solution very quickly.
- › I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what to expect.
- › I enjoy having a clear and structured way of living.
- › I don't usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.

If you agreed with most of these statements, you probably lean toward being high in need for cognitive closure.




- ◆ A good deal of research has examined how people who are low versus high in the need for cognitive closure differ. When they're trying to make a decision, people who have a high need for closure generate fewer ideas and options before they finally decide. People who are low in need for closure don't mind dragging the process out by getting as many options and as much information as they can.
- ◆ Neither approach is better all the time: People high in need for closure make decisions more efficiently, but they may not consider all relevant information. On the other hand, those who are low in need for closure consider more options, but they take longer.
- ◆ In the same way, people high in need for closure seek less information about other people before they form an impression about what the other people are like. People high in need for closure are also more likely to draw conclusions about people based on stereotypes. Although stereotypes can certainly create problems, they're often very useful, allowing us to draw conclusions quickly.
- ◆ Need for cognitive closure also relates to how people seek information about other people. Research shows that people who don't like ambiguity and want closure ask about more concrete and specific things when they meet someone for the first time. People who are low in need for closure tend to ask more abstract questions, things that provide less definitive information about the other person.

- ◆ Many decisions in life are made in groups, and people who are low versus high in need for cognitive closure differ in how they want group discussions to go. Group members who are high in need for cognitive closure want the group to reach decisions as quickly as possible, but those who are low in need for closure are happy to talk things out in great detail, and they might not be bothered if the meeting ends without the group making a decision.
- ◆ Group members who are high in need for cognitive closure not only want the group to reach a decision quickly, but they want there to be consensus. They even prefer different kinds of group leaders. Members with a need for cognitive closure prefer directive, and even autocratic, leaders—who make the decisions themselves and then tell the group what to do—whereas members low in need for closure prefer democratic leaders, who let the group talk about things and then decide.
- ◆ Even though people who are high in need for closure make their decisions and choices more quickly and make them on the basis of less information than people who are low in need for closure, people high in need for closure are more confident that their conclusions and decisions are correct.
- ◆ People who consider issues in less detail may feel more confident because they've exposed themselves to less contrary information. In many cases, the more information you consider, the more cloudy and uncertain the picture becomes. So, considering less information may make you feel more confident that you are right. In addition, people who dislike ambiguity may talk themselves into feeling more confident.

INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY

- ◆ Intellectual humility involves the degree to which people recognize that what they believe might be wrong. People who are high in intellectual humility are more willing to accept the possibility that their beliefs and attitudes might be incorrect or unfounded. People who are low in intellectual humility are more certain that their beliefs and attitudes are correct.

- ◆ People who are higher in intellectual humility display characteristics that involve being open and flexible in their thoughts. For example, people high in intellectual humility score higher on the trait of openness, and they're lower in need for cognitive closure. Intellectually humble people also tend to be more curious, and they like to think more than people who are low in intellectual humility. They also tend to score lower in self-righteousness.
- ◆ People who are high in intellectual humility are more sensitive to the quality of the evidence on which their beliefs are based than intellectually arrogant people are. But people who don't often entertain the possibility that their beliefs are incorrect—those low in intellectual humility—pay less attention to the evidence.
- ◆ Intellectual humility also matters in how we deal with other people. The more intellectually humble people are, the less they judge other people by what they believe (versus who they are).



There's a stereotype that religious people and political conservatives are more entrenched in their views and more resistant to change, which might suggest that they would be lower in intellectual humility. But research shows that religious people and conservatives are no more intellectually arrogant on average than atheists and liberals are.

- ◆ People who are higher in intellectual humility are also more tolerant of people who change their minds. Intellectually humble people know that they would change their own mind if they had new evidence that their old view was wrong, so they accept the possibility that other people might also change their minds.
- ◆ Some people go beyond simply believing that they are right to think that they have an obligation to try to correct other people's ignorant beliefs. This characteristic is called social vigilantism, and it goes beyond reasonable efforts to educate people in a particular domain to a broad tendency to let everyone know that they're wrong. So, it's much more than simply low intellectual humility.

NEED FOR COGNITION

- ◆ Need for cognition refers to the degree to which people enjoy thinking. Some people derive a great deal of intrinsic enjoyment from thinking, analyzing, and pondering—just for its own sake. Other people don't like thinking; they'll think when they need to, but just thinking about things doesn't sound like their idea of fun.
- ◆ People who are higher in need for cognition consider more information and think about it more deeply when they have to make a decision, whereas people who are lower in need for cognition think less and often rely on cognitive shortcuts. And, because they think more deeply, people who are high in need for cognition remember more details about things they read.
- ◆ Because they think more deeply about things, people high in need for cognition are more affected by the quality of arguments. Because people who are high in need for cognition think about the evidence more deeply, they recognize good and bad arguments more easily than people who are low in need for cognition do.
- ◆ People higher in need for cognition enjoy mental tasks and games that involve thinking more than those who are low in need for cognition. And they watch less television, presumably because television usually doesn't require as much thinking as other things they could be doing.

- ◆ Because people who are low and high in need for cognition differ in how they process information, advertisers need to consider consumers' need for cognition as they design their ads. People who are high in need for cognition prefer advertisements that present comparative information about 2 products and allow them to decide which brand is best rather than ads that tell them about only one brand. People who are high in need for cognition also spend more time looking at an ad than people who are low in need for cognition, and they tend to remember the details better.

Suggested Reading

Kashdan, *Curious?*

Singal, "How Well Do You Handle Uncertainty?"

Questions to Consider

1. People differ in the degree to which they want to have conclusive information and definitive answers. Some people are troubled when they don't have definitive answers, whereas other people are not bothered by uncertainty and may even enjoy ambiguity. Consider how the 4 characteristics discussed in this lecture—curiosity, need for closure, intellectual humility, and need for cognition—each relate to the degree to which people are comfortable with uncertainty.
2. Consider at least 5 consequences that would occur in people's personal lives and in society more broadly if everyone became more intellectually humble. Would these be mostly positive changes, negative changes, or both?

BELIEFS ABOUT THE WORLD AND OTHER PEOPLE

LECTURE 10

Many psychologists make a sharp distinction between personality traits and beliefs, but that distinction breaks down when people's beliefs lead them to behave in consistent, stable ways across many domains of their lives. Many of the ways in which you differ from other people can be traced to differences in what you believe—about what other people are like, about how the world works, and about yourself.



BELIEFS ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

- ◆ Of course, people vary a great deal. But each of us has assumptions about what people are like in general—what most people are like. Your philosophy of human nature is important because your assumptions about human nature influence how you interact with people.
- ◆ For example, whether people have generally positive or generally negative views of other people is related to how much they tend to trust other people: The more positively you view human nature, the more trusting you are.
- ◆ And the more positive people's views of human nature are in general, the more positively they evaluate specific other people. Our general assumptions about human beings color our judgments of specific people.

Students who have more positive beliefs about human nature rate their professors more positively—as being more knowledgeable and competent, as being a better teacher, and as having better relationships with students—than students with less positive views of human nature.



- ◆ In addition, people whose beliefs about human nature are more positive interact with other people in a more positive, open, and agreeable way than people with generally negative views do. People who believe that human beings are generally altruistic and trustworthy treat other people differently than people with less favorable beliefs about human goodness.
- ◆ People's assumptions about human nature also bleed over into how they interpret the government's actions. People with more negative views of human nature impute more undesirable, diabolical motives to things that the government does than people with positive views of human nature.
- ◆ Overall, there's no particular benefit associated with having consistently positive or consistently negative views of other people. People with either very positive or very negative views of human nature are more likely to misjudge people compared to those who don't show a bias in either direction and, thus, judge people more accurately. Yet many people do have a tendency to lean in a trusting or cynical direction.

BELIEFS ABOUT THE WORLD

- ◆ The extent to which you think that the world is mostly fair and just is called the belief in a just world, and the degree to which people believe in a just world functions like a personality trait. Like all traits, beliefs in a just world fall on a continuum. Almost no one believes that the world is totally fair or totally unfair, but people differ a great deal in how fair they think things are.
- ◆ Perhaps most importantly, the degree to which people believe that the world is fair and just relates strongly to how they react to the inequalities they see in the world. The more that people believe that the world is fair, the more they think that people are mostly responsible for the good and bad things that happen to them. One of the best-replicated findings in this area is that people who believe in a just world think that people who are victims of misfortune are more responsible for their plight, whatever it may be.


People who think that the world is just are more likely to derogate and blame people for their personal misfortunes. For example, people who score higher in the belief in a just world are more likely to think that poor people are responsible for their plight and that victims of crimes probably did something to cause it or at least weren't careful enough.



- ◆ The downside of believing in a just world is that it leads people to be less concerned about those who experience unfortunate circumstances. When bad things happen to other people, they assume that the person must be partly responsible somehow, so they don't feel as much empathy, and they aren't as likely to help. So, people who believe in a just world are less inclined to support affirmative action, welfare, and other programs aimed at helping people.
- ◆ People who believe in a just world also tend to have a stronger work ethic than people who don't believe in a just world. If you think that the world is unfair and that people don't get what they deserve, then there's no reason for you to work particularly hard because your extra effort won't pay off in the long run.
- ◆ Many people work hard to reduce injustice in the world, which indicates that perceiving that the world is unfair doesn't necessarily lower how hard people work. People can certainly perceive that aspects of life are unjust while also believing that hard work pays off.

LOCUS OF CONTROL

- ◆ As they go through life, people want to understand the things that happen to them. The problem is that we almost never really know exactly why things happen as they do. Life is filled with attributional ambiguity. For most things that happen to us, there are too many possible causes to know for certain why something happened.
- ◆ Even though we rarely know for certain exactly why things happen, people gravitate toward certain kinds of explanations. Some people tend to believe that most of the things that happen to them are the result of their own behaviors, whereas other people tend to believe that most of what happens to them is the result of external influences of various kinds—things they can't control.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white ruffled sleeveless top and light-colored jeans, is leaning over a table in a sewing studio. She has a yellow measuring tape draped around her neck. On the table are various sewing supplies, including fabric, a yellow spool of thread, and a measuring tape. In the background, there are racks of colorful clothing and a sewing machine. The image is framed by large magenta triangular shapes on the left and right sides.


Students who are high in internal locus of control are more likely to do well in school, and employees who are high in internal locus of control are more likely to succeed at work. Even among less intelligent students and less skilled employees, internal locus of control is associated with better performance.

- ◆ This trait is known as locus of control. If you generally assume that your outcomes in life are due primarily to your own actions, then you have an internal locus of control. If you think that your outcomes are usually the result of external influences—such as other people, situational influences, luck, fate, and other circumstances that are outside of your control—then you have an external locus of control.

- ◆ Whether people use primarily internal or external explanations for things that happen to them has a number of implications. For starters, the higher people are in internal locus of control, the more information they seek during the course of everyday life.
- ◆ And it's clear why: If you think that your outcomes in life depend on what you do, then it makes sense to get as much information as possible to help you make good decisions. But if you have an external locus of control, there's no good reason to know very much about what's going on because you don't think you can do anything about it anyway.
- ◆ People high in internal locus of control are also more likely to take action to improve their lot in life. Because they think that their actions affect their outcomes, they put more effort into doing what they think is needed. And because they take action, they're more likely to achieve those desired outcomes than people with an external locus of control.
- ◆ In the same way, internal locus of control is associated with better health. People who think that their actions affect their outcomes take better care of themselves and are more likely to take action when they're sick. Not surprisingly, people with an internal locus of control are, on average, healthier than people with an external locus of control.
- ◆ One of the most widely studied effects of locus of control involves psychological well-being. People who have an internal locus of control are, on average, happier and better adjusted than people who have an external locus of control. They tend to be less anxious, feel less hopeless and pessimistic, and are less likely to be depressed. Perhaps most strikingly, they're also less likely to try to commit suicide.
- ◆ Research has shown that parents of children with an internal locus of control tend to be more responsive and supportive, and parents of children with an external locus of control tend to be more controlling and domineering. Other factors undoubtedly play a role in the development of locus of control, such as culture, religious beliefs, and personal experiences, but we know less about those causes.

AUTHORITARIANISM

- ◆ At its core, the trait of authoritarianism involves a particular set of beliefs and attitudes. In everyday language, people sometimes use the word “authoritarian” to refer to people who are domineering and strict or who emphasize absolute obedience to authority, such as a harsh parent or a dictator. That’s not quite what the authoritarian personality involves, although there is a connection.
- ◆ As a personality characteristic, authoritarianism involves a set or syndrome of attributes, none of which by itself would be considered authoritarianism. The 3 primary characteristics of the authoritarian personality are rigid adherence to traditional attitudes and values, prejudice toward a broad assortment of groups, and a preference for strong political leaders who will crack down on people who don’t conform to one’s own traditional attitudes and values.
- ◆ The characteristic that seems most central to authoritarianism involves rigid adherence to conventional, mainline, usually middle-class attitudes and values. People who score high in authoritarianism believe that their own conventional beliefs, values, and lifestyles are the only right ones and that people who don’t share their cultural beliefs and values and who don’t live like they do are wrong, if not somehow evil.
- ◆ Authoritarianism is also associated with fervent patriotism—the kind of patriotism that recoils at any suggestion that one’s own country isn’t the best in the world. Authoritarians tend not to tolerate any criticisms of their country.
- ◆ People high in authoritarianism also tend to endorse more traditional sex roles. For example, people who score higher on authoritarianism are more likely to say that they like being a traditional male or female. Authoritarian men and women also support more traditional roles for men and women.
- ◆ Authoritarianism is also related to the characteristics that heterosexual men and women find attractive in members of the other sex. Authoritarian women are more attracted to more conventionally masculine men, and authoritarian men are more attracted to more conventionally feminine women.



Authoritarianism correlates very highly with believing that one's own religious views are absolutely correct and that everybody else is completely wrong. So, people who score higher in authoritarianism tend to populate the most fundamentalist segments of every religion.

- ◆ Authoritarianism correlates with conservative values in general; traditional values are associated with conservative political attitudes.
- ◆ Of course, we all have values that are important to us, and most of us wish that other people would see things the way that we do. But people who are high in authoritarianism have particularly negative views of people who don't share their values. This is the prejudiced component of authoritarianism.
- ◆ People who score high in authoritarianism tend to be prejudiced toward a broad range of racial and ethnic groups as well as toward atheists, members of nonmainstream religions, homosexuals, drug users, homeless people, and people with liberal attitudes. The common theme here is a distrust and dislike of people who don't share their cultural attitudes and values.

- ◆ The third primary component of authoritarianism involves a preference for strong political leaders, particularly leaders who will crack down on all those people who are violating the person's values. People with an authoritarian personality would like the government to impose their views and values on everybody, and they even support the use of illegal tactics by the government to crack down on these groups.
- ◆ In fact, people higher in authoritarianism are less concerned about human rights than people low in authoritarianism when the people whose rights are being violated are members of distrusted and disliked groups that don't share their values.
- ◆ Authoritarian parents tend to have authoritarian children, and early on, research pointed to strict discipline and harsh parenting as a contributor to authoritarianism. But researchers have struggled to separate various kinds of parental influences. There's also evidence that some people pick up authoritarian perspectives from their peer groups during adolescence.



- ◆ Interestingly, though, going to college seems to reduce authoritarianism on average, particularly for students who score very high in authoritarianism at the time they start college. These effects are strongest for students who attend liberal arts programs, which seem to challenge many of the beliefs and attitudes that maintain authoritarianism.
- ◆ Research also suggests that the authoritarian personality is fueled by uncertainty and anxiety. People with different religious beliefs, values, and lifestyles can threaten people's sense of security.
- ◆ Along these lines, people who are high in authoritarianism tend to perceive their social environments as more threatening and dangerous, and authoritarian attitudes increase even among people who are not authoritarian in the face of social and economic threats. When crime is rising, or the economy is bad, or a country is experiencing political crises, authoritarian tendencies increase.

Suggested Reading

Altemeyer, *The Authoritarian Specter*.

Svoboda, "A Field Guide to the Cynic."

Questions to Consider

1. Do you believe that the world is generally fair and just or generally unfair and unjust? Whatever your answer, how does your belief manifest in your attitudes and behavior?
2. Authoritarianism increases when people experience societal threats to their well-being, such as increasing crime rates, economic problems, political crises, or military threats. Why do you think that social threats and instability lead people to become more authoritarian?

BELIEFS ABOUT YOURSELF

LECTURE 11



Understanding people requires that we give some attention to their beliefs about who they are and what they are like. In this lecture, you will learn about 4 types of self-related beliefs: identity (who people think they are and what they think they're like), self-efficacy (people's beliefs about what they are capable of doing), self-esteem (people's evaluations of themselves), and self-compassion (how people think about themselves when bad things happen).

IDENTITY

- ◆ When researchers have people list things that help identify them as a unique human being, they list a very big variety of specific things about themselves. But interestingly, virtually everything that people report generally falls into only 4, sometimes 5, basic categories:
 1. You might mention physical or biological characteristics, such as your sex, race, age, or height.
 2. Some of the characteristics that you'd mention would involve personal attributes that you possess, called your self-concept or personal identity characteristics, which are things that describe you that don't involve your relationships with other people—for example, that you are religious or play the piano.
 3. Other aspects of your identity involve your social relationships with particular other people, so you might mention that you're someone's husband or wife, mother or father, or friend.
 4. Another aspect of your identity, called collective identity characteristics, involves your membership in whatever social groups and collectives you belong to; you might mention that you're a member of a certain club or a citizen of a particular country.
 5. Most of the things that make up people's identities fall in these 4 categories—physical, personal, social, and collective identity characteristics—but sometimes people mention some broader or transcendental identity that doesn't fall into one of these categories. For example, seeing yourself as a child of God or as a part of the cosmos would be classified as one of these broader aspects of identity.
- ◆ Although everybody's identities include physical, personal, social, and collective characteristics, people differ in the proportion of their identity that falls into each of these categories. Are you mostly defined in terms of your personal identity characteristics—your goals, motives, traits, abilities, and interests—or in terms of your social identity characteristics—your relationships with family and friends? The answer to this question reflects what parts of your identity are most important to you, and this determines your primary focus and primary goals as you walk through life.



Research has shown that people with different identity orientations give different reasons for being physically active. Having a predominately personal identity orientation is associated with reasons such as improving one's health and physical condition, feeling better physically, and self-satisfaction. But people with a predominant social identity orientation said they exercised to interact with other people and to look better.

- ◆ Sometimes we look at other people's choices in life and we can't understand why they make the choices they do. One reason is that they have a different dominant identity orientation than we do. Each of us prioritizes things that feed the dominant aspects of our identities.

SELF-EFFICACY

- ◆ People's beliefs about whether they can do certain things or accomplish certain goals—called self-confidence in everyday language—is usually called self-efficacy by psychologists, who are interested in this variable because people's beliefs about whether they can do something or not are important any time people undertake challenging tasks.
- ◆ Self-efficacy is important because it determines whether people will engage in certain behaviors or seek certain goals. There's no use trying to do something if don't think you can do it, so beliefs in one's self-efficacy are exceptionally important. Self-efficacy affects people's motivation as well as their ability to cope with setbacks, failures, and other problems.
- ◆ Although we each have high self-efficacy in some domains and low self-efficacy in others, people differ in how much self-efficacy they have in general. And that's where personality comes in. People who have higher overall expectations that they can do things successfully behave differently than people whose overall self-efficacy is lower.

Assessing Your Self-Efficacy

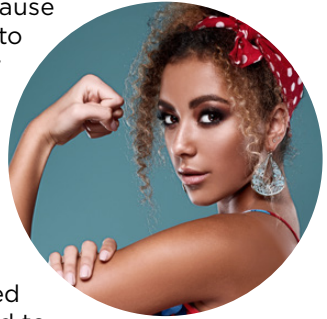
Think about how much you agree or disagree with the following statements as they pertain to you:

- › I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
- › When I make plans, I am certain that I can make them work.
- › Do you expect that you will be able to achieve most of the goals that you set for yourself, whatever they are?

Believing that you can usually solve difficult problems or make your plans work out reflects a high level of self-efficacy.

On the other hand, if you agree with the statement, "If something looks too complicated, I won't even bother to try it" or "I give up easily," it would seem that you're lower in overall self-efficacy.

- ◆ Research shows that people who have higher general self-efficacy tend to be more optimistic because they're convinced that they'll usually be able to make things work. As a result, people higher in general self-efficacy are less anxious and less depressed, on average, than people who are lower in self-efficacy. They also tend to be lower in fear of failure because you don't have to worry as much about failure if you're pretty sure that you'll usually succeed.




- ◆ People with higher self-efficacy tend to succeed more both because they are more motivated to attempt challenging tasks and because they persist longer on tasks when things become difficult. Not surprisingly, self-efficacy has been widely studied in educational settings because students' self-efficacy beliefs are strongly related to academic performance in school.

SELF-ESTEEM

- ◆ Our beliefs about our characteristics, identities, and capabilities—good and bad—contribute to our self-esteem. We've already discussed whether people have a motive to maintain and enhance their self-esteem, but here we'll focus on individual differences in people's level of self-esteem, what psychologists call trait self-esteem.
- ◆ Although people's self-esteem fluctuates as the result of things that happen to them, people differ in how positively they evaluate themselves overall. Some people's typical, or average, level of self-esteem is higher than other people's level of self-esteem.
- ◆ Although we loosely talk about people having low self-esteem versus high self-esteem, truly low self-esteem—people who evaluate themselves negatively across the board and who dislike or even hate themselves—is actually quite rare. People who score relatively low on measures of trait self-esteem don't typically view themselves negatively across the board or really dislike themselves. Rather, most of the people who fall in the lower ranges on standard measures of self-esteem have a mixed or ambivalent view of themselves.

- ◆ Trait self-esteem has received so much attention in psychology because it is consistently related to almost every indicator of psychological well-being that you can imagine. People with higher trait self-esteem are happier and more satisfied with their lives, and they score lower on most negative emotions. People with higher self-esteem tend to be less anxious, less depressed, less lonely, less angry, and less ashamed than people with low self-esteem are.



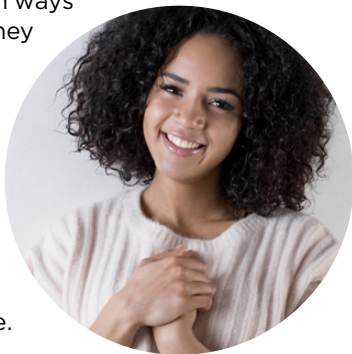
From childhood through college, children with higher self-esteem tend to do better in school, and when they grow up, employees with higher self-esteem tend to do better at work.

- ◆ Having higher self-esteem is also associated with having better relationships—with family members, romantic partners, and friends. And people higher in self-esteem are less likely to engage in behaviors that create problems for themselves and others, such as to abuse alcohol and drugs, join gangs, and engage in criminal behavior.
- ◆ People's self-esteem is affected by the degree to which they feel valued and accepted by other people, so trait self-esteem reflects the degree to which people believe that they are generally a socially valuable and acceptable person.
- ◆ All of the things that predict high self-esteem are things that indicate that one has socially valued characteristics. So, doing well in school or being a valued employee predicts trait self-esteem. Seeing oneself as competent or smart or athletic or attractive also contributes to trait self-esteem, because other people value those things. In the same way, having good relationships makes us feel acceptable.
- ◆ So, personality differences in trait self-esteem reflect differences in how acceptable people feel. It's an effect of perceiving oneself as having desirable characteristics that people value.
- ◆ But high self-esteem doesn't cause positive outcomes, such as doing well in school, having a good job, being liked, or having good relationships. High self-esteem is the effect of these things, because they indicate that the person has socially desirable characteristics.
- ◆ Likewise, high self-esteem doesn't cause happiness or protect people from anxiety, depression, or other emotional problems; instead, believing that you have socially desirable characteristics that make you valued by other people causes positive emotions and reduces negative emotions.



SELF-COMPASSION

- ◆ Some people create a great deal of unhappiness for themselves simply by how they think about themselves and their lives. In fact, many people are pretty mean to themselves inside their own heads, beating themselves up for their shortcomings and failures, agonizing over their difficulties, blowing their problems out of proportion, and talking to themselves in ways that are meaner and more critical than they would ever talk to somebody else.
- ◆ Other people, though, take a kinder and gentler approach to themselves. They might not always be happy with themselves, but they accept the fact that everybody has shortcomings and problems and makes mistakes, and they don't criticize themselves unnecessarily for the normal problems of everyday life.
- ◆ These 2 reactions to one's shortcomings, failures, and problems might appear to reflect a difference in self-esteem, but the key difference instead involves self-compassion—that is, the difference lies not in how people evaluate themselves (self-esteem) but, rather, in how they treat themselves (self-compassion). And self-compassion may be more important for well-being than self-esteem is.
- ◆ Just as compassion involves a desire to minimize the suffering of other people, self-compassion reflects a desire to minimize our own suffering and to avoid creating unnecessary unhappiness for ourselves. Self-compassionate people treat themselves in much the same caring, kind, and supportive ways that compassionate people treat their friends and family members when they are struggling.
- ◆ Self-compassionate people approach their problems, failures, and shortcomings with warmth and concern, rather than with judgment and self-criticism. As a result, they react to life with greater equanimity, not downplaying the seriousness of their challenges but also not being overwhelmed by negative thoughts and feelings.



- ◆ Research has shown that self-compassion is strongly associated with psychological well-being. Dozens of studies have assessed people's level of self-compassion along with indicators of good and bad psychological adjustment and have shown that people who are higher in self-compassion show greater emotional stability and are more resilient, more optimistic, and more satisfied with their lives. They're also less likely to display signs of psychological problems, such as severe depression and chronic anxiety.
- ◆ People who are high in self-compassion deal more successfully with negative events—such as failures, rejections, and loss—than people who are low in self-compassion. Whether the problem is a minor daily hassle, a major traumatic event, or some chronic problem, people who treat themselves with care and compassion respond more adaptively to life's challenges than people who lack self-compassion.
- ◆ Self-compassionate people try to be kind to themselves in the face of whatever difficulties they experience. Of course, self-compassion doesn't eliminate the original problem, so people will still be upset, anxious, or sad, but people can reduce some of the initial angst by responding in a kind and gentle manner. Just as we can soothe another person's upset through concern and kindness, people high in self-compassion can soothe themselves.
- ◆ Self-compassion is not just positive thinking. In fact, self-compassion is associated with a more realistic appraisal of one's situation and one's responsibility for it. When people don't add to their distress through self-recrimination and catastrophizing, they can see life for how it really is. Self-compassionate people have a more accurate, balanced, and nondefensive reaction to the events they experience.
- ◆ Self-compassion isn't indifference to what happens or to how one behaves, and it's not an excuse to be lazy or shirk responsibility or not care what happens. Instead, self-compassion is based on a desire to want the best for oneself and involves responding in ways that promote one's well-being.

Research shows that older people who are higher in self-compassion cope better with the challenges of aging than those who are less self-compassionate. As a result, they have higher well-being and fewer emotional problems and are more satisfied with their lives. They also say that they think they're aging more successfully.



- ◆ Self-compassion is a relatively new area of research in psychology. In fact, the construct didn't even appear in the research literature until 2003. So, although there's been a good deal of research on the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being, we don't know much yet about why some people are more self-compassionate than other people are.

Suggested Reading

Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs, "Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?"

Leary, *The Curse of the Self*.

Olga, "Why Self-Compassion Works Better Than Self-Esteem."

Questions to Consider

1. In an effort to promote self-efficacy, many parents, teachers, and motivational speakers tell children and adolescents that they can do anything that they set your mind to. Is this true? Can people actually accomplish *anything* they set their mind to? And are there any drawbacks of promoting too much self-efficacy among young people?
2. Some people are much harder on themselves than needed to manage their own behavior effectively, and such people benefit from treating themselves with greater self-compassion. Yet feeling bad about one's failures and misdeeds is sometimes beneficial in guiding people's behavior in desired directions. So, how hard *should* people be on themselves?

PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

LECTURE 12



The nature of people's relationships—including how close, conflicted, and satisfying they are—is directly influenced by the personalities of the people involved. We have different kinds of relationships because we are different kinds of people. In this lecture, you will explore just 4 of the many personal characteristics that relate to how people manage, and mismanage, their social relationships: attachment style, tactics of social influence, Machiavellianism, and dispositional empathy.

ATTACHMENT STYLE

- ◆ People differ in their general approach to relationships with other people, what's known as their attachment style. Researchers have discovered that attachment styles are defined by 2 distinct dimensions. One dimension, called attachment-related anxiety, involves the degree to which people tend to think that other people, such as their parents or romantic partners, care about them.



Children's Attachment Styles

Interest in attachment began in the 1960s with research on how babies react when they're temporarily separated from their parents.

The most common response, which was seen in about 60% of the infants, was that the baby became upset when the parent left the room but then sought the parent out and quickly calmed down when the parent came back.

Another 20% of the children also became extremely distressed when the parent left, but babies in this group had trouble being comforted when their parent came back into the room.

The other 20% weren't very upset when the parent left, and they didn't seem to care much when the parent came back in.


So, there are least 3 types of babies: those who are secure in their relationship with their parents and are easily calmed, those who are anxious and inconsolable, and those who are indifferent and avoidant.

Further research showed that these patterns arise, in part, from different parent behaviors. Securely attached children tend to have parents who are consistently responsive to the child's needs. But children who have an anxious or avoidant attachment style tend to have parents who are not very responsive, parents who are inconsistent in how they deal with the child, or parents who tend to be rejecting.

- ◆ People who score high on attachment-related anxiety tend to think that other people don't care about them as much as they would like and that other people aren't sufficiently responsive and supportive. People who score on the low end of this attachment-anxiety dimension feel more secure about the responsiveness and commitment of their partners and other people. They're less anxious about whether other people care about them.

- ◆ The second dimension is called attachment-related avoidance, or just attachment avoidance. People on the high end of this avoidance dimension prefer not to rely on other people. They feel uncomfortable getting too close to other people, and they have trouble trusting other people and opening up. People on the low end of the avoidance dimension are more comfortable being close to other people; they find it easier to depend on other people and having others depend on them.
- ◆ Although these 2 dimensions—one defined by low versus high attachment anxiety and the other defined by low versus high attachment avoidance—are continuous dimensions that run from low to high, for convenience we can think of people being either low or high on each dimension so that when we combine them, people fall into one of 4 categories:
 1. Some people are low in both attachment anxiety and in attachment avoidance. These people generally feel confident that their partners and other people care about them and will be there for them when needed, and they're comfortable depending on other people and having others depend on them. These people are generally secure in their close relationships, so we call them securely attached.
 2. Other people fall high on both the attachment-anxiety dimension (they aren't certain that people care about them) and on the attachment-avoidance dimension (they don't like to get too close to other people and don't want other people depending too much on them). This isn't a great combination for satisfying relationships.
 3. Still other people score low on one dimension but high on the other. Some people score low on attachment anxiety (they aren't worried about whether their partner cares about them), but they're high in avoidance (they like to keep their distance). Those kinds of people can have good relationships, but only if the other person in the relationship is also high in attachment avoidance.
 4. The final attachment style involves being high in attachment anxiety and low in avoidance. These people want to have close relationships with others, but they don't think that people care about them as much as they'd like. These people tend to have an anxious, dependent sort of relationship style.

- ◆ How anxious and avoidant people are in their relationships depends on the nature of specific relationships; particular people can make us feel more or less secure. But attachment style is a trait-like variable that people carry with them to some extent.
- ◆ People with a secure attachment style—those who are low in attachment anxiety and low in avoidance—tend to be more satisfied in their relationships than the other 3 categories. Their relationships have higher trust and commitment, and they tend to last longer than the relationships of people who are less securely attached. People with a secure style are more likely to seek support from their romantic partner when they're upset, and they're more likely to provide support when their partner needs it.



About 60% of American adults seem to have a secure attachment style, and those who don't struggle a bit more in their close relationships.

- ◆ Whether people are secure or insecure in their relationships as an adult partly reflects their experiences as children. Once children have developed expectations about relationships—such as expectations about whether other people will be responsive and supportive—their reactions throughout life are colored by those expectations.
- ◆ But our attachment style is not etched in stone since childhood. New relationship experiences can revise our expectations about other people and our views of relationships. But early childhood experiences carry a great deal of weight in forming our basic approach to relationships.

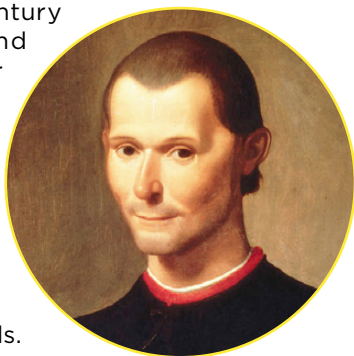
TACTICS OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

- ◆ In all of our relationships, we often want to influence the other person to do something that we want them to do, and they sometimes try to influence us, too. Sometimes, the issue is a momentous, life-changing one, but usually, they're pretty mundane. Either way, life is filled with efforts to get other people to do what we want them to do.
- ◆ People use different tactics for getting other people to do what they want, depending on the relationship and the situation, but we each have some preferred tactics for influencing other people. Part of your interpersonal style—how you generally interact with other people—involves the tactics that you tend to use when you want to persuade and influence them. And the quality of your close relationships depends to an extent on which tactics you tend to use.
- ◆ Studies that have carefully examined the tactics that people use to get what they want have identified several categories: Sometimes we take a rational approach to influence other people, giving reasons and explanations for why the other person should do what we want them to. At other times, we offer to reciprocate or to reward them. Or, we might try to use personal charm or try to convince the other person that they'll like whatever it is we want them to do. At other times, we suggest that it's the other person's obligation or responsibility to do whatever it is that we want or that the person should agree to what we want because it's what most other people would do.

- ◆ Those all are reasonably up-front tactics to get others to do as we wish, but sometimes people use less positive approaches. Sometimes people use coercion or threats, put the other person down, or sulk or whine or give the other person the silent treatment until they get their way.
- ◆ People use somewhat different tactics in different relationships. But there's a good deal of consistency in the tactics each of us tends to use across our different relationships. And the tactics that each of us use most frequently relate to our personality. People with different traits tend to use different tactics to influence other people.
- ◆ Some people consistently use reason as an influence tactic across various relationships more than other people do. But if you usually don't use reason as a tactic in one relationship, you probably don't use it much in other relationships either.
- ◆ People who prefer to use rational social influence tactics tend to be people who score higher in conscientiousness and openness. People who prefer to use the more negative influence tactics, such as coercion and the silent treatment, tend to be low in agreeableness. People who whine, pout, and throw tantrums to get what they want tend to be higher in neuroticism.

MACHIAVELLIANISM

- ◆ Niccolò Machiavelli—the 16th-century Italian politician, historian, and philosopher—is best known for his book *The Prince*, in which he suggested that political rulers should use whatever means necessary to maintain power and to control their citizens. According to Machiavelli, people in positions of power should feel free to use deceit, treachery, and force to achieve their political goals.



- ◆ Although Machiavelli was addressing his recommendations to political leaders, some people approach everyday life in the way that Machiavelli recommended. People who are high in Machiavellianism live their lives in a highly selfish fashion, guided by their belief that it's okay to do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. Machiavellians tend to pursue their desires in underhanded, duplicitous, and manipulative ways. Machiavellians report that they more often lie and cheat and that they use charm, flattery, and deceit to get people to do what they want.

Assessing Machiavellianism


Psychologists have developed measures of Machiavellianism that simply ask people whether they agree or disagree with statements that reflect Machiavelli's recommendations.

People who score high in Machiavellianism agree more strongly that "The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear" and that "It's wise to flatter important people" than people who are low in Machiavellianism.

People who are low in Machiavellianism agree more strongly with statements such as "One should take action only when sure it is morally right" and "All in all, it is better to be humble and honest than to be important and dishonest."

- ◆ They also say that they often don't intend to honor their agreements and commitments; they promise to do things to get other people to do what they want and then ignore their agreements. They also like to guilt people into doing what they want.
- ◆ Machiavellians aren't necessarily trying to hurt anybody, and they often use mild manipulation and deception before turning to pressure and threats. Their goal is to get what they want however they can, and they don't worry much about what happens to other people in the process. Not surprisingly, Machiavellians score very low in both agreeableness and conscientiousness.

- ◆ Most people would feel horrible going through life manipulating people, but Machiavellians are able to do it because they are rather emotionally detached and nonempathic. They also have fewer qualms about behaving unethically. And they have a dismissive-avoidant attachment style, along with a negative view of other people as basically selfish and manipulative.
- ◆ Like most characteristics, both nature and nurture are involved in Machiavellian behavior. About 30% of the variability that we observe in Machiavellianism across people is due to genetic factors. The remaining 70% of the variability is due to an assortment of situational and social factors. Most notably, about 40% of the variability in Machiavellianism can be explained by family variables, including parental effects.



Machiavellian tendencies have been identified in children as young as age 10 or 11. One interesting study showed that the children of parents who score high in Machiavellianism are better liars.

DISPOSITIONAL EMPATHY

- ◆ An important determinant of successful relationships is the degree to which people in a relationship are attuned to what each other is thinking and feeling. We all want our relationship partners to understand us—to understand our goals, reasons for doing things, emotions, preferences, and pet peeves. In a word, we want our partners to be empathic.
- ◆ Yet people differ in empathy, and these differences are related both to people's behavior and to the quality of their social relationships.
- ◆ Researchers distinguish 3 aspects of empathy:
 1. Cognitive empathy involves understanding what other people are thinking—the ability to take another person's perspective.
 2. Emotional empathy involves understanding what other people are feeling and sometimes even feeling it ourselves.
 3. Empathic concern involves feeling tenderness, sympathy, or compassion for someone who is distressed and wanting to make them feel better.
- ◆ Most of the time, cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and empathic concern go together. For our purposes, we'll group these things together and refer to differences in how attuned people are to other people's thoughts and emotions as dispositional empathy.
- ◆ The relationship partners of people who are higher in dispositional empathy report being more satisfied with their relationships than the partners of people who are lower in empathy. But people high in dispositional empathy are themselves more satisfied with their relationships as well.
- ◆ Interestingly, both partners in a relationship benefit if even just one of them is reasonably empathic. People who are higher in dispositional empathy also meet their partner's emotional needs better than people who are less empathic.

- ◆ Dispositional empathy is also a benefit in professional settings, particularly for people who are in people-related, or helping, professions. Teachers, doctors, counselors, and therapists who are higher in dispositional empathy seem to be more effective in their professional roles.
- ◆ Empathy-related characteristics are also related to better physical health and higher psychological well-being. Highly empathic people report lower stress, lower anxiety, less hopelessness, and lower depression and show better physiological indicators of stress regulation. The evidence isn't entirely clear, but these effects seem to be partly due to the fact that empathic people have more rewarding, supportive relationships.
- ◆ Like many characteristics, dispositional empathy does have a genetic basis, although the ability to infer other people's emotions is more highly heritable than the ability to infer what other people are thinking. Parenting also plays an important role in empathy.



- ◆ Many studies have examined parenting and empathy, and the findings show that 3 aspects of parents' behavior are central in promoting children's empathy:
 1. Because it's difficult to learn to be attuned to other people's needs when one's own needs are not being met, a family environment that satisfies the child's own emotional needs and discourages excessive self-concern tends to promote empathy.
 2. Children who are encouraged to experience and express their emotions tend to turn out more empathic.
 3. Parents who model being emotionally sensitive and responsive promote empathy.

Suggested Reading

Fraley, "A Brief Overview of Adult Attachment Theory and Research."

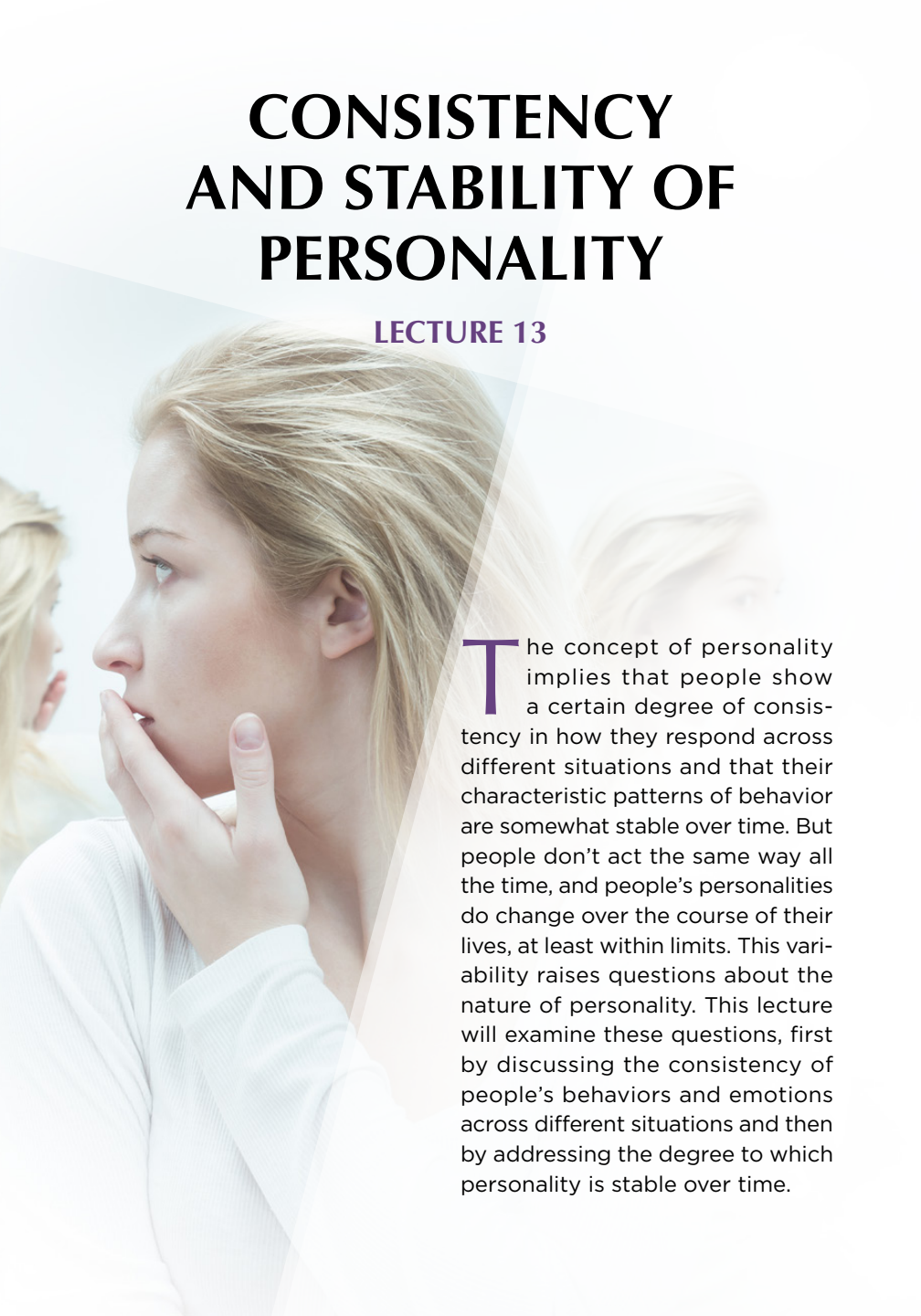
Lilienfeld, Lynn, Ruscio, and Beyerstein, "Myth #27."

Questions to Consider

1. Research on college students shows that the proportion of young people in the United States who are securely attached decreased between 1988 and 2011, whereas the proportion of young adults with an insecure attachment style has increased. Keeping in mind that secure attachment is characterized by low attachment anxiety and low attachment avoidance, what changes in families, social life, and society might be responsible for this change in attachment styles?
2. Empathy is usually regarded as a positive personal characteristic, but is it possible to have too much empathy?

CONSISTENCY AND STABILITY OF PERSONALITY

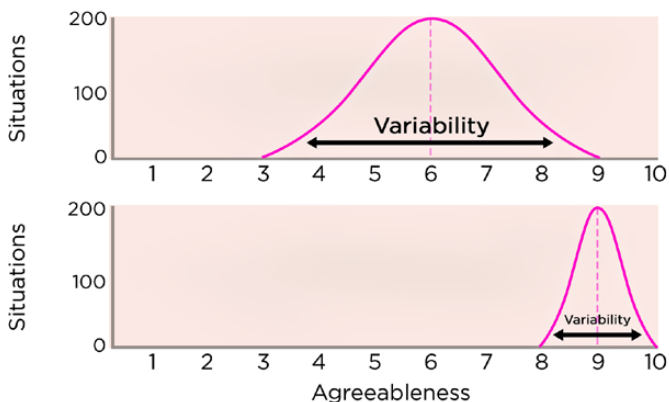
LECTURE 13



The concept of personality implies that people show a certain degree of consistency in how they respond across different situations and that their characteristic patterns of behavior are somewhat stable over time. But people don't act the same way all the time, and people's personalities do change over the course of their lives, at least within limits. This variability raises questions about the nature of personality. This lecture will examine these questions, first by discussing the consistency of people's behaviors and emotions across different situations and then by addressing the degree to which personality is stable over time.

CONSISTENCY

- ◆ All thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are influenced to some extent both by people's internal, psychological characteristics and by the features of the situations in which they find themselves. To understand these 2 sets of influences, let's consider the trait of agreeableness as an example.
- ◆ If we could send an invisible researcher to follow you around and record how agreeably you act in every situation that you're in for the next several weeks, we would find that your level of behavioral agreeableness varies a great deal across various situations. Sometimes you're exceptionally friendly, agreeable, and nice; sometimes you're moderately friendly and agreeable; and sometimes you're not very agreeable—in fact, you might be critical and grumpy or downright nasty.
- ◆ These differences in how agreeable or disagreeable you act are mostly due to differences in the situations you're in. You're probably less agreeable when other people are difficult to get along with, or when the situation is frustrating, or perhaps when you haven't been able to get enough sleep.
- ◆ Now imagine that this invisible researcher who's following you around gives you a rating from 1 to 10 in every situation to indicate how agreeable you are in that situation. If we plotted these ratings of your agreeableness across hundreds of situations on a graph, we'd find that they fall into a classic, normal, bell-shaped distribution.



- ◆ Now imagine that the invisible researcher followed 100 people around for a few weeks and created a graph for each of these individuals. These graphs would show us 3 important things that are relevant to the question of consistency in personality:
 1. Different people's graphs peak at different places on the 1-to-10 agreeableness scale, reflecting differences in their personalities. People's general, or average, level of agreeableness differs.
 2. No matter where their peak is, everybody shows variability in their agreeableness. Even the people who are usually most agreeable sometimes behave disagreeably, and the people who are usually disagreeable sometimes act in a friendly and agreeable way. These differences are due to factors operating in those situations.
 3. People differ in the amount of variability they show in agreeableness across situations. Whatever their most common level of agreeableness—wherever their graph peaks—some people show more variability around their typical level of agreeableness than other people do. Psychologically, this means that agreeableness is a more influential part of some people's personality than it is for other people.
- ◆ This point applies to every personality characteristic, not just agreeableness. People differ not only in how they tend to behave on every personality dimension—in their average level of extraversion or anxiety or agreeableness—but they also differ in how consistently they behave on each dimension across situations.
- ◆ Researchers have found it challenging to deal with these differences in variability in their research. When we measure personality with a standard, self-report personality questionnaire, we do a pretty good job of assessing the person's dominant tendency, but we don't get information about how much the person's behavior varies around that tendency.
- ◆ In 1968, psychologist Walter Mischel started a firestorm of controversy when he noted that the average correlation between 2 measures of the same behavior taken at different times was rather low. This was explained by the notion that people have to adjust their behavior to fit the particular situation they're in.

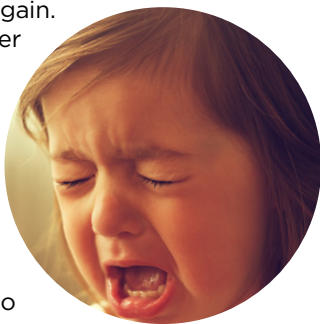
- ◆ Mischel's commentary on personality inconsistency led some psychologists to question whether personality even exists. Mischel later offered an interesting resolution to the controversy about consistency that he started. He suggested that it's useful to think of personality as a very large set of conditional, if-then rules that guide our behavior.
- ◆ Personality is a system of if-then cognitive associations: If the situation is A, then do X, but if the situation is B, then do Y. Some of these if-then rules are shared by just about everybody. If the situation is a party, then be lively and funny; if the situation is a funeral, then be sedate and solemn. These mental rules automatically guide us to behave differently in different situations. But each of us also have our own, idiosyncratic if-then rules that may differ from other people's.
- ◆ The idea that personality operates according to if-then rules—which is known as the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) model—can explain both consistency and variability in behavior. The if-then rules that control your behavior are simply specific to each situation.
- ◆ Within the CAPS model, personality differences between people show up in how much of the time a person responds the same way across different situations. If your if-then rules for many different situations specify the same behavior, you will manifest a broad personality trait that transcends different situations.
- ◆ Aspects of your personality are situation-specific. You consistently behave the same way in the same kinds of situations, but you don't necessarily behave consistently across different situations because those situations have different if-then rules for you.
- ◆ Mischel's CAPS model was important in clarifying that personality consistency doesn't necessarily mean that you always act exactly the same way. It means that you tend to act roughly the same way when you are in the same situation on different occasions.
- ◆ Another factor that influences the consistency of our behavior is that we all have many aspects to our personality, and these different characteristics may push us to respond in competing ways. Any one trait by itself might exert a consistent influence on our behavior, but other tendencies might sometimes move us in other directions.

Personality characteristics can be thought of as tendencies to think, feel, or do certain things. Personality is related to the probability that people will respond in a particular way. As a result, people show a certain amount of consistency from situation to situation, but they also display variability and inconsistency.

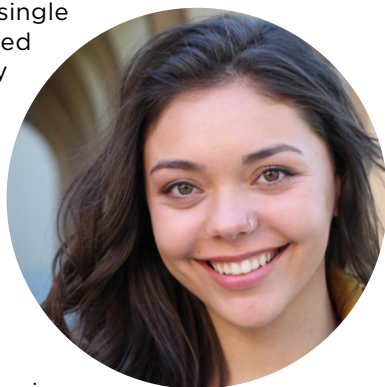


STABILITY

- ◆ In addition to consistency across situations, a separate consideration involves how stable personality is over time. Usually, when we talk about whether something is stable over time, we're talking about absolute stability. For example, if you say that your weight has been stable for the last 5 years, it means that you weighed yourself 5 years ago and then today and there hasn't been much change.
- ◆ But personality isn't like weight because there aren't any absolute standards for quantifying most personality characteristics. If someone wanted to know how extraverted you are, they could have you complete self-report measures of extraversion, observe you in social interactions, or have other people who know you well rate how extraverted you are.
- ◆ For studying personality differences among people, we don't need an objective, standard criterion. All we need is a way to quantify differences in extraversion among people, and researchers have many ways to do that. But if we're trying to understand personality stability and change over time, the lack of a single absolute criterion that we can use across the life span creates problems and ambiguities.
- ◆ Consider a characteristic such as self-control. Let's say that we want to know whether self-control, as a personality trait, is stable over time. So, we get a sample of a few hundred 2-year-olds and measure their self-control in various ways. Then, we bring these same children back for retesting when they're 22 years old and measure their self-control again. How stable would their self-control be over that 20 years?
- ◆ There are a few problems. First, the tasks that we'd use to measure self-control in a 2-year-old are very different than we'd use to measure self-control in a 22-year-old. And if we can't use exactly the same measures, then how can we compare self-control at age 2 to self-control at age 22?




- ◆ In addition, even if we did have a single measure of self-control that worked on all ages, our data will certainly show that all of these children's self-control changed a great deal from age 2 to age 22. All of them would show much more self-control as young adults than they did as toddlers. So, in one sense, their personalities were very unstable when it came to self-control. They changed a lot.




- ◆ But this gigantic age-related change in self-control is obscuring the possibility that individuals' levels of self-control are actually highly stable when compared to people of their own age.
- ◆ Imagine that we rank-ordered all of the children when they were 2 years old from lowest to highest in self-control and we rank-ordered the participants again based on their self-control scores at age 22. We would find a high degree of stability in where each person ranked at age 2 and at age 22 compared to the rest of the sample.
- ◆ The children who were comparatively low in self-control when they were 2 will probably be comparatively low when they are 22. And those who were high in self-control compared to other 2-year-olds will tend to have high self-control when compared to other 22-year olds.
- ◆ Absolute stability in self-control would be very low: Everybody's self-control increased a lot. But rank-order stability would be high because people maintained their relative position in the sample; individual differences in self-control would be a rather stable trait across a 20-year span.
- ◆ To understand stability fully, we need to consider both rank-order stability, which involves how much people change relative to other people, as well as whether the average level of particular traits, such as self-control, changes over time.

People can change throughout their lives, but in general, personality becomes more stable with age, and stability peaks somewhere between age 55 and 65.



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- ◆ In general, personality becomes more stable as people get older, both in terms of rank-order stability and absolute stability. This is partially because as we get older, we develop more and more habitual ways of responding to situations. In addition, our environment stabilizes more and more as we get older.
 - ◆ As we get older, we also have fewer experiences that change us as dramatically than the extensive developmental changes that occur in childhood and adolescence. And these changes aren't as random or as dictated by other people as when we're younger. They're based on our own choices and behaviors, which means that the environments that we create, seek out, and end up in are based to a large extent on our personality.
 - ◆ So, whatever our personality inclinations were to begin with, we gradually create a lifestyle and a life environment that supports and strengthens those characteristics. And that consistent lifestyle and environment makes our personality increasingly stable over time.
 - ◆ Another reason that personality becomes more stable as we get older is that our identity stabilizes. Those certain stable views of ourselves provide a reference point for reacting to situations and making decisions. Because our identity has stabilized, our ways of responding become more consistent than they were when we were younger.
 - ◆ Although we see greater stability in personality as people get older, people can and do change throughout life. There's never a point where your personality is etched in stone and has no chance of changing. New experiences, new life events, and new roles can always change the way we operate. Sometimes, people intentionally try to change themselves, such as working on anger management. But they typically change less because of the reasons just described.



Across personality studies, we have data that includes people from birth up to 101 years old.

- ◆ Dozens of longitudinal studies have tracked people's personalities over extended periods of time, so we can see how the average level of certain personality characteristics changes with age. Some of this work has addressed the question of whether people become more well adjusted as they get older.
- ◆ Life experiences guide people into increasingly more adaptive and mature ways of dealing with life, so we see a general shift toward more functional personality profiles throughout life. For example, on average, neuroticism decreases with age. People also tend to become more conscientious and agreeable on average as they get older. Together, these seem to be positive changes, both for the individuals and the people around them.

- ◆ The picture for age-related changes in extraversion is a bit muddy. It looks like some aspects of extraversion change with age but others don't. In particular, people tend to become more dominant and assertive as they get older, but how outgoing or sociable they are on average doesn't change overall.
- ◆ The average level of openness doesn't seem to change with age. It's not that people don't change in how open they are, but there's no consistent pattern. Some people become more open as they get older, some become more set in their ways, and others don't change.

Suggested Reading

Dahl, "How Much Can You Really Change after You Turn 30?"

Mischel, "Toward an Integrative Science of the Person."

Roberts and Mroczek, "Personality Trait Change in Adulthood."

Questions to Consider

1. Think of a reaction that you have that varies a great deal across different situations. (Perhaps you're very calm in certain situations but easily upset in others, or maybe you're sometimes very generous but sometimes stingy or selfish.) Using Mischel's CAPS model, see if you can discern any if-then rules that might determine how you respond in different situations. These rules have the following form: If the situation is A, then do X, but if the situation is B, then do Y.
2. Do you have any traits, beliefs, motives, or values that regularly conflict with one another and thus lead you to behave differently depending on which one has precedence in a particular situation?

EVOLUTION AND HUMAN NATURE

LECTURE 14

Personality reflects tendencies or regularities in people's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors—how a person generally tends to respond. And human beings as a whole show some of the same general tendencies. There are features of personality that can be seen in just about everybody, no matter where they live or what experiences they've had. There are ways in which your personality resembles everybody else's personality. There are regularities and tendencies in your emotions and behavior that can be seen in almost everybody else's personalities as well, and this lecture is about where those aspects of your personality came from.



EVOLUTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

- ◆ Physical characteristics evolve because animals who have them survive and reproduce at a higher rate than those who don't. Gradually, through the process of natural selection, animals with an adaptive characteristic have more offspring than those without the characteristic.
- ◆ Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was all about physical characteristics, but toward the end of the book, Darwin suggested that his ideas about natural selection could also be applied to psychological characteristics. After all, the brain is a physical organ, and just like every other organ of the body, it's subject to the process of natural selection.
- ◆ If an animal's brain is designed in such a way that it leads to behavior that increases survival and reproduction, then the genes for that more adaptive brain will get passed along at a higher rate, and the behavioral tendency will become part of the species' general personality.
- ◆ Anything that's part of human nature—just about any characteristic that we see in every normal person—is the result of natural selection. And that means that the aspects of your personality that you share with everybody else probably reflect evolutionary processes.
- ◆ The processes that produced human nature as it is today occurred over millions of years. This means that most of the processes that created human nature happened long before we became fully human only in the last 200,000 years or so, and these processes happened in an environment that was dramatically different from the one we live in today.
- ◆ Our prehuman ancestors lived in small bands that wandered across the plains of central Africa. They were hunters and gatherers and scavengers. The universal aspects of human personality evolved to meet the challenges of living in that sort of environment. This means that our personality includes some evolved tendencies that might have worked great 500,000 years ago but that aren't very helpful—and might even be problematic—in the 21st century.

- ◆ At the most basic level, the evolved characteristics that are relevant to understanding personality involve psychological processes that steered behavior in ways that promoted survival and reproduction during the course of evolution. So, it's helpful to think about the recurring problems that our prehistoric ancestors faced that had implications for the likelihood that they would survive and reproduce.
- ◆ As infants, they had to do things to get breast milk and to be protected by adults. Later, to survive, they had to get along with other people in a group context, avoid predators, secure an ongoing supply of food, avoid toxins and diseases, and avoid getting killed by other people. Then, to reproduce, they had to identify and attract desirable mates, fend off rivals who might pull their mate away, and be sure that whatever offspring they might have lived to reproductive age.
- ◆ The individuals who dealt with these and many other adaptive problems most successfully passed along their genes, and those genes contained the instructions for new brains that could also solve such problems.
- ◆ An example of why certain emotional and behavioral tendencies are part of your personality is judgments of physical attractiveness. Each of us finds certain people more attractive than other people, and each of us has certain personal preferences that other people might not agree with. But there are some notable consistencies in what people find attractive and unattractive that go deeper than personal preference. Some people are simply more attractive or unattractive than other people are to just about everybody.
- ◆ Most people—in every culture—show a clear and consistent preference for people without dark or bloodshot eyes, physical deformities, or open sores. This is because these physical features are often signs of disease; sometimes they indicate some problem that we might catch. So, natural selection favored individuals who kept their distance from people who showed signs of being sick.

- ◆ To look at it the other way, our prehistoric ancestors who found these features desirable and sought out people who showed signs of being infected or having a disease survived and reproduced at a lower rate than those who had negative reactions. So, now it's part of everybody's personality.

Acceptance and Belonging

Every normal person wants to be accepted and approved of by at least a few other people, even though people differ in the strength of this motive.

The need for acceptance and belonging can be traced to natural selection. Today, most people can survive without strong social connections, but for millions of years, survival depended on being integrated into a supportive social group.

Natural selection favored individuals who were drawn to live with other people and motivated to behave in ways that led those other people to accept and support them. This is how a strong desire for acceptance and belonging evolved to be part of the human personality.



SEX DIFFERENCES IN PERSONALITY

- ◆ Natural selection is also responsible for differences that we see in the personalities of men and women. There's been a good deal of controversy over the years—both among scholars and among the general public—regarding whether the differences that we see in the behavior of men and women is biological versus socialized. But now there's no scientific doubt that differences between men and women have both biological and social sources.
- ◆ All other species of mammals show clear differences in the behaviors of males and females, so we would be a very unusual species if none of the sex differences that we see in human beings were evolved. But socialization, culture, and learning also play a big role in how men and women act.
- ◆ The fundamental principle underlying natural selection is that organisms that are the most successful at reproducing contribute disproportionately to the gene pool. So, we are the descendants of prehistoric people who were most successful at reproducing. But throughout evolutionary history, men and women faced different reproductive challenges and evolved different strategies to meet those challenges.
- ◆ Men and woman faced different reproductive challenges because they differ biologically in their reproductive roles. First, men and women differ in reproductive constraint—the simple fact that, over a lifetime, women can potentially have a much smaller number of children than men can. Second, women invest much more biologically into their offspring than men do, including during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- ◆ Biologists tell us that if an organism has a limited number of opportunities to reproduce and must invest more into each offspring, then it should be more careful with each of its mating opportunities than an organism that has more potential opportunities to have offspring and little biological investment. But an organism that can potentially have many offspring with a very low biological investment doesn't need to worry as much about any particular mating opportunity.



Even if she works really hard at it, no woman can have more than, say, 20 children, and most women have many fewer. On the other hand, there's almost no limit to how many children a man could have. For example, Genghis Khan sired several hundred children.

- ◆ Research shows that, on average, women are more selective than men are when it comes to sex. This is a human universal: There's no society in which women are, as a group, less choosy and careful when it comes to sex than men are. It's part of the female personality to be more selective because, throughout evolution, females who were more selective made better mating decisions and had a larger number of viable offspring who lived to reproductive age.
- ◆ Evolution may also play a role in what men and women find attractive. We all have our personal tastes regarding who we find attractive, but we see some consistent differences between men and women that seem to be part of human nature.

- ◆ The most noticeable difference is that, on average, men prefer mates who are younger than they are. There are plenty of personal exceptions, but this preference shows up in every one of 37 cultures in which mating preferences have been studied. Scientists believe that the reason this preference is part of the male personality comes down to another difference in the reproductive challenges that men and women faced throughout evolution.
- ◆ From the standpoint of natural selection, the central reproductive task is finding a fertile mate with good genes. But finding a fertile mate has been much less of a challenge for women than for men. After all, men are potentially fertile from puberty until death, so almost no matter who women chose as a mate, chances are that he was fertile.
- ◆ But that wasn't the case for men, because women's reproductive years are limited. A man who preferred only 50- or 60-year-old women would not have passed along his genes, so natural selection would have favored men who preferred women who were younger than the age of menopause.
- ◆ In addition, a man was likely to have more offspring the younger his mate was because she had more child-bearing years ahead of her. This, too, would have given an evolutionary edge to men who preferred younger rather than older women.
- ◆ Men today are mostly the descendants of males who preferred younger, rather than older, females as mates. Whatever it was about the brains of those prehistoric men that led them to prefer younger women is still in the brains of men today.





If you look at the ages of heterosexual couples in the United States, women are, on average, 2.3 years younger than their male partner.

- ◆ This doesn't make sense in the modern world, in which people use contraception and often try to plan their families. In industrialized countries, most people who have children have only a few, and most people—men and women alike—stop having children by about age 40.
- ◆ But even though people today are virtually negating evolved dispositions to enhance reproduction, we're all walking around with a brain that evolved the way it did because it facilitated reproduction in prehistoric Africa hundreds of thousands of years ago.

EVOLVED PROCESSES THAT LEAD TO DIFFERENCES AMONG PEOPLE

- ◆ In the early days of evolutionary psychology, the focus was on the evolution of human nature—species-typical characteristics that can be seen, more or less, in every normal person. More recently, however, evolutionary psychologists have turned their attention to evolved processes that may contribute to differences among people.
- ◆ The general idea is that some evolved psychological adaptations may operate differently depending on different inputs from the individual's environment. If a single response is not adaptive under all circumstances, natural selection may create mechanisms that lead to different behaviors depending on environmental conditions.
- ◆ That means that people who live in one type of environment may respond differently from the way those who live in another environment respond. They would consistently differ from each other in terms of their typical reactions, but the source of the differences in their personalities would be an evolved conditional adaptation—one that appears only in certain environments.
- ◆ Throughout evolution, an adaptive problem that all children faced was to compete with their siblings for parental resources. Natural selection would have presumably favored children who were particularly successful at getting their share, if not more than their share, of food, protection, support, and other resources from their parents. And the notion that siblings compete for their parents' attention seems to be more or less universal.

- ◆ But the best strategy for getting one's share may differ depending on whether the child is the first-born child, the second-born child, or the third-born child, etc. The first-born child has an easy time of it at first, until the next brother or sister comes along. Then, suddenly, the first-born child has to share resources with a newcomer.
- ◆ One solution to this adaptive problem may be to identify with the parents and take on the responsibility of helping raise the younger sibling. First-born children often assume such a helper role, and this leads them to develop more responsible personalities—to be higher in conscientiousness, on average—than later-born children do.
- ◆ The second child in a family never has as much access to parents as the first one did because big brother or sister was there from the start. Then, when the third-born child comes along, he or she seems like an add-on.
- ◆ The youngest child, whatever number he or she is, is not going to have much authority or power in the family because everybody else is older. One solution to this problem is to get attention by being nonconforming and maybe even a bit rebellious.



- ◆ Evolutionary psychologists call this type of process strategic niche specialization. Although all children have faced the same general adaptive problem—how to get what they need in the context of the family—they may differ in how they pursue that goal, depending on the environment that they're born into based on their birth order. They essentially specialize in filling different niches within the family, and that difference in strategic niche specialization shows up as a difference in their personalities.

Suggested Reading

Buss, "Human Nature and Culture."

Geary, *Male, Female*.

Questions to Consider

1. Make a list of common human reactions that you think might be evolved features of human nature, both ones discussed in this lecture and others that you think might be universal. Which of these aspects of human nature continue to be beneficial in modern life, and which are no longer useful, or are even detrimental, now that we no longer live in small bands of hunter-gatherers?
2. Biologists believe that although the pace of evolution has slowed down, natural selection is probably still occurring. Consider the psychological traits that might be most adaptive under modern conditions and, thus, could become part of human nature over time if current conditions did not change over the next 500,000 years (which, of course, they will). Remember that these would be traits that enhance the probability of reproductive success (having many offspring who also survive to reproductive age) in the modern world.

PERSONALITY AND THE BRAIN

LECTURE 15



Everything that you think, feel, and do involves activity in the brain, so all differences in how people tend to think, feel, or behave must involve differences in their brain's anatomy or physiology. To give you a taste of the research being done on the psychophysiology of personality, this lecture will focus on 4 aspects of anatomy and physiology that involve brain regions, neurotransmitters, hormones, and bodily rhythms.

BRAIN REGIONS

- ◆ Many theorists have suggested that the most basic distinction that underlies virtually all behavior is the distinction between approach and avoidance. In other words, at the most basic level, virtually every behavioral reaction involves either approaching situations and activities and doing things or avoiding situations and activities and not doing things.
- ◆ Given the importance of this distinction for understanding behavior, researchers have worked to identify the systems in the brain that are responsible for approach and avoidance. Our current understanding of these 2 basic systems owes a debt to Jeffrey Gray, who first described them and mapped out the basic components. Researchers have extended Gray's work in many ways, including considering how these systems relate to personality.
- ◆ Approach and avoidance are controlled by 2 distinct systems: The approach system is called the behavioral activation system (BAS), and the avoidance system is called the behavioral inhibition system (BIS).
 - ❖ The BAS is the neurophysiological basis of behaviors and emotions that involve approach. The BAS is sensitive to possible rewards. Whenever rewards are salient, the BAS kicks on, orients you toward the rewarding activity, and motivates you toward doing the rewarding behavior. The BAS mediates reward-seeking behavior and the emotions that go along with seeking and getting rewards.
 - ❖ The BIS is involved in inhibition and avoidance. The BIS manages avoidance behaviors, including stopping behavior that's in progress, because the BIS is sensitive to possible punishments. Anxiety and fear and dread are the emotional language of the BIS.
- ◆ We all have activation and inhibition systems; we couldn't function and survive if we didn't have such systems. But people differ in how sensitive and active their BAS and BIS are. People differ in their overall reactions to possible rewards and punishments, which has many implications for how they feel and what they do.

- ◆ If you have a particularly active BAS, you're likely to be a bit on the impulsive side, because being impulsive reflects the fact that you find all kinds of things rewarding. If you have a more active BAS, you're also likely to be higher in extraversion than if your BAS activity is lower. The correlation between BAS and extraversion is rather high, which suggests that a sensitivity to rewards may contribute to extraversion. One reason why extraverts are out there doing extraverted things is because they find them rewarding.



- ◆ BAS scores are also related to people's tendency to experience positive emotions, which are reactions to real or anticipated rewards: The more sensitive you are to rewards, the more positive emotions you'll feel. This might also explain why people who are high in extraversion tend to have more positive emotions overall. The same brain system—the BAS—is related both to reward seeking and to positive emotions.
- ◆ Depression is associated with lower scores on measures of the BAS. It's not clear whether an underactive BAS predisposes people to depression (because they don't find things rewarding) or whether depression makes people less responsive to rewards—but it's probably both.
- ◆ On the other hand, the BIS—the avoidance system—is associated with the tendency to experience negative emotions because negative emotions are reactions to potential or actual punishments. So, the BIS is associated with the degree to which people experience anxiety, fear, frustration, sadness, disappointment, regret, dread, and just about every other emotion that occurs when bad things happen. If you have an active BIS, you probably score higher in neuroticism than if your BIS is less active.
- ◆ Whereas higher BAS is associated with impulsivity, higher BIS is associated with restraint—with inhibition and avoidance. People with a more active BIS are more risk averse; they're more focused on being sure that bad things don't happen than on seeking rewards.
- ◆ People who are higher in conscientiousness tend to be higher in both BAS and BIS than people who are lower in conscientiousness. One interpretation of this pattern is that people who are particularly conscientious and responsible are motivated both by the possible rewards they get from behaving conscientiously and also by the possible punishments of not being conscientious.
- ◆ Agreeableness is negatively associated with BAS and positively associated with BIS: Agreeableness is lower among reward-oriented people and higher among punishment-oriented people. This pattern suggests that agreeable people are more motivated by a concern with social punishments than by a desire for rewards.

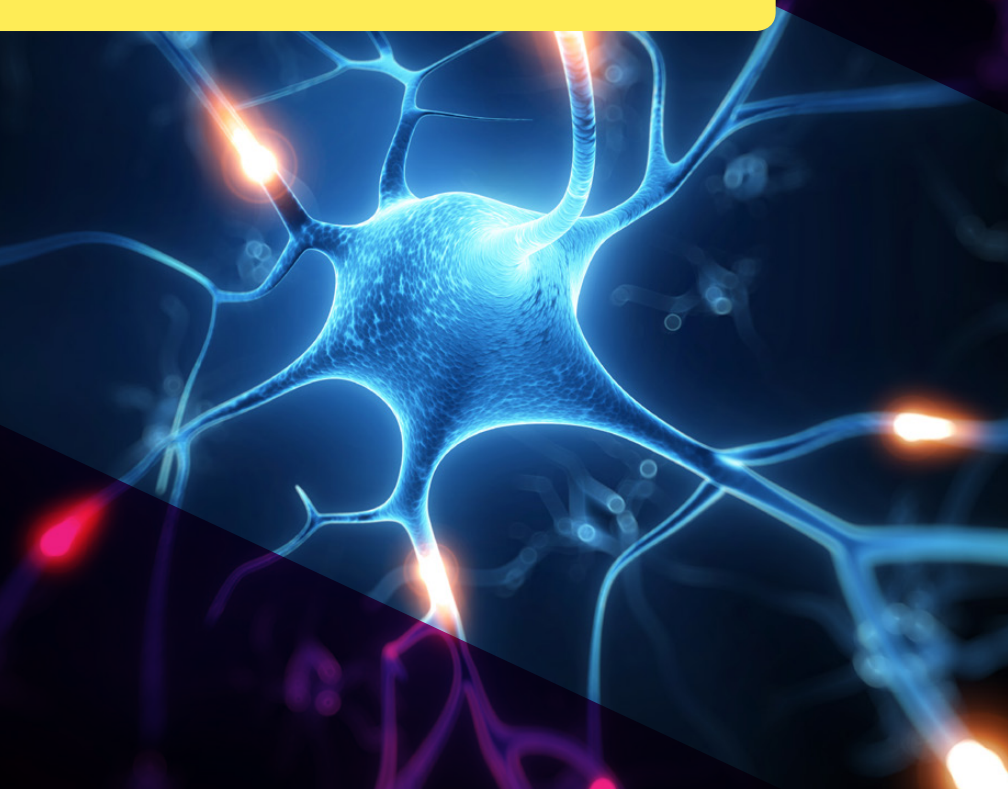
- ◆ Curiously, openness isn't related to BAS one way or the other. However, openness is negatively related to BIS; people higher in openness tend to have a less active BIS. Openness seems to be higher when people don't fear punishment as much, so it looks like people are more open to new and different things when they aren't as afraid of having bad experiences.
- ◆ A good deal of research has explored ways in which brain activity differs for people who score low versus high on measures of BAS and BIS. As expected, the areas of the brain that seem to be related to the BAS are those that involve positive emotions, reactions to rewards, and the motivation to engage in behavior.
- ◆ While the neural substrates of the BAS are reasonably well established, the brain regions that mediate the BIS are less clear. The BIS does seem to involve neural structures that detect potential threats and violations of expectancies, but researchers have debated whether the BIS primarily manages avoidance or whether its purpose is to detect and manage conflicts between the impulses to approach and avoid.



NEUROTRANSMITTERS

- ◆ The nerve cells in your brain—the neurons—communicate with each other by releasing chemicals called neurotransmitters that stimulate, or sometimes inhibit, activity in other neurons. The concentration of neurotransmitters in various areas of the brain can influence people's reactions, making some responses more likely than others. And in affecting the tendency for neurons to fire, these neurotransmitters can affect people's personalities.

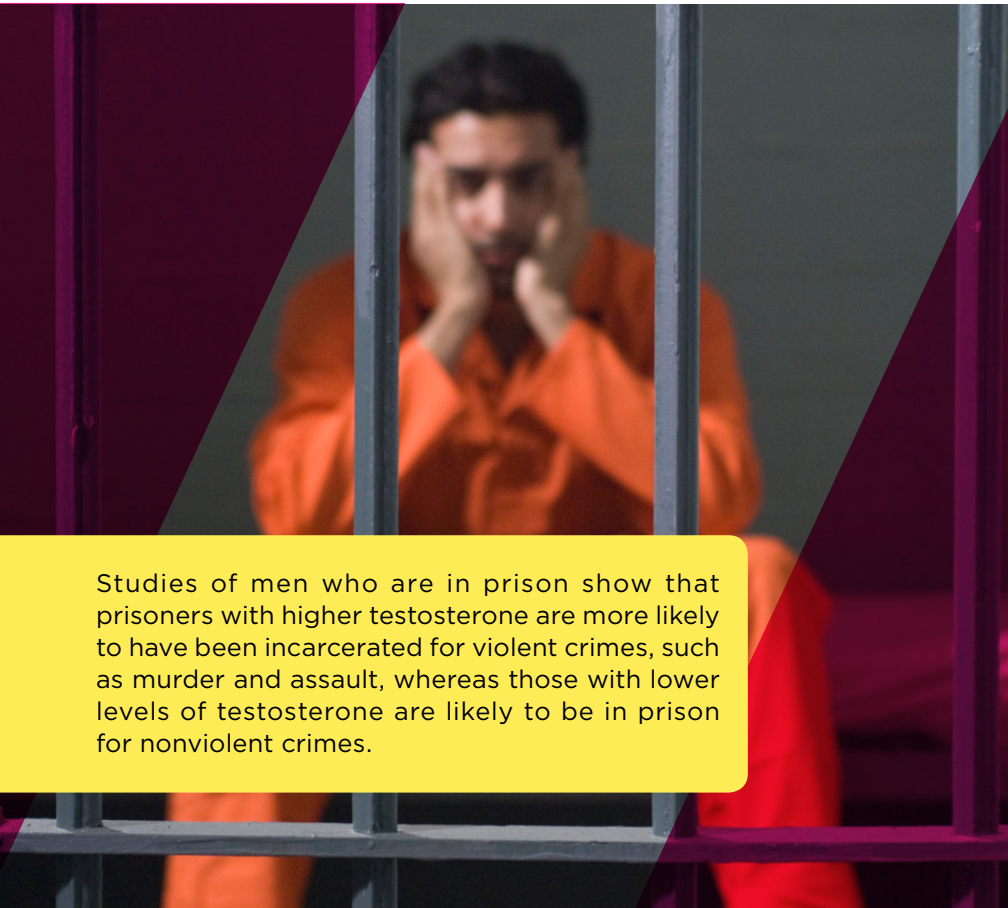
People sometimes think of the brain as something like a very complicated computer, but brains and computers differ in many ways, and one is especially important: Whereas everything that happens in a computer operates on the basis of electricity, your brain involves both electrical and chemical processes.



- ◆ Dozens of neurotransmitters have been identified, but a handful do the bulk of the work in neurotransmission, and these are the ones that have gotten the greatest research attention.
- ◆ To give just one example of how neurotransmitters relate to personality, let's consider the trait of sensation seeking, which was first identified during early research on the effects of stimulus deprivation.
- ◆ People differ a lot in how they respond to a low level of stimulation. Some people find lack of stimulation restful and relaxing, and other people find it very unpleasant, almost maddening. This led researcher Marvin Zuckerman to a life-long interest in personality differences in the degree to which people need stimulation—that is, to an interest in the trait of sensation seeking.
- ◆ People who are high in sensation seeking enjoy and seek out intense and exciting experiences. In everyday language, we might call them thrill seekers. They tend to like doing things that involve intense stimulation, such as skydiving and attending wild parties. They tend to drive faster than average and play their music louder. And they get bored easily when nothing exciting is going on.
- ◆ High sensation seekers also engage in more risky behaviors. For example, they're more likely to take illegal drugs, and they make more risky bets when they gamble.
- ◆ Sensation seeking is also related to people's job preferences. People who like a lot of stimulation go a little batty in quiet, unstimulating jobs. On the other hand, people who go into the military or who work in emergency rooms tend to score higher than average in sensation seeking.
- ◆ Sensation seeking is highly heritable. Part of the reason why some people crave stimulation, novelty, and intensity more than other people do involves neurotransmitters—specifically, an enzyme called monoamine oxidase. Studies show that people who are higher in sensation seeking have lower levels of monoamine oxidase.

HORMONES

- ◆ Hormones are chemicals that the body produces that regulate the activity of certain cells or bodily organs, including helping bones and organs grow and regulating metabolism. And some of these hormones have a direct effect on the brain, increasing or decreasing the likelihood of certain emotions, motives, or behaviors.
- ◆ As an example, the hormone testosterone is responsible for male secondary sexual characteristics—all of the changes in appearance, body hair, muscle mass, and voice that boys experience at puberty. Overall, testosterone is not related to basic dimensions of personality, such as the big five, but it is clearly related to a narrow swath of behaviors that involve aggression and dominance.

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing an orange jumpsuit, standing behind vertical metal prison bars. He has his hands pressed against the bars and is looking directly at the camera with a somber expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is framed by dark purple geometric shapes on the left and right sides.

Studies of men who are in prison show that prisoners with higher testosterone are more likely to have been incarcerated for violent crimes, such as murder and assault, whereas those with lower levels of testosterone are likely to be in prison for nonviolent crimes.

- ◆ For example, high levels of testosterone are related to getting into arguments and confrontations with people, and people who have higher concentrations of testosterone are more aggressive.
- ◆ Men have a much higher concentration of testosterone than women—8 to 10 times more, depending on their age—which might partly explain why men are much more likely to behave aggressively than women are. That's not to say that social factors don't also play a role in differences in aggression between men and women, but the males of almost all mammalian species are more aggressive than the females, and testosterone seems to be the reason.
- ◆ Researchers once interpreted these findings as reflecting a direct link between testosterone and aggressiveness, but the thinking now is that testosterone may not directly cause aggression. Instead, it predisposes people to be motivated to exert dominance and power over other people. Being angry and aggressive is one way to exert one's power and dominate others, but there are also other ways.

BODILY RHYTHMS

- ◆ Whether you are a morning person or an evening person involves the nature of your daily, circadian rhythm, which has a strong genetic basis and is relatively stable over long periods of time. Research has uncovered genetic differences between people who reported that they were morning or evening types, and those differences involved genes that are related to daily rhythms.
- ◆ Of course, we all have to conform to the schedules of daily life, but that doesn't mean that our body's natural rhythms necessarily go along with what society wants us to do.
- ◆ There is obviously some flexibility in these rhythms, particularly for people who aren't genetically programmed to be strong morning or evening types. In fact, we see general shifts in preferences across the life span. On average, people shift a little toward becoming more of an evening person around the age of 13, which reflects youth culture's preference for staying up late.

- ◆ Then, as people get jobs and have families, they usually have to start getting up earlier. But even then, many adults who have to drag themselves out of bed every morning haven't really become full-fledged morning people. Then, another shift tends to occur around age 50 toward becoming more of a morning person. We're not sure why.
- ◆ We usually talk about morningness and eveningness as if it's a dichotomy or a type. In fact, researchers call whether you are a morning person or an evening person your chronotype. But less than half of the population can be clearly classified as one type or the other, and most people fall in between. So, like most personality characteristics, this looks more like a continuous trait than a categorical type.
- ◆ Certainly, when we look at other indicators of chronotype than self-report—such as if we measure people's body temperature cycles or their ratings of how alert they feel at certain times during the day—morningness and eveningness look more like a continuum than like a dichotomy. But people do differ along this continuum, and people at the extremes—the true morning people (called larks by researchers) and the true evening people (called owls)—differ in ways that are reflected in their personalities.



- ◆ For example, morning people tend to be more conscientious than evening people are, and they also tend to be less impulsive. Larks also have a more proactive approach to life than owls in the sense that they show a greater ability to take action to change situations to their advantage.
- ◆ Larks tend to do better in school than owls. On the other hand, owls tend to score higher in extraversion than morning people do, and they seem to be more creative. They're also higher in their desire to have fun. Evening people also tend to consume more addictive substances, both legal substances (such as nicotine and caffeine) and illegal drugs.

Suggested Reading

Siever, "The Frontiers of Pharmacology."

Sullivan, "The He Hormone."

Questions to Consider

1. Looking at your own behaviors and emotional reactions, do you think that your personality is dominated by the behavioral activation system (approach) or the behavioral inhibition system (avoidance), or do these systems seem to be equally strong for you? What evidence supports your answer?
2. Do you think that you are low, average, or high in sensation seeking? How has your life been affected by your level of sensation seeking, and how might your life be better or worse if you had a different level of sensation seeking?

GENETIC INFLUENCES ON PERSONALITY

LECTURE 16

One of psychology's longest-standing controversies is the nature-nurture debate: the genetic factors that influence who we are (nature) versus the environmental variables that influence who we are (nurture)—not only how we were raised, but also our personal experiences, our social relationships, and the influence of the surrounding culture. Today, there is no doubt that personality—almost every major characteristic that has been studied—is influenced by both nature and nurture. This lecture addresses how strong the effect of genes versus the environment is for particular traits, how genes and environment interact to affect personality, and how genetic influences can affect people's environments.



GENES AND PERSONALITY


- ◆ Most of the work on genetic influences on personality has been conducted by researchers in behavioral genetics, which is an interdisciplinary field that studies the genetic and environmental influences on personality and behavior. It's essentially the field that studies questions about nature and nurture.
- ◆ The goal of behavioral genetics is to document how much genetic and environmental factors influence behavior and to study the ways in which genes and environment operate, both individually and together, to produce differences in personality.
- ◆ The central concept that we need to understand to make sense out of research findings in behavioral genetics is the concept of heritability, which is defined as the proportion of phenotypic variance in a trait that is attributable to genetic variance.
- ◆ Phenotypic variance is simply the observed variability in some characteristic. Normally, biologists think about variability in an animal's physical characteristics, but for behavioral geneticists, phenotypic variance is the variability that we observe in some behavior or psychological characteristic across people.
- ◆ As a proportion, the heritability of a trait can range from 0—indicating that none of the phenotypic variance in a trait is due to genetics—to 1—indicating that all of the variance in the trait is due to genetics. In between 0 and 1, the heritability tells us the proportion of variability in the trait that's due to genetic influences.
- ◆ Although certain physical characteristics, such as eye color, have heritabilities of 1, no personality trait seems to be completely determined by genes, so we never see heritabilities of 1 in behavioral genetics. We also rarely see a heritability of 0, as most behavior has at least some small genetic component.
- ◆ When it comes to the 5 basic dimensions of personality—extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness—somewhere between about 40% and 60% of the variability we observe in these traits is due to genetic factors. Genes play a big role in why we are the way we are with respect to the big five traits.

Research shows that the heritability of height for Americans is 0.87, which means that 87% of the variability we observe in height is due to differences in genes. Only 13% of the variability in height is due to nongenetic influences—mostly nutritional factors.



- ◆ Heritability is a population-based statistic, which means that it tells us the proportion of the variability in a trait that is genetic when we consider everyone in a particular population. But heritability does not tell us how much of your personality, or any individual's personality, is due to genetics.
- ◆ There's no way to know what proportion of a given individual's personality is due to genetic versus environmental influences. But even though heritability is based on population-level analyses, it does give us a ballpark idea of how much genes versus environment have influenced any one of us.

- ◆ Virtually every personality characteristic shows evidence of being influenced by genes. Of course, their heritabilities differ: Some traits are more strongly influenced by genes than other traits are. But most traits have a genetic basis, and the heritability for most of them falls between about 0.3 and 0.6. About 30% to 60% of the variability in most traits is due to genetic factors.
- ◆ Researchers in behavioral genetics use a number of approaches to estimate the heritability of a trait, but most of them come down to comparing the personalities of people who share genes and/or environments. Statistical analyses are conducted to estimate heritability for whatever trait is being studied.
- ◆ Some studies compare the personalities of adopted children to the personalities of both their biological parents and their adoptive parents. If the personalities of children who were adopted early in life resemble those of their biological parents more than those of their adoptive parents, then genetic influences appear to be operating. If they resemble their adoptive parents more than their natural parents, the environment seems to have an effect.
- ◆ Other studies compare monozygotic (or identical) to dizygotic (or fraternal) twins to see the degree to which monozygotic twins are more similar in their personalities than dizygotic twins are. If monozygotic twins are more similar than dizygotic twins, then genetic factors may be responsible because monozygotic twins are more similar genetically. This kind of comparison is enhanced when the twins have been either raised together—in the same family—or raised apart, which permits a more nuanced analysis of genetic and environmental effects.
- ◆ Many genetic influences on personality begin to reveal themselves soon after birth. Personality traits that are obvious soon after birth—inborn personality characteristics—are called temperaments by psychologists. Researchers have identified a number of characteristics that can be observed soon after birth, although they disagree about how many temperaments there actually are.

A close-up photograph of a man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing black-rimmed glasses. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. In the foreground, several out-of-focus balloons in red, yellow, and pink are visible, suggesting a festive or celebratory setting. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the same colors.

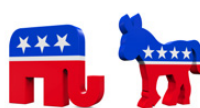
The heritability of intelligence, as measured by standard IQ tests, is about 0.5, which means that 50% of the variability that we see in intelligence across people is due to genetic differences among them. This also means that environmental factors affect intelligence about the same amount.

- ◆ Perhaps the most obvious temperament in newborns is activity level. Babies show a good deal of consistency in activity across situations and time: Active babies tend to stay active as they get older, and less active babies remain less active. So, differences in activity that exist at birth persist as features of personality.
- ◆ Fearfulness is also considered a temperament. Interestingly, research shows that the degree to which children react fearfully as young infants predicts their scores on measures of neuroticism as they get older. Furthermore, some babies are easier to soothe when they're upset, whereas for others, there's not much you can do to make them feel better. The basis of low and high neuroticism is present at birth, which makes sense given that neuroticism is partly heritable.
- ◆ We should be careful not to conclude that all differences that we see among newborns are necessarily genetic. After all, a developing fetus is exposed to environmental influences even before birth. The mother's emotions, nutrition, drug use, and other factors during pregnancy can affect the fetus's developing brain in ways that have implications for personality later on. Even so, most of the differences that we see in personality at birth are probably due to genes.

GENES AND ATTITUDE

- ◆ In addition to influencing personality traits, genes can play a role in people's attitudes. We usually think of attitudes as something we learn from other people—from our parents or peers or culture at large—but research shows that a wide variety of attitudes have sizable heritabilities.
- ◆ For example, the heritability of attitudes toward the death penalty is 0.5—just as high as for major personality characteristics. In other words, 50% of the variability in people's attitudes toward the death penalty is due to genetic differences. Not all attitudes have a genetic component, though. For example, the heritability for attitudes toward playing organized sports is 0.

The heritability of identifying as politically liberal or conservative is 0.43.



Attitudes toward organized religion have a heritability of 0.45.

The heritability of attitudes about exercise is 0.36.



Attitudes toward reading have a heritability of 0.37.

- ◆ Even when the heritability of a trait or attitude is high, it's misleading to say that people are inheriting their personality or attitudes except in a very loose sense. You don't actually inherit your traits or attitudes or behaviors; rather, you inherit a nervous system that tends to respond in particular ways. Genes influence the development of our physical body, including the brain and other parts of the nervous system, and that's what you actually inherit.
- ◆ Just as genes can cause people to be tall or have bad eyesight, genes also influence the structure of our brains. And differences in how the brain operates can lead people to respond in different ways.
- ◆ For example, the limbic system is the part of the brain that's directly involved in responding to threatening and stressful events. If your genes led you to have a limbic system that is unusually responsive to threats, you'll probably score high in neuroticism. Technically, you didn't actually inherit neuroticism—you inherited a brain that has an active limbic system. Likewise, if you inherited a limbic system that's less responsive than average, you'll probably be lower in neuroticism.
- ◆ Researchers have only started to explore the genetically determined differences in people's brains that underlie various personality characteristics, but whatever personality differences among people are due to genetic influences must be due to differences in how their brains operate.
- ◆ The same thing holds for attitudes. People whose brains respond in certain ways will find certain attitudes more agreeable to them than people whose brains respond in other ways. For example, if your genes designed your brain in such a way that you happen to find highly stimulating activities enjoyable, you'll have more positive attitudes toward stimulating activities, and you'll be high in sensation seeking.
- ◆ Similarly, if your genes designed your brain in such a way that makes you prefer stability and dislike change, you're likely to be more traditional and maybe lean toward conservative ideas. But if your brain leads you to like novelty and to be open to change and new ideas, you might be more likely to be liberal.

- ◆ Your environment, upbringing, and experiences also played a role in your political views, and your environment might even have overridden your inherited inclinations. But by creating a brain that responds in a particular way, your genes probably played a role in your political attitudes. Keep in mind that it's also possible to develop an attitude that has no apparent genetic basis.

Think about the link between genes and attitudes when you deal with people whose attitudes are so different from yours that you can't fathom how someone could hold such views. Remind yourself that your difficulty in understanding these people might lie in the fact that your brain is designed so differently from theirs that you can't even begin to resonate with their attitude. And, of course, they don't understand your views either.



GENES AND ENVIRONMENT

- ◆ Genes can influence our personality not only by designing our brain in a particular way, but also by changing our environment in ways that then affect our personality. Genes can influence personality in 3 distinct ways, some of which make it difficult to disentangle the separate influences of genes and environment:
 1. Most obviously, genes can affect personality and behavior more or less directly by influencing the brain and other parts of the nervous system.
 2. A second way that genes affect personality arises when genes create a brain that leads people to behave in ways that affect their environment and then the environment affects the person's personality. This process is called a reactive, or evocative, gene-environment correlation, in which a person's genes directly affect the nervous system and lead to certain patterns of behavior, which lead to certain reactions from other people, which affect the person's personality.
 3. A third way that genes can influence personality is known as an active gene-environment correlation, in which genes create a brain that is associated with certain motives, interests, preferences, or behaviors, and these genetically influenced inclinations lead the person to gravitate toward certain environments and activities. Then, spending time in those particular environments affects the person's personality.



A Psychological Puzzle

In studying personality development during the 1960s and 1970s, researchers initially found evidence suggesting that parents have little or no effect on their children's personalities.

Studies showed that 2 adopted children raised in the same home by the same parents are no more similar, on average, than any 2 random people.

As researchers dug deeper into this puzzle, they found that parents do indeed affect their children's personalities, but those effects differ across their children. In other words, parents affect their children, but they affect different children in different ways.



- ◆ In both the reactive and active gene-environment correlation, what starts out as a genetic effect on the nervous system creates different environments either by affecting how other people treat the person or by leading the person to select different environments and activities. In both cases, the environment created by the person's own actions then influences his or her personality.

Suggested Reading

Holmes, "How Dogs Are Helping Decode the Genetic Roots of Personality."

Pinker, "My Genome, My Self."

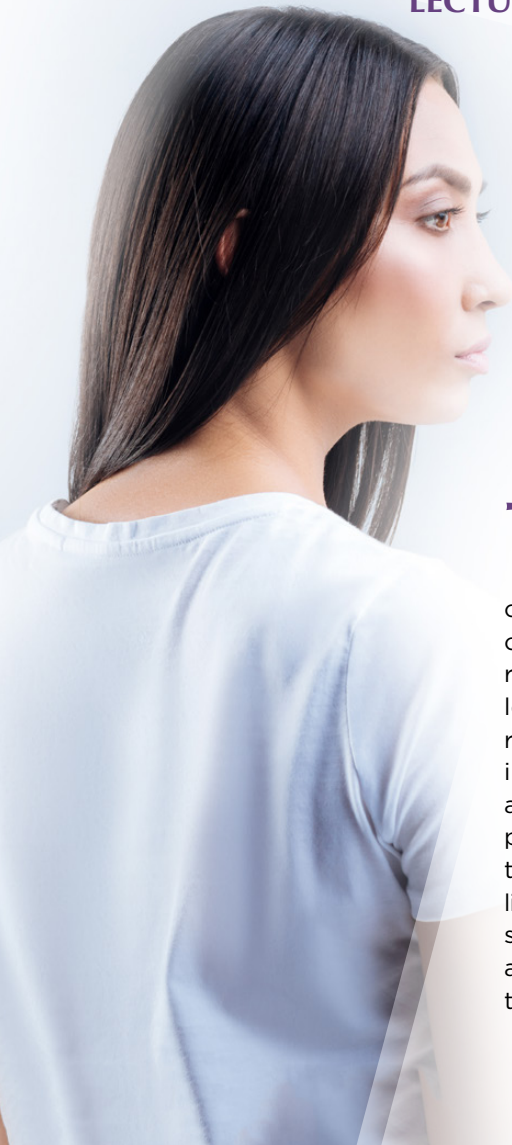
Plomin, "Behavioral Genetics."

Questions to Consider

1. Imagine 2 cultures: In culture A, every child is raised in exactly the same way, and parents are allowed no latitude in how they treat their children. In culture B, children are raised in many different ways, and parents can treat their children however they wish. If we calculated the heritability of a trait separately in culture A and in culture B, would you expect the heritability to differ in the 2 cultures? Why or why not? To answer this question, keep in mind how heritability is defined and calculated.
2. Explain the 2 ways in which people's genes can affect their environment, which then influences their personality. Although there's no way to know for certain, can you think of ways in which one or both of these processes might have occurred in your life?

LEARNING TO BE WHO YOU ARE

LECTURE 17



This lecture will focus on 4 simple but powerful processes that involve learning: classical conditioning, operant conditioning, observational learning, and experiential learning. These processes lead us to develop tendencies to respond in certain ways and, thus, influence our personalities. And although the foundations of our personalities are laid in childhood, these processes occur throughout life, so new aspects of people's personalities can emerge or disappear at any point, depending on what they learn along the way.

CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

- ◆ Ivan Pavlov was a Russian physiologist who discovered classical conditioning. He found that the dogs that he used in his research would often start salivating even before they were fed and that he could condition dogs to salivate to almost anything that he presented to them in connection with food. All he had to do was introduce the stimulus just before feeding the dog.
- ◆ In each case, after they learned to associate a sound or an image with food, the dogs' digestive systems would start working when the stimulus was presented, even if no food came. This phenomenon came to be known as classical conditioning.
- ◆ In the language of classical conditioning, the sound or image was a conditioned stimulus. It was a previously neutral stimulus that gained the power to influence the dogs' reactions by being paired with an unconditioned stimulus—the food—that naturally produces the reaction—salivation—without conditioning.
- ◆ Many of our emotional and visceral reactions are conditioned in exactly the same way that Pavlov's dogs were conditioned to salivate to other stimuli. When a previously neutral stimulus becomes paired with an unconditioned stimulus, the neutral stimulus may begin to elicit the same reaction.
- ◆ You probably have reactions to particular kinds of people, events, and other stimuli that were classically conditioned sometime in your past. These conditioned associations lead you to respond in particular ways and thus contribute to your personality.
- ◆ In some cases, you might remember exactly what it was that created this conditioned response. For example, you may know that your fear of bees started the day you were stung at a picnic. In other cases, the memory of the original event is lost, or you may have never realized that the reaction was conditioned. But if you have certain stable patterns of reactions to things that themselves wouldn't be expected to produce that reaction, those patterns might have been classically conditioned.

- ◆ The best examples of this phenomenon are emotional reactions, particularly fears and aversions. For example, most animals don't naturally produce fear unless we've either had a scary experience with one or other people have scared us by telling us how bad they are. And while the sight of most food isn't inherently nauseating, many people have aversions to certain foods so that simply the sight or smell—or maybe even just the thought—of that food makes you feel queasy because you got sick after eating it in the past.
- ◆ Positive reactions can also be classically conditioned. Some people have unusual sexual reactions to what would seem to be neutral, nonsexual stimuli, such as certain articles of clothing, people's feet, or tattoos. One answer to why people become aroused to neutral things is classical conditioning. If neutral stimuli become associated with sexual arousal, even accidentally, people may begin to become aroused by the neutral thing.



OPERANT CONDITIONING

- ◆ While some parts of your personality were classically conditioned, other aspects of your personality arose through a second type of learning, operant conditioning.
- ◆ In 1905, Edward Thorndike was the first psychologist to describe the law of effect—the idea that behaviors that produce a satisfying, pleasant effect become more likely to occur and behaviors that produce a discomforting, unpleasant effect become less likely.
- ◆ A few years later, John Watson, the founder of behaviorism, claimed that he could use the law of effect to turn any infant into whatever he wanted, such as a doctor or even a thief, regardless of the child's genes. Of course, people's abilities, personalities, and ways of thinking are strongly affected by genetics, so you can't turn people into absolutely anything you want, but you can influence the development of people's personalities within limits.
- ◆ As an example, about half of the variability that we see in conscientiousness across people is due to genetic factors. But the other half is due to other things, and operant conditioning probably ranks high among them. Many people are strongly reinforced their whole lives for behaving in conscientious ways, such as planning and being organized, because such characteristics are valued by society in general.
- ◆ But some people received much more encouragement and reinforcement for being conscientious than others over a period of many years. And some people were punished—reprimanded or deprived of privileges or even physically punished—when they showed a lack of conscientiousness, such as when they were irresponsible and slacked off. Over time, all of that reinforcement and punishment led you to behave conscientiously, sometimes when it doesn't really matter.

For operant conditioning to occur, it doesn't matter whether the behavior actually caused the reinforcement or punishment. All that matters is that a particular reinforcing or punishing event followed the behavior.



- ◆ So, to some extent, you are the way you are because of operant conditioning: You were reinforced for certain behaviors and possibly punished when you did other things. Reinforcement and punishment are important determinants of behavior.
- ◆ In everyday language, we think of reinforcement as a positive thing—a reward—and punishment as something negative. But this way of thinking about reinforcement and punishment can sometimes be misleading because people differ so much in what they find rewarding.
- ◆ In psychology, reinforcement and punishment are defined by their consequences, so we don't know whether something is reinforcing or punishing in a particular instance until we see what effect it has on the person's behavior.
- ◆ Reinforcement is an event that increases the likelihood of behavior that preceded it. If you do something and get attention and then you keep doing the behavior, then attention was reinforcing.
- ◆ Punishment is an event that decreases the likelihood of behavior that preceded it. If you get attention for something and then never do that thing again, it would appear that attention is punishing for you.

OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING

- ◆ For many years, psychologists assumed that people had to be reinforced or punished personally to affect the likelihood that they would repeat or refrain from a given behavior in the future. But this is not correct, because that's not the only way we learn.
- ◆ We learn a great deal, for example, by watching what other people do—and what happens to them afterward. In other words, we learn a great deal through purely observational learning. Watching other people receive rewards and punishments can serve as incentives that then influence our behavior.



- ◆ We learn 3 distinct kinds of things by observing other people: how to perform behaviors, what consequences may occur, and how likely various consequences will be.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- ◆ One other process by which we acquire parts of our personality through learning is personal experience. Through their personal experiences, people learn new ways of seeing themselves and the world. And what they learn then provides guidelines for how they should behave in the future.
- ◆ Our views of ourselves are based on many things, but our personal experiences play an important role in how we think about ourselves. To some extent, you figure out what you're like from the things that happen to you. We sometimes draw the wrong conclusion, and our views of ourselves are often based on just a handful of particularly memorable experiences rather than on a careful analysis of all the evidence. Still, whether your conclusions are correct or incorrect, your experiences teach you things about yourself.
- ◆ These kinds of experience-based effects on personality have been widely discussed in the context of how people react to traumatic events, such as physical attacks, catastrophic injuries, life-threatening illnesses, natural disasters, or losses of loved ones. These kinds of traumatic events can have a dramatic effect on people's personalities. Many people are not the same person after the event as they were before.
- ◆ But what's interesting is that the effects of traumatic events can be either negative or positive in the long run. In the aftermath of a traumatic event, some people return to normal, some show chronic post-traumatic stress and depression, and some show post-traumatic growth.



Imagine that a person grows up in an environment in which parents and other adults are distant, selfish, and not available when needed. That type of personal experience might lead the person to develop the belief that other people really can't be counted on and that people have to look out for themselves.

But a person who grew up with a great deal of support from other people might conclude, based on personal experiences, that most people will come through when you need them, and they'll learn to trust and count on others.

By creating different sets of guiding beliefs, these different personal experiences would result in quite different personalities: The first person would be distrusting and make every effort to be self-sufficient while the second person would be trusting and willing to rely on other people.



- ◆ The difference seems to depend, at least in part, on what they learned from the experience. When these changes in perspective are beneficial in helping them deal with life, people get back to normal or even experience post-traumatic growth. But when what they learned—or think they learned—from the event is not beneficial, people experience post-traumatic stress.
- ◆ Research on post-traumatic reactions suggests that traumatic events can change people's views in several major areas—people's sense of their future opportunities, people's views of their relationships with others, people's views of themselves, and people's views of life in general—and those changes can be either beneficial and lead to growth or detrimental and lead to disintegration.
- ◆ Each of these post-traumatic changes involves learning; people's experiences have changed their beliefs about the world and about themselves. It's interesting that precisely the same traumatic event can lead to positive post-traumatic changes for some people but to negative changes for other people, and we don't know a great deal about why people come away from traumatic events having learned different things.
- ◆ But some of it has to do with what their personalities were like before the trauma. People who, before the traumatic event, were optimistic and high in openness to experience, perceived that they had greater control over their lives, and believed that they coped well with negative events are more resilient in the face of crises and traumas than people without these characteristics. So, people who don't cope well even with ordinary daily problems get even worse when they experience traumatic events.
- ◆ Some research shows that people who cope better with traumatic events are more flexible in the coping strategies that they use. Traditionally, clinical psychologists have suggested that people need to confront the bad things that happen to them and that they shouldn't suppress or deny what happened or their feelings about it.

- ◆ But research has suggested that there are times when confronting trauma is more beneficial, and there are times when it's better not to dwell on it and to ignore it or push it aside instead. And the people who cope best are those who flexibly move back and forth in how they deal with what's happened to them—sometimes thinking about and confronting it and sometimes putting it on the shelf. We don't know much about what makes these flexible people's personalities different from people who use a single coping strategy, but it seems to work for them.

Suggested Reading

Collier, "Growth after Trauma."

Layton, "How Fear Works."

Questions to Consider

1. Do you see any common emotional reactions you have that you think might be the result of classical conditioning?
2. Looking back at your childhood, what behaviors did your parents or guardians tend to reinforce, and what behaviors did they tend to punish? Do you now have behavioral tendencies that may reflect these patterns of reinforcement and punishment? Perhaps more interestingly, do you have behavioral tendencies today that your parents or guardians clearly did not reinforce, and perhaps even punished, when you were young? If so, where do you think those tendencies came from?

HOW CULTURE INFLUENCES PERSONALITY

LECTURE 18

Culture has been defined in many ways, but it fundamentally comes down to a set of beliefs that are shared by a large group of people—beliefs about what’s important, what’s right and wrong, how things should be done, and how people should behave. And the beliefs that people adopt from their culture influence their tendency to behave in certain ways. As a result, people from different cultures show systematic differences in their thoughts, behaviors, and even emotions.



TIGHT VERSUS LOOSE CULTURES

- ◆ Personality doesn't manifest as much in strong situations that pressure people to act in certain ways as it does in weak situations, and cultures differ in the degree to which they generally exert a strong or a weak effect on people's behavior. So, cultures differ in the degree to which people's behavior reflects their individual personalities.
- ◆ Some cultures put more pressure on people to behave in certain ways—to be a certain kind of person—than other cultures do. And the more that cultural pressures require people to act in culturally prescribed ways, the less people's individuality comes through and the less variability we see among people.
- ◆ For example, the dominant culture of the United States permits a great deal of individual choice in how people behave, including what they do for a living, who they live with, what they wear, how they spend their free time, and whether they practice a religion. In fact, American culture not only permits a great deal of latitude in behavior, but it values and actively encourages individuality.
- ◆ There are still social norms and pressures to conform in certain ways—that's true of every society—but people's personalities are given more freedom to operate when cultural pressures are relatively weak.
- ◆ Contrast that with cultures that limit people's discretion to choose their lifestyle or occupation or religion or spouse. In those cultures, which researchers sometimes call tight cultures, how people behave is more heavily scripted by the culture and less influenced by personality. These cultures allow less personal discretion than so-called loose, or weak, cultures.
- ◆ Tight cultures are more common in homogeneous societies, where just about everyone shares the same basic racial and ethnic background, cultural beliefs, religion, and social values. Those societies have many norms and rules about how people should behave, and they punish those who deviate from the rules, even in minor ways.

- ◆ In contrast, heterogeneous societies tend to be looser and more tolerant of individuality because many different cultural belief systems are present. People are permitted to make their own choices of what to believe and how to live.
- ◆ Growing up in a tight culture creates a different orientation to rules, authority, and one's place in the society than growing up in a loose culture. And when rules are strict, people have fewer opportunities for autonomy, and their behavior is less likely to express their individual personalities.



INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS COLLECTIVISM

- ◆ Comparing the personalities of people from different cultures presents a number of challenges. Most notably, when the people in the cultures being studied speak different languages, it's difficult to be certain that the translations of the measures being used are equivalent. Typically, researchers translate a measure from one language to another and then translate it back to the original language to be sure that the words mean the same thing in both directions. This often requires several efforts, back and forth, before they get it right.
- ◆ But even then, exactly the same word or phrase may have different connotations in different cultures, which may affect how people answer the question. And sometimes questions on a personality measure contain concepts or situations that don't even make sense in another culture.
- ◆ The other big challenge for researchers has been identifying the characteristics of cultures that affect personality. Cultures differ in many ways—some quite important and some very trivial. And it's been a challenge to identify and measure the aspects of culture that might have psychological consequences.
- ◆ To do this, researchers have tried to identify the basic dimensions on which cultures differ from each other. Just as we can describe people's personal characteristics in terms of basic personality dimensions, we can also describe the characteristics of cultures along basic dimensions.
- ◆ Cultures differ along many dimensions, but the one that has attracted the most research attention is individualism versus collectivism. One of the big challenges of life involves managing the tension between looking out for yourself versus looking out for other people. But there's no clear answer to the question of how you should balance your focus on yourself as an individual with your focus on the other people in your life.
- ◆ Cultures differ in their beliefs about how people should balance this tension between self and other, and those differences are captured by a dimension that has individualism at one end and collectivism

at the other end. Individualist cultures give greater priority to the individual, and collectivist cultures give higher priority to the collective, or the group.

- ◆ Individualist cultures are based on the idea that each person's life ultimately belongs to that person, so people have a right to select their own beliefs and values and can live almost any way they please. Collectivist cultures are based on the belief that a person's life belongs mostly to a group or society, so people often have to sacrifice their personal goals and interests for the benefit of the group.

The most individualist countries tend to be the most Westernized; the United States, Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands top the list.

It's common for people from Western cultures to assume that the most collectivist cultures are countries in East Asia, such as Japan, but in fact, the most collectivist countries are places such as Ecuador, Peru, Columbia, and Venezuela. Pakistan is also on that list.

Japan actually falls in the middle of the individualist-collectivist continuum, along with countries such as Spain, India, Israel, and Austria. They're the most balanced between individualism and collectivism.



- ◆ All cultures have individualist and collectivist features, as well as individuals who depart from the cultural norm. But as a whole, cultures differ markedly in the degree to which they are individualist or collectivist, and those differences have implications for the personalities of the people who live or operate within those cultures.
- ◆ For example, individualist cultures encourage behaviors that are more extraverted in the sense of being assertive and dominant and attracting attention to oneself, whereas collectivist cultures encourage a less extraverted and more introverted style.
- ◆ People raised in individualist cultures also tend to be higher in openness than people from collectivist cultures, possibly because collectivist cultures encourage people to adopt the norms of their groups and don't allow as much individual freedom in choosing what to believe and how to behave.
- ◆ People from individualist cultures are not as good at taking other people's perspectives as people from collectivist cultures are. It's not that individualists can't do it; they just don't take other people's perspectives as automatically or as quickly as people from collectivist cultures do.



CULTURAL VALUES AND PERSONALITY


- ◆ Values are one route by which cultures influence people's personalities. For example, a culture that values toughness and aggression will presumably have a higher proportion of tough, aggressive people than a culture that values being gentle and kind. In helping people prioritize what's important, a culture's values change how people tend to behave.
- ◆ Given the large number and diversity of values around the world, researchers have looked for broad themes in the values that cultures promote. A leader in this area has been Geert Hofstede, who has studied the basic dimensions of cultural values across more than 50 countries.
- ◆ Hofstede's research identifies 4 basic dimensions of values on which cultures differ and, thus, dimensions that might affect the personalities of the people in a given culture. Not surprisingly, one of the values that he identified is the value placed on individualism versus collectivism.
- ◆ A second value that he identified is called power distance, which refers to the degree to which people should recognize and accept an uneven distribution of power among people. At one end of this value dimension are cultures that are very hierarchical—cultures in which people generally relate to one another in terms of their relative status and power and in which everyone accepts where they are in the hierarchy and the hierarchical status quo. Middle Eastern countries are particularly high in power distance, as are countries with a caste system, such as India.
- ◆ At the other end of the power distance dimension are cultures in which people generally interact with one another as equals and hierarchies are used only when necessary, such as in the military. Countries with the lowest power distance include New Zealand, Austria, Israel, Ireland, and the Scandinavian countries. The United States is also relatively low in power distance—in the bottom quarter of countries—but it's not as low as you might expect for a country founded on the idea that all people are created equal.

- ◆ In most status hierarchies, there are many more people toward the bottom of the hierarchy than there are at the top. As a result, most people in high-power-distance cultures have low status and power. And research shows that most people in a high-power-distance culture are socialized to be subservient—to follow the rules and stay in their place.
- ◆ People from cultures that are high in power distance also tend to score higher in conscientiousness. They follow the rules and do what they're supposed to—that is, they do what people higher up the hierarchy tell them to do.



Researchers who looked at the relationship between cultural personality fit and well-being across 28 countries found that immigrants whose personality characteristics were more consistent with cultural norms in the new country had greater psychological well-being.

- ◆ They are also lower in extraversion, so they're less dominant and assertive. They're also lower in openness; they're less likely to entertain new ways of thinking and doing things. That would go against the status quo.
- ◆ A third dimension of cultural values is usually called masculinity-femininity. At the high end of this dimension—the so-called masculine end—are cultures that emphasize ambition, achievement, success, competition, and acquiring wealth. At the low end of this dimension—the so-called feminine end—are cultures that emphasize caring, cooperation, nurturance, and valuing the quality of life.
- ◆ A better name for this dimension might be agentic versus communal orientation. Cultures that value an agentic orientation stress getting things done, succeeding, and focusing on oneself, including focusing on making money. Cultures that value a communal orientation emphasize helping other people and fostering good relationships.
- ◆ Most industrialized countries, including the United States, lean toward the agentic, achievement-oriented side of this dimension. After all, becoming an industrialized country requires people to generally value achievement, success, and making money. Japan scores highest in terms of valuing this agentic orientation.
- ◆ The 4 countries that emphasize the communal, supportive orientation the most in the world, by far, are the Scandinavian countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Costa Rica and Portugal are also relatively communal, along with some countries in central Africa.
- ◆ People in agentic, achievement-oriented, so-called masculine cultures score higher in neuroticism than people in cultures that value a communal orientation. People in agentic cultures are notably more likely to be unhappy, distressed, angry, upset, and stressed out than those in communal cultures.
- ◆ People in agentic cultures also score higher in openness. It's not completely clear why, but it might be that people who value achievement and success have to be willing to be open and flexible in their beliefs and behaviors to succeed. Success requires novelty and innovation, which are valued more by people high in openness.



When interacting with people from other cultures, keep in mind that they may value certain personality characteristics differently than you do. In fact, certain characteristics may have quite different connotations in their country than in yours. That means that someone who is behaving in a perfectly acceptable manner for their own country may come across as inappropriate, rude, or even disturbed to people from somewhere else.



- ◆ Hofstede's fourth dimension of cultural values involves uncertainty avoidance, which refers to the degree to which a culture leads its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured and ambiguous situations.
- ◆ Cultures that are high in uncertainty avoidance don't like situations that are novel, unstructured, surprising, or different than usual. So, such cultures minimize uncertainty by having stricter rules, laws, and regulations that specify how things should be done and how people should behave. They also emphasize safety and security. Cultures that are high in uncertainty avoidance don't like innovation and change, and they can feel repressive compared to cultures that are low in uncertainty avoidance.
- ◆ Cultures that are low in uncertainty avoidance are more tolerant of different beliefs and opinions, including being comfortable with a variety of religions. They try to have as few rules as possible and allow people the freedom to live as they wish.
- ◆ In general, uncertainty avoidance is higher in Latin countries, Japan, and Germany, and it's lower in Scandinavia, English-speaking countries, Jamaica, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore.
- ◆ People in cultures that value accepting uncertainty score significantly lower in neuroticism. Normally, uncertainty, novelty, and change worry people, but if your culture values those things and says that uncertainty is not really a problem, you'll probably be more accepting of it all.
- ◆ Greater acceptance of uncertainty is also associated with higher agreeableness. When a culture promotes a live-and-let-live philosophy, people are nicer to each other.

- ◆ We can interpret these relationships between cultural values and personality in 2 ways: We could conclude that growing up in cultures that value particular orientations leads people to develop certain personalities, but perhaps people in different cultures have different genetic predispositions that influence their personalities, and over time, people with different kinds of personalities create different kinds of cultures.

Suggested Reading

Hofstede, "Dimensionalizing Cultures."

Jarrett, "Different Nationalities Really Have Different Personalities."

Triandis and Suh, "Cultural Influences on Personality."

Questions to Consider

1. Individualist and collectivist cultures each have benefits and liabilities in terms of people's personality development and psychological well-being. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each?
2. In what ways does your personality fit and not fit the culture in which you live? In other words, compare the primary characteristics that your culture values to your own configuration of personal characteristics and think about how well your personality matches your culture's ideal.

NONCONSCIOUS ASPECTS OF PERSONALITY

LECTURE 19



The focus of this lecture is that much of what influences people's emotions and behavior occurs outside of their conscious awareness and that to understand people's personalities, we have to consider nonconscious processes. At any given moment, you are aware of only a small portion of what's actually going on around you and only a small portion of what's happening in your own mind. And that's a good thing. Your brain has a limited capacity to think consciously about things, so it handles most tasks without you having to think consciously about what you're doing.

NONCONSCIOUS PROCESSES

- ◆ Imagine yourself at a large party. There's a lot of noise, so when you're talking with people, you have to focus very carefully on what they are saying and ignore everything else. In fact, if someone asked you what the other people around you were talking about while you were carrying on a conversation with someone, you probably couldn't tell them. Even though they are within hearing distance, you're totally oblivious to what they are saying. Until, out of the hubbub, you hear someone say your name, and your ears perk up.
- ◆ This tells us that you've actually been monitoring all of those other conversations all along, or at least your brain has been—it's doing so nonconsciously, without you thinking consciously about it. Only if it picks up something that might be important to you, such as your name, does your brain bother you by bringing it to conscious awareness so that you can figure out what's going on.
- ◆ This so-called cocktail party phenomenon tells us not only that your brain is monitoring things nonconsciously, but also that it's using information stored in your memory to make nonconscious decisions about how to respond. After all, your brain recognized your name—nonconsciously—so it was pulling information from memory as it monitored the situation.
- ◆ At the broadest level, human beings possess 2 distinct systems that process information, influence emotion, and guide behavior. In other words, there are 2 basic types of thinking, and they go by a variety of names: nonconscious versus conscious, automatic versus controlled, and system 1 versus system 2.



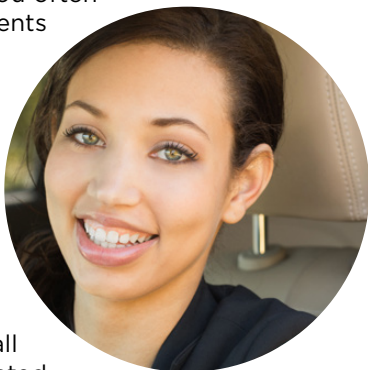


Researchers have studied nonconscious effects by putting headphones on people and playing different messages to each of their ears. They tell people to listen carefully to one of the messages and then ask participants about the message in the other ear, the one that they were not consciously monitoring. People would claim not to know anything about what was said, yet certain kinds of words would pop out and get their attention—not only their own name, but also words pertaining to sex and curse words.

- ◆ You're already pretty familiar with the conscious system, system 2, because you're consciously aware of the way that it works. If you're trying to make a decision, whether about something important or something trivial, you're consciously aware of what you're thinking about. You can make lists of what the considerations are, and you can articulate what your thought processes are. And afterward, you can explain the basis of your decision—or at least the conscious basis of your decision.

- ◆ Conscious thought is important, but it has some drawbacks. You can think consciously about only one thing at a time—in spite of what habitual multitaskers may say. Conscious thought is also rather slow and deliberate, so you often can't make instantaneous judgments consciously.

- ◆ Fortunately, we also have system 1, the nonconscious system, which can process lots of information simultaneously and very rapidly. But you're not aware of anything that's going on inside the system until an answer or a reaction pops out. You engage in many behaviors all day, many of them very complicated behaviors, using the nonconscious system.



- ◆ Talking is usually completely nonconscious. As you are chatting with someone, you usually aren't choosing your words consciously. Of course, sometimes people try to manage their speech consciously; when you want to be careful of what you're saying, some conscious thought might be involved. But usually it's not.



- ◆ This means that many manifestations of your personality—ways in which you tend to feel or behave—are not mediated by conscious thought. You often don't deliberately and consciously decide to act the way you do, have the reactions that you have, or be the person that you are.

- ◆ Sometimes you do make deliberate, conscious decisions that reflect aspects of your personality. If you're a highly conscientious person, you might plan things out and purposefully get organized and talk to yourself in ways that keep you on task.
- ◆ So, sometimes conscious thought can reflect aspects of our personality and create our typical ways of responding. But much of what determines your personality is entirely nonconscious.

NONCONSCIOUS CONTENT

- ◆ The processes that occur nonconsciously involve brain mechanisms that process information in ways that you aren't aware of. There's nothing particularly mysterious about this, although it is terribly complicated. Computers can process lots of information all at once to make decisions, and they do so presumably without any conscious awareness of what they are doing. They are nonconscious information-processing devices.
- ◆ Your brain isn't exactly like a computer, but it's similar to the extent that it's also an information-processing device. And the analogy helps us see that mechanisms can process information and make decisions without conscious awareness. So, the fact that you can process information and make decisions nonconsciously isn't too difficult to grasp.
- ◆ The more challenging part is to explain the content of the information that's being processed nonconsciously, because that's what makes people's personalities different. Your brain's nonconscious processes are using somewhat different nonconscious content from the content that another person's brain uses.
- ◆ What's actually in your nonconscious? That question is misleading because it implies that the nonconscious is a place in your mind. In fact, nonconscious processes take place in many different parts of the brain. But the internal content that influences your nonconscious reactions is just stored in memory like other information in your brain.



- ◆ Consider this question: What color do you associate with the word “stop?” When the answer popped up in your mind—“red”—where did that information come from? And did you have to think consciously about it, or did the answer just come out of nowhere? Most likely, you associated “red” with “stop” very quickly without having to think about it consciously.
- ◆ And when you’re driving, you probably respond very quickly and automatically when the light turns red without thinking consciously, “Oh, the light turned red, and red means stop.” The association between “stop” and “red” is stored in the memory that your conscious mind uses, but your nonconscious processes also have ready access to it.



- ◆ That's a very simple association, one that doesn't have much relevance or impact outside of driving, and just about everybody has that same association. But some of our nonconscious associations are idiosyncratic. One person might have developed a very different set of automatic associations to certain situations, events, or kinds of people from the associations that another person has. These 2 people might respond differently in a particular situation because they have different nonconscious associations to stimuli that are present.

MOTIVES

- ◆ Two people also might respond differently because they have different motives. Modern research shows that people have motives that they aren't aware of. These nonconscious motives are called implicit—to distinguish them from explicit motives that people are aware of and can think about.
- ◆ The idea that people have motives that they aren't aware of creates a problem for researchers in psychology, who depend a great deal on questionnaires and interviews to ask people about themselves. Psychologists have well-designed and highly valid self-report measures of people's motives, but people can report only on their explicit, or conscious, motives, which leaves us in a bind.
- ◆ One solution to the problem of determining what people's implicit motives might be is to use projective tests, which provide people with an ambiguous stimulus or unstructured task of some kind, such as an ambiguous picture or a task that can be accomplished in many different ways. The idea is that people's motives will come out in how they interpret the ambiguous picture or deal with the unstructured task even if they can't identify or verbalize what their motives are.
- ◆ The most popular measures of implicit motives have been variations of tests modeled on the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), which involves a set of drawings of ambiguous situations. For example, one picture shows a woman lying in bed with a man standing by the bedside shielding his eyes or grasping his forehead—it's not clear. And the respondent is asked to tell a story about the scene.



Research has shown that a projective measure of power motivation predicts long-term success as a business manager better than a self-report measure of power motivation.

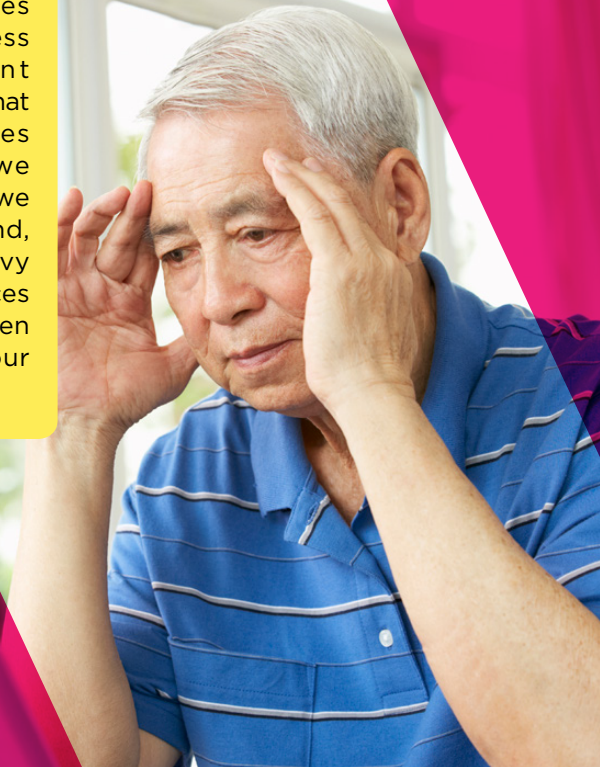
- ◆ The kinds of stories that people tell differ a great deal in who respondents think the people in the picture are and what their relationship is. Some think the woman's asleep; others think she's dead. Sometimes the man is her husband or lover; sometimes he's a guy who picked her up in a bar the previous night. Respondents even describe the people's emotions differently. Some think that the man is covering his eyes out of guilt; others think that he is rubbing his eyes as he gets up to go to work early.
- ◆ You can't tell too much about someone from the story he or she tells about any particular picture. But after coding a person's stories about several of these ambiguous pictures, certain themes often emerge. You can begin to get a sense of how people interpret the world, thereby shining some light on their concerns and motives, even if they can't consciously identify or explain what those motives are.

- ◆ If you measure a particular motive using this kind of projective technique and you also administer standard self-report personality scales on which people answer questions about their motives, the scores on the 2 measures often don't correlate very highly. In other words, the nonconscious, implicit motives reflected in the stories people tell on projective tests don't necessarily relate to the explicit motives that they report on questionnaires.
- ◆ Researchers have spent a lot of time trying to understand why implicit, projective measures and explicit, self-report measures don't seem to be getting at the same thing. The best conclusion is that people have 2 sets of motives—one nonconscious, implicit set; and one conscious, explicit set—that may or may not converge, but both sets manifest in people's personalities.
- ◆ Given what we know about nonconscious versus conscious processing—about system 1 versus system 2 thinking—it's not surprising that people can have nonconscious motives that don't necessarily line up with their conscious motives.
- ◆ Sometimes we have automatic, gut-level desires to do something, and sometimes we think carefully about what we should do. And there's no reason that these 2 processes will necessarily lead to the same motivation. In fact, we are sometimes motivated to do something that we consciously tell ourselves we shouldn't be doing, which shows that we can have competing motivational influences.
- ◆ Another thing we've learned is that implicit, nonconscious motives predict people's long-term outcomes in life better than explicit, conscious motives do, whereas explicit motives predict people's specific choices on particular tasks better than nonconscious motives.
- ◆ When we're confronted with an explicit decision—something specific that we have to decide right now—we tend to think about it consciously, so our conscious motives figure prominently in our reactions. But as life unfolds, there are many subtle, seemingly unimportant decisions and choices that we don't think about consciously, and in those unimportant situations, our nonconscious motives are likely to be operating.

HABITS

- ◆ Another example of how nonconscious processes can influence behavior in ways that make people different from each other is habits. A habit forms when people are cued to perform a behavior automatically without making a conscious decision to do so.
- ◆ Many people have the habit of following a certain routine as they get ready for work each morning. A certain contextual cue—getting out of bed—cues an automatic pattern of behavior. If you have a habit for this kind of thing, you don't sit on the edge of the bed each morning and ponder what to do to get ready for work. You just start your day, without any conscious thought or deliberation. Your day is filled with habitual responses, and they help make you who you are.

The fact that much of our personality operates outside of our awareness has a few important implications: First, given that nonconscious processes affect our reactions, we can't know for sure why we do certain things. Second, the fact that we aren't privy to nonconscious influences helps explain why it's often so difficult to change our behavior.



- ◆ Habits are exceptionally efficient because they allow us to perform certain actions without devoting time or energy to figuring out what to do or how to do it. The downside is that, because they're automatic, habits sometimes unfold even though they aren't the best responses in a particular situation—and even when they conflict with our intentions.
- ◆ Neuroscience research shows that as habits form and strengthen, control of the behavior shifts from areas of the brain that are associated with conscious thinking and goal-directed control to brain areas that are involved in perceiving stimuli and initiating actions—that react automatically and nonconsciously.

Suggested Reading

Bargh, *Before You Know It*.


Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves*.

Questions to Consider

1. Compare Freud's view of the unconscious to the view of nonconscious processes endorsed by many modern personality psychologists. In what ways are the 2 views similar, and in what ways are they different?
2. Automatic, habitual reactions lead to consistencies in our behavior even without us thinking about them. What automatic, habitual responses can you see in your own behavior?

PERSONALITY AND SELF-CONTROL

LECTURE 20

A young woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a light pink blazer over a white shirt, is smiling and pointing her right index finger directly at the camera. The background is plain white.

Understanding how people self-regulate is critical to understanding their personalities. Not only do people differ in how well they control their own behavior, but many of the things that make people different from one another involve how they manage their behavior and cope with the challenges they face in life. How good people are at self-regulation is an important determinant of the quality of their lives. High self-control helps people get along better with others and makes them better at avoiding things that will hurt them in the long run. Overall, good self-regulators are happier, healthier, and even live longer than bad self-regulators.

SELF-CONTROL BY INHIBITION VERSUS INITIATION

- ◆ At its foundation, self-regulation involves how people manage the process of pursuing their goals. We all have many goals in life. Some are ongoing goals that stretch out over time, such as being financially secure, while other goals are momentary and fleeting, such as getting to a meeting on time.
- ◆ At any given moment, many goals can be potentially active. But there are limits on how many goals we can pursue at the same time, and sometimes our goals directly conflict with each other. People who are good at self-regulation manage their behavior in pursuit of their goals better than people who are bad at self-regulation.
- ◆ Usually, when we think of people who have poor self-control, we think about people who can't stop themselves from behaving in ways that create problems for themselves or other people—for example, a person who can't resist sweets. These people seem to struggle with the ability to inhibit or resist impulses that are inconsistent with important goals. They're bad at self-control by inhibition; they have trouble inhibiting certain problematic behaviors.



One study found that self-control was the only personality variable among 32 variables studied that significantly predicted grade point average among college students.

- ◆ Just as important for self-control as inhibiting yourself from engaging in undesired behaviors is the ability to make yourself take action and initiate desired behaviors. For example, a person who wants to stay fit has to make him- or herself get out the door to work out. This type of self-regulation is called self-control by initiation, and it involves initiating behaviors that move us toward a goal.
- ◆ These 2 types of self-regulation tend to go together to some extent. People who are good at initiating behavior also tend to be good at inhibiting behavior, and people who are bad at one also tend to be bad at the other. But self-control by initiation and self-control by inhibition are not as strongly related to each other as you might expect, and different personality variables are associated with each.
- ◆ Whether we're talking about initiation or inhibition, people sometimes need to control themselves on an ongoing basis rather than just once. Yet some people are good at initiating or inhibiting just once, but really bad at continuing to initiate or inhibit. To be really good at self-regulation, people not only have to initiate or inhibit a behavior, but they have to be able to keep it up. This requires another set of skills and characteristics called self-control by continuation.

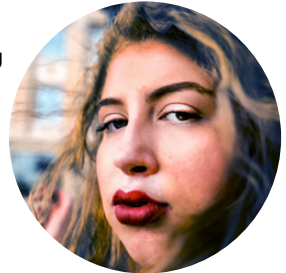
Some people are good at controlling their impulses to do things they shouldn't do, but they're not very good at initiating behaviors needed to achieve their goals. A well-behaved person may still have trouble with procrastination, for example.



STUDYING SELF-REGULATION

- ◆ The scientific study of self-regulation got its start in the late 1960s with research on delay of gratification in children. Delay of gratification refers to the ability to resist the temptation to settle for an immediate reward to get some larger or more important reward sometime in the future. Learning to work toward, and wait for, desired outcomes is essential for achieving most important goals.
- ◆ In the early research on delay of gratification, in the so-called marshmallow test—a test of self-control by inhibition—young children were shown a small treat. It wasn't always a marshmallow; it depended on what the child liked. The child was told that the researcher was going to leave the room for a few minutes, and if the child waited and didn't eat the treat until the researcher got back, the child would get 2 of the treats. But at any time while the researcher was gone, the child could ring a little bell that was on the desk and then eat the one treat immediately, in which case he or she wouldn't get any more.
- ◆ Dozens of these types of studies have been conducted over the years on children of various ages and using different ways of measuring delay of gratification. These studies have taught us a lot about self-regulation in childhood, but 3 important findings stand out:
 1. Some children were better at self-control than other children were.
 2. Performance on this simple task was correlated with the degree to which children self-regulated in many domains of their lives, meaning that this task measures some basic characteristic or set of characteristics that are related to general self-control.
 3. How well children were able to control themselves when they were young predicted important psychological, educational, and social outcomes both at the time and many years later in adolescence and adulthood.
- ◆ If we measure how many seconds a child in elementary school waits before eating the treat, that very simple measure can not only predict reliably how good the child's grades are at the time, but also predict the child's academic performance in high school and how many years of education the child will complete by his or her 20s.

- ◆ Furthermore, the better children are able to delay gratification in elementary school, the fewer risky behaviors—such as taking drugs or stealing—they engage in in 9th grade. They also show fewer disruptive behavioral problems, get along better with other people, and are less likely to be overweight.
- ◆ Twenty years after doing the marshmallow test, adults who delayed gratification better as children had higher self-esteem, coped better with stress, were less likely to use certain illegal drugs, and had lower rates of obesity.
- ◆ People who are generally better at delaying gratification as children fare better in life than those who aren't so good. Clearly, there's some relatively stable personality characteristic related to self-regulation that impacts people's well-being across life.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

- ◆ At the root of all self-control is a set of cognitive skills that are often called executive functions, which include mental abilities that are involved in goal setting, planning, making decisions, monitoring what you do, and managing behaviors that would interfere with your goals. These mental functions are involved any time you try to regulate your own behavior.
- ◆ Self-regulation involves separate mental executive functions, including coming up with good goals, coming up with plans for how to achieve those goals, and following through. If people are to be really good at self-regulation, they need to be reasonably good at all of these tasks. If any executive function isn't up to the task, self-regulation will be more difficult and less successful.

- ◆ Significantly, these executive functions are highly heritable, so self-regulation has a clear genetic basis. That doesn't mean that people can't get better at these kinds of skills. Research shows that they can. But one reason that some people are better at self-regulation than others from an early age is that they were born that way.

IMPULSIVITY

- ◆ Beyond executive functions that are needed for self-regulation, people differ in other ways that are relevant to their ability to control their behavior. A very important trait that predicts self-regulation is impulsivity.
- ◆ By the time that children are toddlers, you can see differences in how impulsive they are. Some children run and grab and react without much thought or hesitation, whereas others are more deliberate and controlled. In the same way, some adults are highly impulsive and others are more deliberate, and those who are more impulsive have greater problems with self-regulation.
- ◆ When researchers first started studying impulsivity, they regarded it as a single trait. But as it turns out, impulsivity can reflect several different psychological characteristics, each of which is associated with problems in self-regulation for a different reason.
- ◆ These characteristics include the tendency to act without thinking or premeditation, an inability to stay focused on what one is doing at the moment, and the tendency to act quickly and with a sense of urgency when something happens—even when a quick reaction isn't necessary.
- ◆ Whichever type of impulsivity we're talking about, highly impulsive people tend to have more problems with self-control by inhibition than less impulsive people do.



THE BIG FIVE TRAITS AND SELF-REGULATION

- ◆ The big five trait that's most consistently linked to self-regulation is conscientiousness. In fact, research has shown that people higher in conscientiousness are better at self-control by inhibition, self-control by initiation, and self-control by continuation than less conscientious people are.
- ◆ Neuroticism is also related to self-control, but the relationship is complex. On one hand, people who are high in neuroticism tend to be inhibited and even overcontrolled at times; they put a lot of effort into self-regulation. But their highly negative emotions can also interfere with self-regulation, and they can struggle with self-control by inhibition when they're upset.
- ◆ Agreeableness also relates to self-regulation. Being a highly agreeable person partly involves controlling your negative reactions to other people, such as biting your tongue and letting other people's annoying behavior slide. People who don't self-regulate as well have more trouble controlling these impulses, so they can end up behaving disagreeably when they have problems with other people. Not surprisingly, agreeableness is related most strongly to self-control by inhibition.



- ◆ Extraversion also tends to be related to self-regulation, but somewhat more weakly. People higher in extraversion tend to be more outgoing, spontaneous, and uninhibited than people low in extraversion. Those characteristics make extraverts better at self-control by initiation, but those same characteristics can make extraverts a little worse at self-control by inhibition. They sometimes respond impulsively and spontaneously, which means they sometimes don't regulate as well. In the same way, people low in extraversion are better at self-control by inhibition but not as good at self-control by initiation.
- ◆ Openness isn't related to self-regulation.

GOALS: PROMOTION- VERSUS PREVENTION-ORIENTED PEOPLE

- ◆ Whether people are good or bad at self-regulation, they tend to approach their goals in 2 distinct ways that have implications for how they pursue their goals and how they react when they succeed or fail at what they set out to do.
- ◆ Some people are motivated to pursue goals primarily by a desire for positive, pleasant outcomes. These people are promotion-focused; they want to promote positive outcomes. Other people are motivated to pursue their goals primarily by a desire to prevent negative, unpleasant outcomes. These people are prevention-focused because they want to prevent negative things from happening.
- ◆ Promotion-oriented people tend to approach their goals with a sense of eagerness because they focus on what they want to get or what they want to have happen. But prevention-oriented people approach goals with caution and vigilance because their goal is mostly to avoid bad things.
- ◆ In fact, success and failure mean something different to promotion- and prevention-oriented people. For promotion-oriented people, success is experienced as a gain, as an improvement or reward, so it results in the cheerful kinds of reactions that people have when they get what they want.

- ◆ But for prevention-oriented people, success is experienced as the avoidance of a loss. Success means that they didn't fail; they were able to avoid a negative event. So, prevention-oriented people react to success but with relief.
- ◆ In the same way, failure means something different to a person who is trying to succeed than it does to a person who's trying not to fail. For promotion-oriented people, failure is a failure to attain some hoped-for goal, so their emotional reaction is disappointment, dejection, or sadness because they didn't get something positive that they were motivated to get. But for prevention-oriented people, failure is having something happen that they didn't want to have happen, so they tend to be anxious and upset by failure.
- ◆ Note that the goal itself can be the same. The difference is whether people construe failure as not getting something that they wanted or as getting something that they didn't want. That minor difference has a big effect on how people react to failures to achieve their goals.
- ◆ This difference also affects how people look back on their failures. Promotion-oriented people look back and think about what they should have done differently to improve their performance. Prevention-oriented people look back and think about what they shouldn't have done.

A promotion-oriented person wants to be healthy, while a prevention-oriented person wants to avoid getting sick.



- ◆ In general, being motivated by the appeal of positive outcomes is better psychologically than trying to be sure that bad things don't happen. People who have mainly a promotion focus tend to be lower in neuroticism than those with a prevention focus. Being promotion-focused is also associated with a lower likelihood of being depressed and with a higher likelihood of being satisfied with one's life.

Suggested Reading

Gottberg, "Promotion or Prevention?"

Jaffe, "Why Wait?"

McMonigal, *The Willpower Instinct*.

Questions to Consider

1. Think of an area of your life in which you are sometimes unable to exercise adequate self-control to make yourself behave in the way that you desire. Is this self-control problem primarily a problem with initiation, inhibition, or continuation—or some combination? Does knowing about the specific source of your self-control problem offer any insights into aspects of your personality that underlie your self-control issue or offer any ideas about how to improve your ability to control this behavior?
2. Are you primarily a promotion-oriented or prevention-oriented person (or an equal mix of both)? What are some examples of how your tendency toward promotion and prevention show up in your behavior?

WHEN PERSONALITIES BECOME TOXIC

LECTURE 21



This course has focused primarily on normal variations in personality. But certain patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior are associated with a high degree of psychological distress, create ongoing problems in people's lives, and make it very difficult for people to function across the important domains of life. These particularly problematic and dysfunctional characteristics are called personality disorders. This lecture will cover 4 of the 10 recognized personality disorders: antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic.

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

- ◆ A personality disorder is a rigid and inflexible pattern of behavior that a person displays across a wide variety of situations and that leads to ongoing problems and distress in key areas of the person's life, particularly work and social relationships.
 - ❖ The person displays a particular pattern of behavior much of the time, even when it's not appropriate for the current situation. In most cases, the behavior could be quite normal under certain circumstances, but the problem is that the pattern of behavior occurs across many situations and over long periods of time, showing that it's a stable personality characteristic.
 - ❖ To qualify as a personality disorder, the pattern of behavior has to be self-defeating. It has to interfere with aspects of the person's life and consistently create problems. Personality disorders typically compromise the person's well-being, and they usually make other people unhappy as well.
 - ❖ Personality disorders tend to get worse when people are under stress.
- ◆ The manual that mental health professionals use to describe and diagnose psychological problems is called the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The most recent edition of the DSM recognizes 10 personality disorders, but there are other problems that some researchers classify as personality disorders that don't appear in the official diagnostic manual.
- ◆ Personality disorders are often classified into 3 broad clusters that involve dramatic, emotional, and erratic behaviors; behaviors that reflect excessive anxiety; and eccentric behaviors and distorted thinking.
- ◆ This lecture will consider the dramatic, emotional, and erratic cluster, which includes 4 disorders: the antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders. These disorders are grouped together because they all involve problems with emotion regulation and impulse control that have negative effects on other people and on people's social relationships.



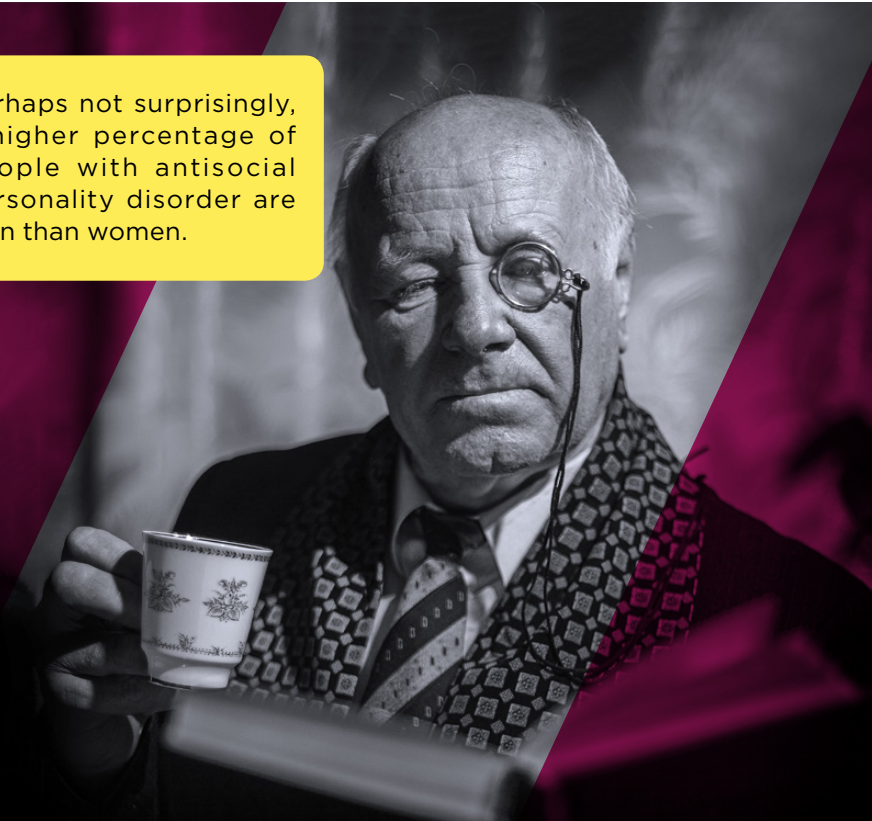
Estimates are that, in any given year, around 10% of adults would qualify for a diagnosis of at least one of the 10 personality disorders. And many more people would show the general disordered pattern of behavior, but it wouldn't create enough of a problem for their lives for it to meet the diagnostic criteria.

ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ Antisocial personality disorder refers to what used to be called psychopathic or sociopathic personalities. At the broadest level, people with antisocial personality disorder regularly disregard and violate the well-being and rights of other people. This disorder is characterized by unemotional callousness and impulsive antisocial motives:
 1. People with antisocial personality disorder are rather cold-hearted people; they simply don't care about other people's well-being. They show very little empathy for other people, and they rarely feel guilty when they hurt somebody. They often don't consider the impact of their behavior on other people, and they really don't care if they happen to do things that hurt or disadvantage someone else.
 2. When they get the urge to do something that's mean, illegal, or aggressive, they impulsively do it, without much regard for rules, norms, or laws. So, they lie, steal, and cheat more than most people do.
- ◆ In their dealings with other people, people with antisocial personality disorder tend to be pretty irresponsible and undependable. They're the kind of people who don't follow through on what they say they're going to do, and they certainly don't apologize if their irresponsibility screws you over. They're usually a bit indifferent and detached emotionally, with an edge of intolerance and impatience with other people.
- ◆ People who act this way usually feel okay about their behavior. In fact, they usually see themselves as free and autonomous people who are not foolish enough to go along with a bunch of silly rules and laws when they don't want to, and they think that the rest of us are dupes for following the rules.
- ◆ People with antisocial personality disorder consistently score very low in agreeableness; they're cold, unfriendly, and unkind people. They're also very low in conscientiousness; they aren't responsible, dependable, or organized.

- ◆ They're also very low in neuroticism. That normally is a good thing, but a certain amount of negative emotion helps keep our behavior in line. People who are very low in neuroticism don't worry much about things, and not feeling much anxiety, guilt, fear, or remorse allows antisocial people not to feel bad about the things they do.
- ◆ Finally, they score very low on the trait of honesty-humility. People who are low on this trait are very selfish. In fact, some of the items on the scale that measures honesty-humility look like indicators of psychopathy or antisocial personality.
- ◆ Fortunately, people with full-blown antisocial personality disorder are relatively rare. The best estimate is that only about 1 out of 100 people would meet the diagnostic criteria for antisocial personality disorder. Of course, many other people show subclinical signs of being antisocial. Whether they meet formal diagnostic criteria or not, you want to avoid people with antisocial personalities.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a higher percentage of people with antisocial personality disorder are men than women.



BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ Borderline personality disorder is so called because in the 1930s when it was first recognized, some psychiatrists thought that it fell in between being a neurotic disorder (which involves high anxiety and negative emotions) and a psychotic disorder (which involves loss of touch with reality). However, that's not true, so many experts are trying to get it renamed.
- ◆ A better term that more accurately describes the borderline personality disorder might be “emotion dysregulation disorder” or “unstable personality disorder” because its central feature involves strong emotions and rapid mood swings in which the person loses control. So, at one moment, the person is interacting easily and happily, and then a moment later, they've lost it in a fit of extreme anger or panic or despair.
- ◆ The things that trigger these strong emotional outbursts tend to involve perceiving that other people are being dismissive or rejecting. People with borderline personality disorder are exceptionally sensitive to signs of criticism, disrespect, and rejection. And when they perceive that others are criticizing, disrespecting, or rejecting them, they overreact, lash out at other people, and sometimes behave in vengeful ways to get back at the person. Then, when they calm down, they act more or less as if nothing happened—until the next incident.
- ◆ Their reactions are rather paradoxical, though. People with borderline personality disorder very much want other people to like and accept them, but their reactions to signs that they are being negatively evaluated or rejected leads to extreme overreactions that cause other people to avoid or reject them. They want people to accept them, but they continually drive people away.
- ◆ The behavior itself is not all that unusual. Many of us lose it every now and then over something that really doesn't matter very much. But it's not our typical way of responding to disagreement or conflict. Only about 1.6% of the population is emotionally unstable enough to meet the diagnostic criteria for borderline personality disorder.

- ◆ People with borderline personality disorder often idealize potential friends or lovers at first. They insist on spending a lot of time together and share very intimate information about themselves. But then, they can switch quickly to devaluing the other person when they perceive that the other person doesn't care enough about them or doesn't give enough to the relationship or is not there enough for them.
- ◆ For those around them—their partners, children, coworkers, friends (if they have any)—people with borderline personality disorder are pretty maddening. You never quite know which person is going to show up on any particular day: the nice one who seems reasonably normal and accommodating or the vicious one who is out of control.
- ◆ And even when the person is acting perfectly fine for a while, other people walk on eggshells worrying about when something will trigger the borderline person's next outburst.

HISTRIONIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ The central feature of the histrionic personality disorder is chronic and excessive attention-seeking behavior. Wherever they are, whatever they're doing, histrionic people want to be the center of attention, so they monopolize the spotlight in most situations. Of course, most people like attention from time to time, but if you are never happy unless you are the focal point of every social interaction, then you have histrionic tendencies.
- ◆ Histrionic people have a very dramatic and lively conversational style. They act like everything they say is very important, and they tell their stories with a great deal of flair, emotion, and exaggeration.
- ◆ People with histrionic personality disorder also seek attention by being flirtatious and sexually provocative.
- ◆ Sometimes, new acquaintances find histrionic people's enthusiasm, energy, and openness charming, but these characteristics wear thin after a while when histrionic people continually monopolize social interactions. In a conversation, people with histrionic personality disorder tend to ignore what other people say and continually bring the focus back to them.



The entertainment industry has more than its share of histrionic people.

- ◆ And when they aren't at the center of the action, histrionic people may do something dramatic or outlandish to create a scene and get the attention back. After the first few minutes, they're not very enjoyable to interact with, so others often try to avoid dealing with histrionic people.
- ◆ Histrionic people don't seem to realize any of this. They generally think of themselves as sociable, charming, and entertaining. And they tend to think that they're well liked and that their relationships with other people are closer and more intimate than they really are.
- ◆ The histrionic personality disorder can be really annoying and socially disruptive, and it often interferes with the quality of people's lives, but it doesn't have the strong negative effects on other people that the antisocial and borderline disorders do.
- ◆ So, the 2% of the population with histrionic personality disorder usually gets along okay in life, particularly if they are in professions in which their vivaciousness, flamboyance, and exhibitionism don't seem too out of place.

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ The central feature of the narcissistic personality disorder is an excessive sense of superiority and self-importance. Narcissists overestimate their positive characteristics and see themselves as special—and not just in a particular domain. They think that they are special as people.
- ◆ Even worse, people who think that they are better than everybody else also think that they are entitled to be treated special. In particular domains, that might be true. If you're the best athlete on the team, maybe you deserve some extra respect and playing time. But if you think you are special as a person, then you walk through life expecting people to treat you special all of the time. And that kind of entitlement often disadvantages other people.
- ◆ In fact, people who show signs of narcissistic personality disorder tend to disregard other people's views and rights. And narcissists tend not to feel bad about this inequity because they tend to be low in empathy. They don't care that their self-centeredness and sense of entitlement hurt other people.
- ◆ When you first meet narcissists, they often make a very good first impression. They're often charming and confident, and they usually have good social skills. But it doesn't take people too long to realize that narcissists are full of themselves, have a sense of entitlement, and treat others as just an audience for their own self-aggrandizing show.
- ◆ By and large, narcissists come across as calm and confident people. In fact, they are so confident that they often seem indifferent to whether other people like them or not. They're often very nonchalant, even when things aren't going well.
- ◆ But now and then, when the façade crumbles and they feel that they're under attack, they sometimes exhibit what's known as narcissistic rage: They lose it and overreact, and they might even seek revenge on people who put them down.

- ◆ In the mind of narcissists, other people should consistently approve of, adore, and agree with them. Much of the time, narcissists can dismiss any negative reactions they get by simply concluding that other people are stupid or envious or just losers whose opinions don't count anyway.
- ◆ But now and then, those defenses break down, and the narcissist becomes enraged by the unfairness of other people's indifference, disrespect, or criticism. We all get angry when we don't think we get what we deserve, but narcissists get angry when they don't get the adoration, respect, and deference that they think someone as special as they are should get.

Parenting and Narcissism

A study conducted in 2015 showed that narcissistic people tend to have parents who overvalued them—who thought they were unusually special—which implies that children seem to acquire narcissism, at least in part, by internalizing their parents' inflated views of them.

The study also showed that parental warmth, not parental overvaluation, seemed to lead to greater self-esteem in the child, supporting the idea that narcissism is different than just having high self-esteem.



- ◆ A little more than 2% of the population meets the criteria for a diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder, but many other people who wouldn't meet the official criteria are still quite narcissistic.

Suggested Reading

Meyer-Lindenberg, "The Roots of Problem Personalities."

Stout, *The Sociopath Next Door*.

Questions to Consider

1. Many people occasionally act in ways that resemble someone with an antisocial, borderline, histrionic, or narcissistic personality disorder, yet we would not conclude that they actually have one of these disorders. Why not?
2. Think of someone you know personally who shows signs of an antisocial, borderline, histrionic, or narcissistic personality disorder. (This person might not qualify for a clinical diagnosis but shows the primary symptoms to some extent.) In what ways does this person's behavior resemble one of these disorders? Are there ways in which his or her behavior does not resemble the disorder? Does considering the possibility that this person has a disorder change how you think about him or her?

AVOIDANCE, PARANOIA, AND OTHER DISORDERS

LECTURE 22



In this lecture, you will learn first about a cluster of 3 personality disorders identified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder that involve excessive anxiety—the avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive disorders—and then about a cluster of 3 others that involve eccentric behaviors and distorted or unusual thinking—the paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal disorders.

AVOIDANT PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ Everybody experiences social anxiety from time to time when they become concerned with how they are being perceived and evaluated by other people. But some people are so consistently worried about what other people think of them that their anxiety interferes with their lives on an ongoing basis.
- ◆ A person with avoidant personality disorder is chronically preoccupied with being criticized, disapproved of, or rejected across a wide range of social situations. As a result, people with avoidant personality disorder are not only exceptionally anxious, but they also avoid a wide variety of situations in which they have to interact with other people.
- ◆ Avoidant people sometimes have satisfying relationships with family members or a close friend, but only if they are certain of being liked and accepted. And even in their closest relationships, they tend to be inhibited because they're afraid of doing something that will lead to disapproval.
- ◆ Underlying their extreme anxiety, inhibition, and avoidance are deep feelings of inadequacy. People with avoidant personality disorder see themselves as inept, unappealing, and inferior to other people, so very low self-esteem is a central component.
- ◆ People with avoidant personality disorder have somewhat unhappy and unsatisfying lives. They can certainly entertain themselves with their personal interests and activities and can form connections with friends or family members, but their basic needs for acceptance and belonging are not being met, and they go through life feeling alienated.



DEPENDENT PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ People differ in how much they need other people's help or support, but when an otherwise normal person has a very needy relationship with just about everybody and can't seem to function on a daily basis without help from other people, the person might qualify for a diagnosis of dependent personality disorder.
- ◆ People who qualify for a diagnosis of dependent personality disorder need—or think they need—constant help from other people to function in most major areas of their life. They even have trouble making everyday decisions, such as what to eat for lunch, without advice and reassurance from other people.
- ◆ This lack of confidence in their own judgment and ability also leads them to have trouble starting projects or doing things on their own; they're too afraid that they won't know what to do or that they will do it wrong.
- ◆ People with dependent personality disorder firmly believe that they are incapable of functioning independently, but they can actually do okay when they know that someone else is supervising and watching over them. So, it's mostly a matter of exceptionally low self-confidence or self-efficacy rather than being truly incompetent.
- ◆ People with dependent personality disorder go to great lengths to get nurturance and support from other people. They usually behave in ways that will lead others to help them. For example, they might offer to help other people in unusual or excessive ways. Their goal is to get the other person to reciprocate by being available for them.
- ◆ And they have trouble disagreeing with and standing up to other people because they're afraid of losing the person's approval or support. So, they're very nice, helpful, compliant people, but it's motivated by a need to keep other people in their corner.



Teenagers who have dependent personality disorder may display the rather unusual pattern of wanting their parents to decide what clothes they should wear, what they should do in their free time, and who to hang out with.



- ◆ People with dependent personality disorder often feel uncomfortable or helpless when they're alone because they're afraid of not being able to handle whatever situations might come up—not being able to take care of themselves. So, they often structure their lives around having other people around for support. And when someone they depend on is not available, they urgently look for somebody else.
- ◆ One downside of relying so much on other people—in addition to becoming clingy and annoying—is that highly dependent people often don't learn what they need to know to manage their lives on their own. So, dependency begets more dependency.

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ There are 2 psychological problems that have the term “obsessive-compulsive” in their name: obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, which is addressed in this lecture, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which is characterized by the presence of true obsessions and/or compulsions.
- ◆ Obsessions are recurring and persistent thoughts that are intrusive and unwanted. Compulsions are repetitive behaviors, or sometimes repetitive mental actions, that a person feels that he or she has to perform. Obsessions and compulsions are not tied to normal activities, and they usually create a great deal of stress for the person. But the person with OCD is helpless to stop their unusual, repetitive thoughts or behaviors.
- ◆ Obsessive-compulsive *personality* disorder is an obsessive preoccupation with order, perfection, and self-control. In many ways, it's like being exceptionally high in conscientiousness, all the time—even when it doesn't matter and even when one's attention to detail is dysfunctional.
- ◆ People who qualify for a diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder are preoccupied with organizing the details of their life. And they become quite uncomfortable when things are not organized and orderly.

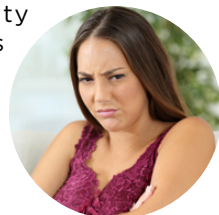
- ◆ Many people have to-do lists and planners to help keep track of important tasks, but people with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder organize their lives in ways that don't matter much. They worry about trivial details and plans. And sometimes, the process of planning and organizing becomes as important as the activities that they're trying to plan and organize.
- ◆ Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is also associated with perfectionism. Doing things well is important, but compulsive perfectionism differs from functional perfectionism in 2 ways: Compulsive perfectionists worry about getting things perfect in areas in which perfection isn't needed, and compulsive perfectionism can interfere with getting many things done because the person won't finish a task until it's absolutely perfect.
- ◆ Obsessive-compulsive traits in moderation may be very adaptive, particularly in situations that reward high performance. So, people with this disorder often do a great job on things. But when people overdo it and try to be organized, conscientious, and perfect with everything they do, even when it doesn't matter and even when it interferes with their life, these characteristics can become maladaptive.

Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is one of the most prevalent personality disorders in the United States, with an estimated prevalence of about 2.4% of the general population.



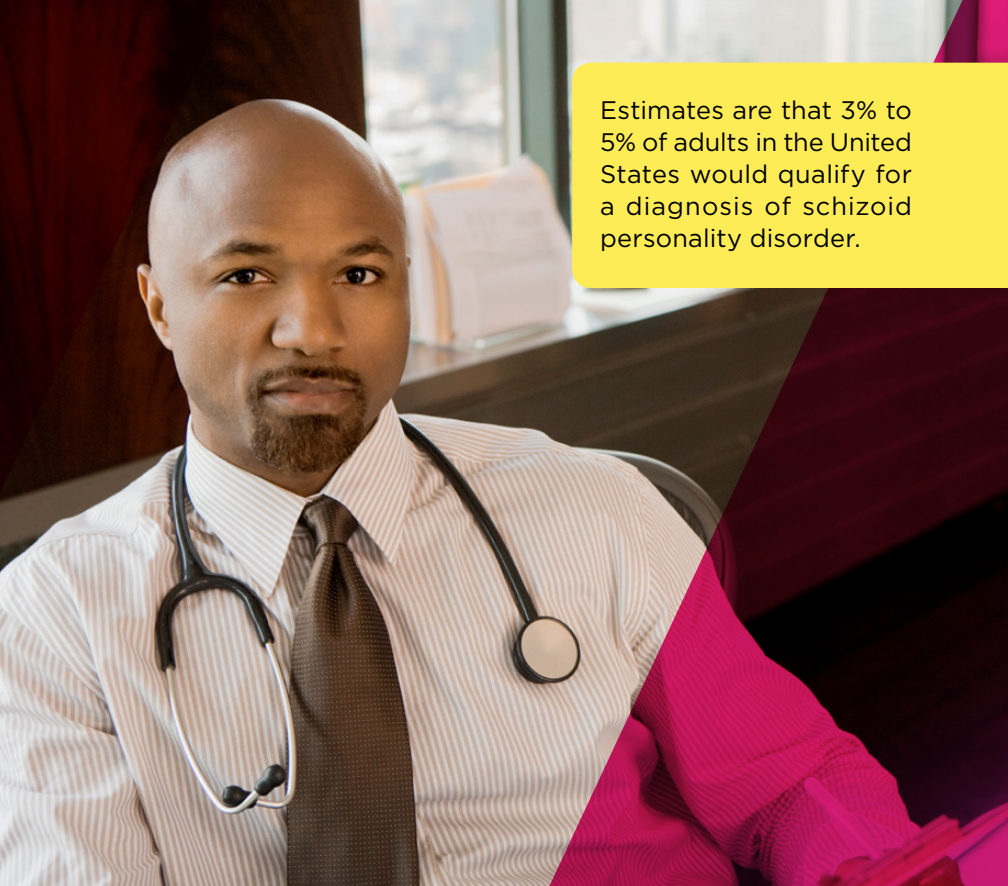
PARANOID PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ The paranoid personality disorder involves a pervasive distrust of other people. Sometimes being distrustful and suspicious is entirely appropriate, but if you find reasons to distrust many, if not most, of the people that you deal with in life, then the rigidity of your response suggests a personality disorder.
- ◆ Paranoid personality disorder manifests in a number of ways. Most importantly, people with paranoid disorder suspect, without sufficient evidence, that people are deceiving, taking advantage of, or harming them—or at least that people might be planning to hurt them. They're preoccupied with doubts about the trustworthiness or loyalty of other people, including their family, friends, and romantic partners.
- ◆ In addition, people with paranoid personality disorder have a bias to perceive others' actions as harmful or threatening. They tend to interpret other people's innocuous behaviors or remarks as being insulting or threatening in some way. They often read malevolent intentions into other people's actions.
- ◆ Not surprisingly, people with paranoid personality disorder tend to be very private people. They're reluctant to share personal information or confide in other people because they're afraid that the information might somehow be used against them. They also tend to hold grudges against people they think have done something bad to them, and they're less forgiving when someone has hurt them in some way.
- ◆ To get a diagnosis of paranoid personality disorder, the person can't show any evidence of schizophrenia or other disorders with psychotic features. Essentially, that means that they can't have lost touch with reality.



SCHIZOID PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ People with schizoid personality disorder seem to have little need for other people. They don't care much about social connections, so they're rather detached from normal social relationships.
- ◆ Despite its name, schizoid personality disorder doesn't actually resemble schizophrenia very much. Schizophrenia is one of the most serious psychological problems that involves profound disturbances in thought and emotion and that typically includes psychotic symptoms, such as hearing voices, experiencing hallucinations, or having delusional thoughts.
- ◆ Instead, schizoid personality disorder is a pervasive pattern of detachment from social relationships. A schizoid person doesn't appear to desire or enjoy close relationships with other people—not even family members.
- ◆ People generally enjoy interacting with other people and regard their social relationships as important. Even people who are very introverted are motivated to interact and have close relationships, just not as much as extraverts do.
- ◆ But people with schizoid personality disorder seem to lack this basic human motive. They simply don't care about having relationships with other people. They don't even seem to care whether people like them, and they seem rather indifferent to both compliments and criticisms.
- ◆ So, not surprisingly, they almost always choose to do things by themselves and live pretty solitary lives. They usually don't have any close friends or confidants, except maybe relatives. And they seem to have little, if any, interest in sexual relationships.
- ◆ This pattern of social disconnection and isolation is usually accompanied by flat emotions. They don't take much pleasure in any activities, but they aren't upset by very much either. It's as if they're detached emotionally from their own lives. So, they usually display a bland exterior and come across as aloof and maybe self-absorbed.



Estimates are that 3% to 5% of adults in the United States would qualify for a diagnosis of schizoid personality disorder.

- ◆ Interactions with schizoid people are usually pretty awkward. You not only get the clear sense that they don't care about interacting with you, but their lack of ordinary emotional reactions is unsettling. They don't reciprocate other people's gestures or facial expressions; they don't necessarily wave back when you wave or smile when you smile. More generally, they don't respond appropriately to social cues, so they seem socially inept, awkward, and self-absorbed.
- ◆ These social skill problems can create difficulties for their work life, given that most people have to work with other people. But people with schizoid personality disorder may do just fine if they can work under conditions of social isolation.

- ◆ You might know some people who could be classified as a secret schizoid, but you wouldn't realize it. Secret schizoids lack the motivation to interact and form close relationships and have flat internal emotional lives. But secret schizoids have learned how to play the part of a normal person, so they may appear to be socially engaged and seem to be interested and involved in interacting, but they still lack any interest in closeness and remain emotionally detached.

SCHIZOTYPAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ◆ Unlike people who are schizophrenic, people with schizotypal personality disorder don't have hallucinations or delusions, but they do have unusual thoughts and ideas. For example, their interpretations of events are often quite odd. They may explain things that happen or other people's behavior in ways that don't make much sense to anybody else.
- ◆ Schizotypal people also tend to have odd magical and superstitious beliefs that most people don't have—usually not things that are downright crazy, but things that are questionable and that most people don't believe.
- ◆ Their speech can be idiosyncratic. It's sometimes difficult to follow exactly what they're talking about because they use loose and vague language and digress a lot.
- ◆ They also tend to have odd mannerisms and expressions; they might never look at other people when they talk, or they might not nod as you're talking to them. They might bluntly end a conversation by just walking away.
- ◆ And they tend to dress in unusual ways. They wear clothes that don't match or don't fit, and it's not because they are making a fashion statement or that they identify with some group that dresses that way. They're not trying to be different—they just are.
- ◆ There's not really anything wrong with any of this, and it doesn't hurt anybody—it's just an odd package of eccentricities. The worst thing is that other people think that they're odd and often avoid them.

Why Do Personality Disorders Develop?

As usual, personality disorders develop as a result of a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

Personality disorders appear to be more heritable than most normal personality characteristics. About 50% to 80% of the variability that we see in these disorders seems to be genetic.

Although each of these disorders involves a set of several specific characteristics, it's not likely that the whole syndrome is inherited as a package. Instead, research suggests that the various components of personality disorders are inherited separately.

There are strong genetic predispositions to develop these kinds of problems, but it probably also takes some unusual kinds of environmental influences—probably in the form of parental neglect or abuse or situations in which maladaptive behaviors are rewarded—for a full-blown disorder to appear.



- ◆ Not surprisingly, people with schizotypal personality disorder have problems in social interactions and relationships. They usually aren't able to manage interactions in a skilled manner, and they are often stiff or socially inappropriate. They realize that they are different and don't quite fit in, and they're anxious in social situations, particularly those that involve unfamiliar people. They interact when they have to, but they often prefer to keep to themselves when possible.

Suggested Reading

Budd, *I'm OK, You're Not OK*.

Dobbert, *Understanding Personality Disorders*.

Questions to Consider

1. Imagine that you have a family member who is exceptionally well organized. He keeps his house and office neat and clean, with everything in its place and his drawers and closets organized. This person's life is also orderly; he keeps a to-do list and plans his days in advance. He also tries to do most things as well as possible, even everyday tasks, such as mowing his yard. At a family gathering, you hear another family member tease this person about being OCD. Does this person actually show signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder? Why or why not?
2. Some personality disorders are problematic mostly because they disadvantage, annoy, or harm other people, and other personality disorders are problematic mostly because they undermine the quality of the person's own life. Which of the 10 disorders primarily create problems for others? Which ones primarily create problems for the sufferer? Which do both?

THE ENIGMA OF BEING YOURSELF

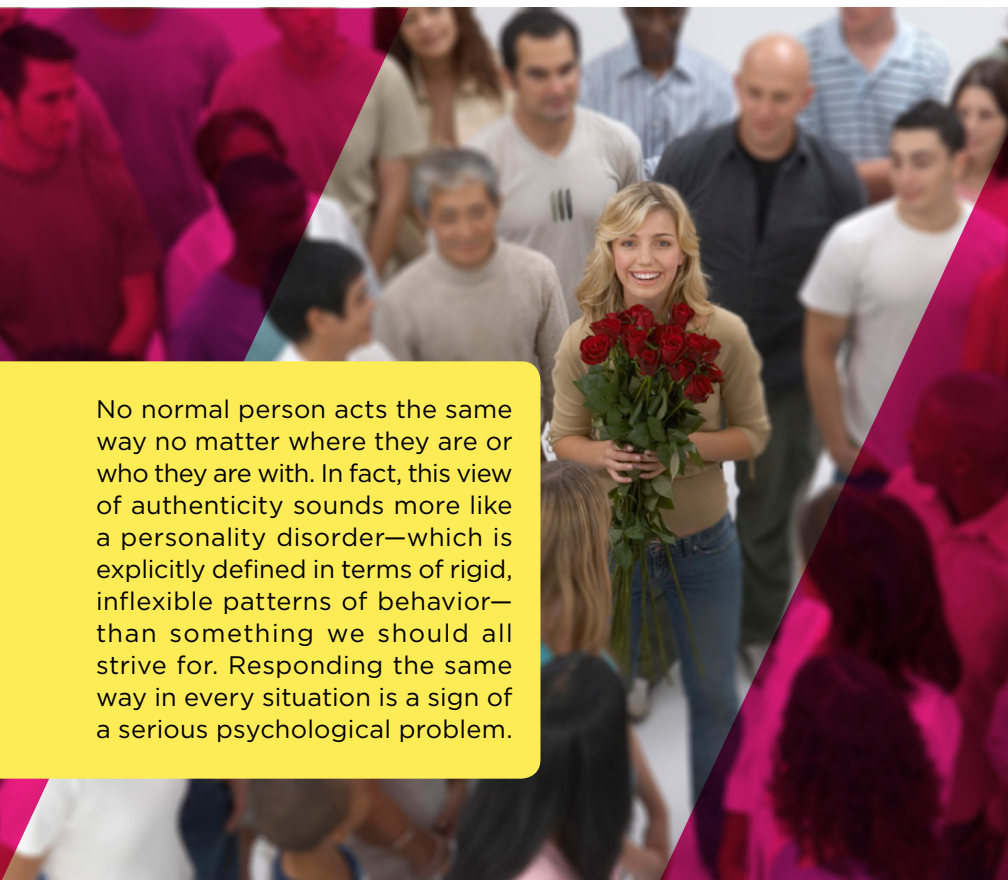
LECTURE 23



Ever since Aristotle first wrote about authenticity more than 2000 years ago, a variety of philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and self-help authors have promoted the idea that people should be authentic—they should always behave in ways that reflect their inner beliefs, values, motives, and dispositions. But this lecture considers the possibility that authenticity has some serious problems as a psychological construct: that it's either not what we usually assume it is or that it's not as important as people typically think it is.

AUTHENTIC INCONSISTENCY

- ◆ Most people think that being authentic means that a person behaves the same way all of the time. But we shouldn't expect any normal person to show absolute consistency in his or her behavior. Healthy, well-adjusted people are flexible in how they respond. Of course, we see consistencies in how people behave across different situations, but behavioral flexibility is necessary for people to handle the challenges of life effectively.
- ◆ If authenticity is going to be a useful construct, it can't require absolute consistency. It has to allow people a good deal of flexibility and latitude—both because people's personalities are multifaceted and contain incompatible characteristics and because well-adjusted people tailor their actions to particular situations.



No normal person acts the same way no matter where they are or who they are with. In fact, this view of authenticity sounds more like a personality disorder—which is explicitly defined in terms of rigid, inflexible patterns of behavior—than something we should all strive for. Responding the same way in every situation is a sign of a serious psychological problem.

- ◆ To complicate matters, inconsistency is itself a personality characteristic. People differ in how much their behavior varies across situations. Some people are affected more by situational influences than other people are, so their behavior is less consistent and more variable. Does that mean that they are less authentic than people whose behavior varies less across situations?
- ◆ It might seem so, but viewed another way, they may be perfectly authentic because the degree to which people's behavior is affected by situational pressures is itself a personality variable. For people whose personality traits cause them to be strongly affected by the situation they're in, being less consistent is actually more authentic. People can be authentically inconsistent.

SELF-MONITORING

- ◆ The personality characteristic that is most closely associated with changing one's behavior to meet situational demands is self-monitoring. People who are high in this characteristic monitor the degree to which they fit whatever situation they are in and behave in ways that are appropriate given the nature of the situation and the characteristics of the people with whom they're interacting.
- ◆ In contrast, people who are low in self-monitoring are less influenced by the immediate situation, so their behavior is somewhat more consistent across situations.
- ◆ Because they're trying to behave appropriately, people who are high in self-monitoring show greater behavioral variability across situations than people who are low in self-monitoring do. But that doesn't mean that they are less authentic than low self-monitors. In fact, for high self-monitors, a certain degree of inconsistency may be more authentic than consistency is.
- ◆ There's a tendency to regard people who mold their behavior to fit the situation that they're in as insecure, duplicitous, or too concerned about social approval. But we all do it, and we absolutely have to in order to manage life effectively.

- ◆ On top of that, people can act differently in different situations and still behave in ways that are congruent with their beliefs, values, motives, and dispositions at all times. And for people who are high in self-monitoring, greater variability is even more authentic because that's the way they really are.



UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

- ◆ To strive to be authentic, people have to be able to tell when they are and are not behaving congruently with what they are “really” like. To do that, they have to know about all aspects of their personality, including full details about what motivates their behavior, what they believe, what they value, and all of their psychological characteristics. Without completely understanding themselves and all of the things that influence their behavior, people can’t judge whether or not they’re being authentic in any particular situation.
- ◆ Most of us assume that we have some kind of special insight into what we’re like. But our views of ourselves are much less accurate than most people think. Of course, there are some things about yourself that you understand perfectly well, and some aspects of your self-image are right on target. But volumes of research show that people’s self-views are not very accurate overall.
- ◆ In many studies, researchers have asked people to rate their own personality characteristics and then compared people’s self-ratings both with objective measures of their behavior and personality and with ratings of people who know them very well—people who would presumably have deep insight into what the participants were like. People do have some insight into their personalities, so they weren’t completely clueless about what they were like, but they weren’t entirely accurate either.
- ◆ We’d all like to think that we know ourselves reasonably well and that we understand why we do what we do. And sometimes, that’s the case. But at other times, it’s simply not possible, and we can’t tell when we know the truth about ourselves and when we don’t.
- ◆ Just about everybody sees themselves too positively. We all overestimate our positive qualities and underestimate our negative qualities, and we’re biased to attribute our actions to positive, desirable motives rather than negative, undesirable ones. These self-serving biases in our views of ourselves make it virtually impossible to really know who we are. And if that’s the case, how do we know when we’re being authentic?

INTERNAL COHERENCE

- ◆ Most of us fall into the trap of thinking of ourselves as a coherent, unified, integrated person. In other words, we have the sense that we are a single psychologically integrated system and not just some hodgepodge of disconnected values, motives, beliefs, and traits.
- ◆ We sense that all of the diverse pieces of our personality are tightly interconnected—that our beliefs are tied to our motives, that our traits are connected to our emotions, that our values and motives are linked, and so on. So, it seems as if our total personality should all work together in some integrated and harmonious way, like the parts of a well-designed machine.
- ◆ You also probably have the sense that there's some central mechanism inside you that oversees and controls all of this stuff, some central control unit that integrates and manages all of the different parts of your psychological machinery. You feel like there's somebody in charge of this whole mess, something that oversees all of the parts of your personality and keeps them running smoothly.
- ◆ But neither of these perceptions is true. The various parts of your personality are not entirely coherent, integrated, and unified, and there's no one in control of all of it. There isn't any central regulatory mechanism that coordinates all of the different parts of your personality and reactions.
- ◆ You have a center of consciousness that you think of as “you” that seems to think your thoughts, feel your emotions, and control your behaviors. But that psychological process that some people think of as their “self” doesn't have much insight into or control over most of what is happening in your brain. Most of what you feel and do operates outside of your conscious self.
- ◆ Furthermore, although many of the processes that control your behavior are connected to each other, many of them aren't. Different reactions are mediated by different parts of the brain, which may not be in communication with each other and aren't controlled by a single integrating mechanism.

- ◆ And with no central mechanism that coordinates, integrates, and maintains consistency among all of the parts, there's no reason to expect people to be consistent. There's nothing in there that tries to reconcile conflicts between different competing elements of your personality.



Psychologist Robert Kurzban has compared the human mind to a smartphone with lots of different apps. Each little computer program that makes up a phone app contributes a separate, specialized function to the phone. And although these apps use the same operating system and sometimes rely on each other—your maps and weather app might both rely on your GPS location—there's nothing in the phone that forces any coherence among them.

Kurzban says that the human mind works much in the same way: You have many different circuits that do different things, but they can operate somewhat independently. And like a smartphone, there's no central mechanism that forces consistency among the various programs.

- ◆ Different parts of your personality can operate somewhat independently while each is doing its job. And you can have a very functional system that processes information and responds without the oversight of a single controller that's trying to maintain consistency among all of the parts.
- ◆ So, the notion of authenticity has problems because there's no reason to expect the human mind to display the sort of consistency or internal coherence that the concept of authenticity implies.

AUTHENTICITY AND PERSONALITY

- ◆ Maybe we've been thinking about the topic completely wrong in the sense that our notion of authenticity isn't compatible with the way that personality actually works. Perhaps, contrary to how it seems, people are actually *always* authentic. In other words, maybe it makes no sense to think that people could ever behave incongruently with aspects of their personality, motives, values, and beliefs.
- ◆ Almost all human behavior is goal-directed—that is, most of your behavior is intended to achieve some goal or fulfill some motive. Sometimes the goal is conscious, and often the goal is not conscious. But it doesn't make much sense to say that you did something for no reason—that your behavior wasn't motivated. You may not know why you did what you did, but there was some reason, motive, or goal.
- ◆ Sometimes the goals that are active and operational for us at a given moment are compatible with each other. But sometimes we have goals that are incompatible. One goal is leading us toward one action, and the other goal is leading us toward a different action—maybe even one that's incompatible with the first one.
- ◆ But they're both genuine goals, and whichever one you choose, you're acting consistently with one genuine goal and inconsistently with the other genuine goal.



Most of us think that a person should be honest, and we probably see ourselves as basically honest people, with occasional lapses. When we lie, we're simply pursuing a different goal than to be honest—maybe to get out of trouble or to not hurt somebody's feelings. But the lie is in the service of a genuine goal that we have, so it's as authentic as telling the truth.

- ◆ So, when we do things that we don't want to do—or think we shouldn't do—those behaviors are not inauthentic. They're simply motivated by goals that are incompatible with other goals or with our vision of the person we want to be or think we should be.
- ◆ People can't help but to behave congruently with their inner beliefs, motives, values, and dispositions. So, all behavior, even if it's inconsistent or duplicitous, would seem to be authentic.

THE VALUE OF AUTHENTICITY

- ◆ Why do we place such a value on authenticity and urge people to live congruently with their true selves? To make the right choices in life, it helps to know who you are and what you're like as best you can so that you'll increase the chances that you'll make decisions that are congruent with your psychological characteristics.
- ◆ Even though some of your characteristics are incompatible with each other and even though you'll never know for certain what you're like or why you do what you do, understanding yourself as well as you can certainly pays off in terms of making good choices in life. It's not a matter of being authentic, but rather a matter of living in a way that best fits your psychological inclinations and thus maximizes your well-being.
- ◆ So-called feelings of inauthenticity are often a sign that you don't understand something about yourself. Feelings of inauthenticity aren't telling you that you behaved incongruently with how you really are; instead, those feelings are telling you that you don't know why you did whatever you did.
- ◆ If you understood yourself better, you'd realize that your actions were not really incongruent. Your behavior may have been inconsistent with conscious values that you hold, or incongruent with what you were intentionally trying to do, or contrary to the kind of person you want to be, but something inside you led you to do what you did.



The pressures that we feel to be authentic are functional. They let us know that we don't understand ourselves well enough to know why we did some seemingly incongruent thing. And they caution us when we do things that might lead other people to view us as fake or dishonest.

- ◆ Another reason that people take authenticity seriously and have viewed it as a virtue since ancient times is that we are under social pressure to be authentic. Having high-quality social interactions and relationships with other people requires that we understand them reasonably well. We want to know what other people are like, what motivates them, what they believe, and whether they can be trusted. Misperceiving what other people are like almost always leads to problems.
- ◆ To know other people well—to know what they're really like—we have to assume that what they say and do is congruent with their actual beliefs, motives, values, and personality. We have to assume that they are conveying accurate and honest impressions of themselves. If they don't—if they appear to be someone they're not—then we'll be at a disadvantage in our interactions and relationships with them.

Suggested Reading

Ibarra, "The Authenticity Paradox."

Mayer, "Know Thyself."

Questions to Consider

1. Do you agree with the proposition that people always behave congruently with some aspect of their traits, beliefs, motives, and values and, thus, people are never truly inauthentic (even when they're being dishonest or trying to appear to be someone they're not)? Why or why not?
2. What situations make you feel inauthentic, like you're not being yourself? Analyze the source of these feelings based on the material covered in this lecture.

THE WELL-ADJUSTED PERSONALITY

LECTURE 24

This lecture will examine the relationship between personality and what most psychologists consider healthy psychological adjustment. It's best not to think of psychological adjustment itself as a trait; instead, it's more useful to view the degree to which people are well adjusted or poorly adjusted as dependent on particular patterns or configurations of traits. Adjustment also shouldn't be thought of as something that's a permanent and unchanging part of a person's personality; our level of psychological adjustment can vary a great deal across time as situations change and as we change.



5 CRITERIA OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

- ◆ There's no definitive list of characteristics that define an adjusted, well-functioning person, but most psychologists would agree that 5 key ingredients are necessary:
 1. a lack of genuine psychopathology or mental illness
 2. the ability to get along with other people and maintain some supportive close relationships
 3. the ability to pursue and achieve one's goals
 4. the ability to cope with problems that arise in life
 5. a sense of subjective well-being.
- ◆ A person who meets all 5 of these criteria is functioning reasonably well. If any one of them is missing over a period of time, however, the person is probably struggling psychologically.
- ◆ The first criterion—lack of psychopathology or mental illness—seems obvious. A person who currently has some serious psychological problem is clearly not functioning well at the moment. In addition to personality disorders, other serious problems, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and depression, can compromise an individual's well-being.
- ◆ The second characteristic that signals good psychological adjustment is an ability to get along with other people and have some close, supportive, high-quality relationships. People who can't get along with others, whose social interactions are full of conflict and negative emotions, and who can't maintain stable and supportive relationships with friends, romantic partners, family members, and people at work are not dealing effectively with a central feature of human life.
- ◆ Healthy, well-adjusted people generally get along with other people, have mostly positive interactions, and have at least a few strong and supportive relationships that help promote their well-being.
- ◆ Being higher in agreeableness and lower in neuroticism is associated with having higher-quality relationships of all kinds.



Nobody glides through life without psychological difficulties of one kind or another.

Being low in agreeableness and high in neuroticism is associated with more conflict, negative social interactions, and unhappy relationships. These traits also predict the stability of friendships and romantic relationships. People lower in agreeableness and higher in neuroticism have more trouble maintaining their relationships over time.


- ◆ People's beliefs about other people—for example, their general tendency to trust others—and the value they place on relationships also influence how they approach their interactions and relationships with other people.
- ◆ In addition, characteristics that are associated with socioemotional intelligence predict the quality and length of people's relationships. Socioemotional intelligence involves skills that are needed to interact effectively with other people, such as the ability to read and understand other people, to empathize with others' problems and feelings, and to carry on meaningful conversations, as well as the willingness to compromise. So, people who are more empathic, more socially skilled, and less self-centered tend to have better relationships.

- ◆ Self-regulation is also important for relationships. People who are better at controlling their reactions to other people get along better with others.
- ◆ Third, well-adjusted people are able to pursue and achieve the goals they set for themselves. The point is not that everybody should necessarily try to achieve great things or always strive to be the best. Those goals are okay for some people, but for other people, they aren't congruent with what's most important to them. Rather, from the standpoint of psychological adjustment, the important thing is that people should be reasonably effective at pursuing whatever goals they do have.
- ◆ Two characteristics are essential for achieving one's goals, almost without regard to what they are: conscientiousness and the ability to self-regulate. In addition, it helps if people have an internal locus of control. People with an internal locus of control believe that their outcomes are due to their own efforts rather than external, outside influences, so they're more likely to take action and to stick with tasks that become challenging.
- ◆ It also helps to have high self-efficacy—to believe that you're able to accomplish what you want to accomplish. Not having confidence that one can achieve a particular goal undermines motivation, keeps people from getting started, and leads them to give up quickly when problems arise. Being too confident can also create problems, but in general, people with higher self-efficacy, either in general or on a particular task, are more likely to accomplish the goals they set for themselves.
- ◆ The fourth requirement for psychological adjustment is to be able to cope with the problems that inevitably arise in life. Being well adjusted means being able to cope with life events emotionally and to take appropriate actions to solve problems that arise when possible.
- ◆ The word “resilient” is often used to describe people who handle their problems well and who bounce back quickly after major problems and traumatic events. Like adjustment, resilience isn't actually a personality characteristic as much as it's a description of how people respond when they confront problems and stressful events.



None of us handles every problem with equanimity and grace, but people who regularly have trouble coping emotionally with their problems or have trouble doing what's needed to deal with them effectively struggle in life.

- ◆ To respond in a resilient fashion, it helps a great deal to be relatively low in neuroticism. People lower in neuroticism still get frustrated, upset, and stressed out when things fall apart, but their reactions are weaker and don't last as long as those of people who are higher in neuroticism. They're also less likely to ruminate about their problems when there's nothing that can be done at the moment, and they tend to worry less about things that might or might not ever happen in the future.
- ◆ In addition to low neuroticism, optimism predicts how well people cope with stressful events. It helps to get through tough times if you're optimistic that things will eventually get better.
- ◆ Certain styles of coping also promote well-being. Research has identified many ways that people try to deal with problems and stressful situations. And personality predicts the strategies that people tend to use.
- ◆ For example, both extraversion and conscientiousness predict a greater use of problem solving and cognitive restructuring (that is, reframing problems in a more positive way), whereas neuroticism is associated with lower use of these strategies. Neuroticism predicts strategies that tend to be less effective, such as wishful thinking and withdrawal, although it also predicts seeking support from other people.
- ◆ Some coping strategies are more effective and more adaptive than others, but evidence also shows that people who are flexible in the coping strategies that they use cope better overall.
- ◆ Different types of problems and stressors call for different strategies. Even strategies that have gotten a bad reputation for being maladaptive and ineffective—such as distracting yourself, avoiding the problem, and denying that the problem even exists—may sometimes be appropriate and effective. We don't know much about the particular characteristics that help people cope flexibly, but researchers are studying them.
- ◆ The final thing that people need for adjustment is high subjective well-being—the general sense that life is going reasonably well. You might think that if the other 4 criteria are fulfilled, people will naturally feel good about their lives and about themselves, but that's not necessarily the case.



A meta-analysis of more than 100 studies showed that flexibility was related to psychological adjustment, well-being, and mental health.

- ◆ The world is full of people who are free of psychopathology, have good relationships with other people, are effective at achieving goals, and deal effectively with problems but still are not satisfied and happy. This signals that something is amiss that is undermining the person's well-being, despite the fact that things seem to be going reasonably well.
- ◆ What undermines a sense of well-being is that people are talking to themselves in their own minds in particular, dysfunctional ways. They're adding a layer of thinking and evaluation on top of their lives that's mostly unnecessary and making things harder on themselves than they need to be. Many of the sources of poor adjustment are self-inflicted as people who should be reasonably satisfied think themselves into unnecessary unhappiness.

WELL-ADJUSTED PERSONALITY TYPES

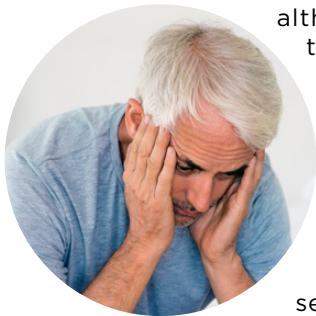
- ◆ In the broadest sense, who are the most well-adjusted people, and what are they like? To answer this question, researchers have used methods that statistically compare people across a large number of personality characteristics simultaneously. These studies repeatedly reveal 3 qualitatively different types of people, and these 3 basic types of people differ mostly in terms of their psychological adjustment.

- ◆ First, all of the studies identified a personality type that is reasonably well adjusted. The researchers called these people the resilient type. The data show that resilient people are low in neuroticism and higher than average in conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness. They also tend to have higher self-esteem and to score low in shyness. Overall, this resilient group had a personality profile showing that they were secure, conscientious, adaptable, and flexible people who had good relationships with others. These characteristics map pretty well onto the features of adjustment mentioned previously in this lecture.



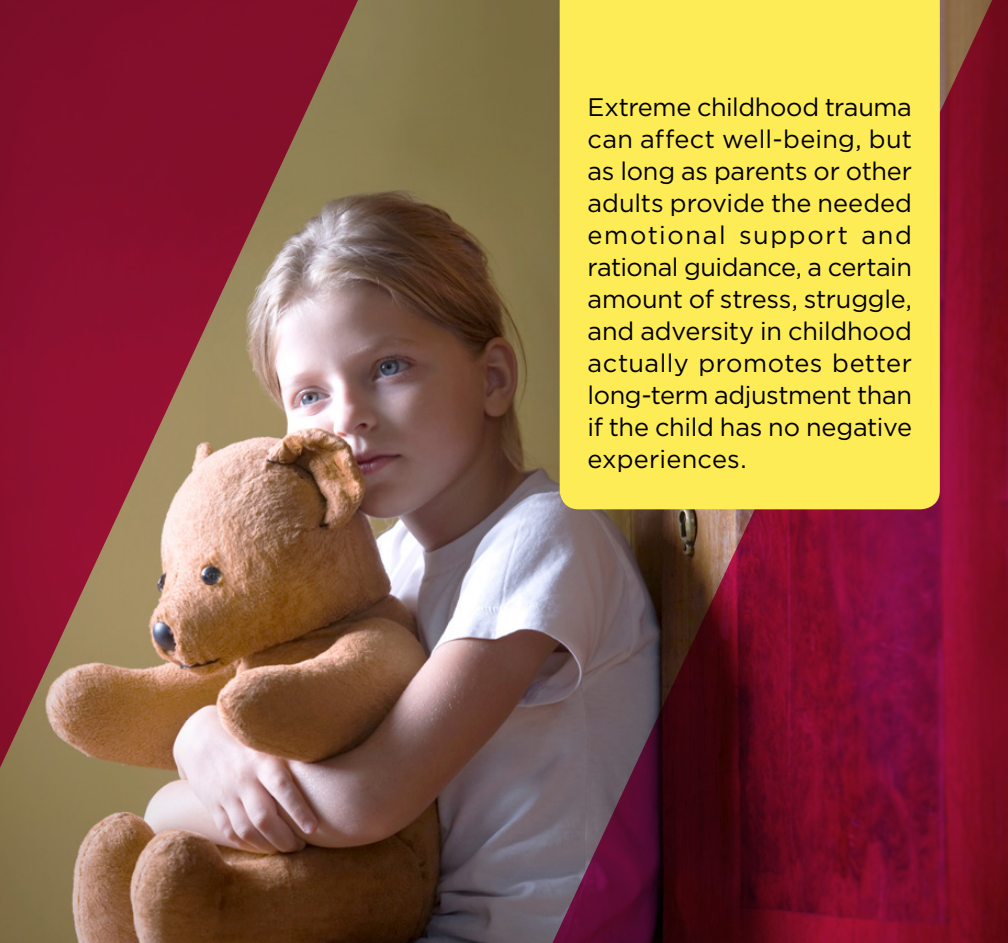
- ◆ The other 2 personality types involved people who are less well adjusted than the resilient group, but they are less well adjusted in different ways. One group—called the overcontrolled personality type—is characterized by high neuroticism. Overcontrolled people not only experience a good deal of negative emotion, but they tend to be inhibited and shy. They also score lower in extraversion, and they're less sociable. They have fewer relationships, and the relationships they do have tend to be less close and less secure. They seem to show an insecure attachment style and have lower self-esteem.
- ◆ The third personality type is the undercontrolled personality. Undercontrolled people also score higher than average in neuroticism,





although not as high as the overcontrolled type, but their primary characteristic is low conscientiousness. Undercontrolled people are impulsive, undependable, and prone to engaging in risky behavior. They also tend to be low in agreeableness, sometimes to the point of behaving in mean and antisocial ways.

- ◆ None of the studies directly measured self-regulation, but one gets the sense that undercontrolled people have problems doing what they're supposed to do and behaving themselves. The studies showed that people who fit the undercontrolled personality profile have fewer close relationships, their relationships are less close and more difficult, and their relationships tend not to last as long. They also tend to be less popular among their peers.
- ◆ Addressing psychological adjustment by classifying everybody into one of 3 personality types is an oversimplification that misses nuances and differences among people within each of these types. But it does reveal a few things about personality and adjustment:
 1. In general, there is only one basic way to be well adjusted but 2 basic ways in which to be poorly adjusted. Fundamentally, the difference between being well adjusted and poorly adjusted lies in how high people are in neuroticism and how well they get along with other people.
 2. The specific characteristics that create the resilient, overcontrolled, and undercontrolled personality types are correlated in nonrandom ways that produce these patterns. In other words, the various characteristics that create each of these 3 types of people tend to go together. People who have one of the characteristics in a profile also tend to have the others.
 3. As we deal with problems in ourselves and in other people, it may be helpful to think about the degree to which those problems reflect the overcontrolled profile versus the undercontrolled profile. Looking beneath the behavioral and emotional manifestations of adjustment problems allows us to think about the psychological characteristics and processes that undermine adjustment and lower well-being in any particular case.

A young girl with blonde hair is holding a large brown teddy bear. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a mix of warm colors, including yellow and red. A yellow text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Extreme childhood trauma can affect well-being, but as long as parents or other adults provide the needed emotional support and rational guidance, a certain amount of stress, struggle, and adversity in childhood actually promotes better long-term adjustment than if the child has no negative experiences.

- ◆ Most of the traits that make some people better adjusted than others have a genetic basis. People are genetically predisposed not only to be relatively well adjusted or poorly adjusted, but people who are poorly adjusted are genetically predisposed to be prone to either the overcontrolled or undercontrolled pattern. Genes account for no more than about half of the variability in these traits, so environment and experience also play a role.
- ◆ Adjustment and resilience generally develop naturally during childhood and adolescence as long as things don't happen that interfere and mess up their development.

- ◆ Setting genetics aside, the most important thing that contributes to long-term adjustment is effective parenting, and it seems to do so by helping the development of important adaptive systems. Two dimensions of parenting in particular are critical: warmth and support on one hand and reasonable, explicit expectations on the other. This combination has repeatedly been shown to result in positive psychological adjustment.

Suggested Reading

Catalino and Fredrickson, “A Tuesday in the Life of a Flourisher.”

Kaufman, “Which Personality Traits Are Most Predictive of Well-Being?”

Weir, “Maximizing Children’s Resilience.”

Questions to Consider

1. This lecture identified 5 primary determinants of psychological adjustment: a lack of psychopathology or mental illness, the ability to get along with other people and maintain supportive relationships, the ability to pursue and achieve one’s goals, the ability to cope with problems in life, and a sense of subjective well-being. In thinking about yourself, which of these 5 is the weakest link? Which one is the greatest impediment to having optimal psychological well-being?
2. No matter how well adjusted you are, when you experience psychological or behavioral problems, do they tend to be of the overcontrolled or undercontrolled variety? Do you see any links between your personality characteristics and whether your struggles primarily reflect an overcontrolled or undercontrolled personality?

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