

Traits, Situations, and Their Interaction

CHAPTER

8



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8. What is the difference between a state and a trait?

The professor in Amelia's personality psychology course had an assignment in which students work in pairs. Students were able to pick their group partner; however, Amelia didn't know anyone in the class. The professor told the students that she would match them up in that case. The professor suggested that Amelia work with Jess. The professor told Amelia that Jess always seemed upbeat and outgoing. When Amelia met Jess, she immediately noticed the odd, yet fashionable, sense of style. Jess told Amelia that she was a senior majoring

in physics but thought that a personality course would be fascinating, so she took it. At first, Amelia was a bit intimidated, but Jess seemed friendly and asked Amelia a series of questions about her life. Amelia quickly became comfortable with Jess, and they seemed to really hit it off. After Amelia left the classroom, she began to wonder how the project would go. She realized that she had figured out several things about Jess but didn't yet know one of the most important things about working together: Is she organized, and will she keep up her end of the assignment? Working with someone who is conscientious was really important to Amelia. She realized that even if she didn't know how conscientious Jess was based on the first interaction, she would certainly learn about that part of Jess's personality as they worked together.

The question "What is she like?" is an important part of meeting and getting to know someone. Typically, we are interested in what traits characterize a person. Is she kind, aggressive, honest? Traits provide us with convenient methods of organizing information about others, of describing how they have behaved in the past, and of making predictions about how they will behave in the future (Jones and Nisbett, 1971; Kelley, 1967). Throughout the history of the study of personality, considerable effort has been devoted to building taxonomies of traits, developing methods for measuring traits, and finding the ways in which groups of traits cluster together. Indeed, the very concept of personality assumes that there are characteristics or traits that remain stable over time.

As described in Chapter 2, an important critique of trait psychology appeared with the publication of Mischel's (1968) book, *Personality and Assessment*. Mischel's review of the personality literature indicated that personality measures were very poor at predicting behavior in specific situations. Following the publication of Mischel's book, the field of personality had to rethink many of its most basic assumptions. This improved measurement and led to a better understanding of when traits predict behavior.

In this chapter, we first consider attempts to classify different kinds of human personalities in terms of types. We then consider some of the most influential attempts to classify personality in terms of *traits*, those of Cattell, Eysenck, and the Big Five model. From there, we move on to consider the debate over the usefulness of trait notions.

Personality Types

The origins of theories of personality go back to Hippocrates and later Galen. Galen suggested there were four personality types associated with the four bodily fluids (humors) as well as with the four physical elements (see Table 8.1). The belief in a relationship between body type and personality has persisted into the present (see also Chapter 1). A well-known effort regarding body types was that of William Sheldon (1954; Sheldon and Stevens, 1942). Sheldon had people rated according to three physical structure types and then attempted to relate these body types to temperaments. Sheldon reported that people who had *mesomorphic* physiques (strong, athletic, and muscular) tended to have somatotonic temperaments (energetic, assertive, and courageous). *Endomorphic* body builds (soft, round, and with large stomachs) were associated with viscerotonic personalities (relaxed, gregarious, and food-loving). *Ectomorphic* physiques (tall, thin, and fragile) were common among cerebrotonic personality **types** (fearful, introverted, and restrained).

types Enduring individual differences in behavior disposition. These differences are thought to be arranged as a set of very few discrete categories.

TABLE 8.1 Relationship between Bodily Humors and Personality Types, as Suggested by Galen

Bodily Humor	Personality Type	Characteristics
Yellow bile	Choleric	Irritable
Black bile	Melancholic	Depressed
Blood	Sanguine	Optimistic
Phlegm	Phlegmatic	Calm; listless

In Sheldon's investigations, individuals were photographed and rated on the extent to which they possessed each of the three body types. Untrained observers then rated the personality characteristics of these same people. Sheldon then found correlations between the physique and personality ratings. However, these findings have been questioned because the raters may have been biased by predominant contemporary stereotypes, such as that round body types are jolly and athletic body types are aggressive. In fact, studies in which individuals are rated on specific behaviors rather than on global traits tend not to show strong associations between body types and personality (Mischel, 1968).

Jung (see Chapter 4) believed that introversion and extroversion are both present in each individual, and he speculated that one of these dispositions would be dominant. Thus, he felt it appropriate to categorize individuals as primarily introverts or extroverts. Nevertheless, typologies like those proposed by Sheldon and Jung are used less frequently in current psychology. The complexity of human behavior makes it difficult to fit individuals neatly into a few simple categories. The description of someone as introverted or extroverted gives us too little information about the person. For most personality characteristics, people fit at some point on a **continuous distribution** of that characteristic rather than into the either-or categories provided by type concepts. A more scientific extension of the typology approach is represented in the work of trait-oriented psychologists.

continuous distribution There are many different gradations between the extremes of a scale. This is in contrast to discrete distributions that allow only a set number of possibilities. Traits are typically considered to have a continuous distribution; types are considered to have a discrete distribution.

factor analysis A statistical method of reducing a large amount of data from tests, rating scales, or behavioral observations to a smaller and presumably more basic number of dimensions of personality factors.

A FOCUS ON STATISTICS AND METHODS

Factor Analysis

Some approaches to the study of personality depend on sophisticated methods such as **factor analysis**, a statistical procedure taking large amounts of data from tests, rating scales, or behavioral observations and reducing them down into smaller, more manageable, chunks.

Factor analysis reduces the redundancy or overlap in a set of scores or data. If two variables are correlated, this means that the two overlap in measuring some common characteristic. For example, there is a correlation between how fast a person runs and how far they can jump. If we took a group of people and recorded their speeds in the hundred-meter run and their distances in the broad jump, we would no doubt find a positive correlation. This correlation would mean that those who run faster also jump farther. The association or correlation between performance on these two track events suggests that some common process or ability, such as leg strength, underlies both running and jumping. Each event requires its own unique abilities, or the two would be perfectly correlated; however, a common factor, such as leg strength, is related to both. The correlation tells us the extent to which some common factor or factors underlie performance in both events; the higher the correlation, the more the two have in common.

It may be helpful to think of factor analysis as analogous to finding basic elements in chemistry. A chemist might use technical methods to find what elements or combinations of elements are parts of a given compound. In factor analysis, the "compounds" are large

samples of behaviors or responses to tests and scales. Submitting such sets of data to factor analysis is like reducing a large array of information to its basic elements.

Typically, there will be a large set of observations, perhaps 500 people reporting on 100 personality traits. The question then becomes, Which personality traits appear to correlate with each other and how many factors are necessary to account for those 100 traits? It would not be a surprise that punctual, organized, and neat are positively correlated, and negatively correlated with messy and disorganized. However, it is also likely that those traits are not correlated with adventurous or outgoing.

Each factor will account for a proportion of the total variability of the original trait ratings. The researcher will use one of several rules to decide how many factors exist based on the proportion of variance accounted for by those factors. The researcher may decide that they want enough factors to account for 75% of the variance. Alternatively, at some point the proportion of variance accounted for will flatten out, with each subsequent factor accounting for smaller and smaller amounts of the variance. When the proportion accounted for by the factors flattens out, it is used as an indication that the key factors have been determined. The individual traits will be associated with a factor via "factor loading." This number can be considered somewhat like a correlation coefficient. Large values indicate an item is strongly associated with that factor. A large negative loading would also indicate a strong association with that factor, just on the other end of the dimension. "Messy" might have a

(continued)

negative loading, whereas “organized” might have a positive loading, on a conscientiousness factor. The trait of “adventurous” may have a factor loading near zero on that conscientiousness factor. The researcher must then identify what the factor represents. Often those high positive and high negative factor loadings are very useful for naming the factor. Cattell (1949) famously invented the names given to his 16 factors,

while most other researchers will use names that are more intuitive.

It should be recognized that no factor analysis can find a factor if the items that make up that factor are not included in the original item set. If there are no items related to honesty being rated, then an honesty dimension will not be found. This principle will hold true for gender and sexuality related traits as well.

Trait Theories

There have been many psychologists who have believed that personality is best understood by studying the organization of traits within an individual. Perhaps the most influential of the trait psychologists was Gordon Allport. Trait psychologists believe that there are characteristics of individuals that remain consistent over time and across situations. If you are an aggressive person, for example, trait theories imply that you will be aggressive in many different settings. In their study of behavior, trait psychologists use a trait as the unit of analysis or the basic focus of examination. Their task is to determine which traits occur together and how patterns of traits are organized within an individual. This taxonomic approach shares with the periodic table in chemistry the goal of identifying basic elements and expressing all compounds (traits) as elements or amalgams of the basic factors.

Early Factor Analytic Work

The pioneer in the factor analytic model of objective personality assessment was J. P. Guilford. Guilford’s approach was to intercorrelate the results of a wide variety of existing personality tests to develop a single test that measured the essentials of all the other existing tests. Guilford’s initial efforts were published in the early 1940s (Guilford, 1940; Guilford and Martin, 1943) and culminated in the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey (Guilford and Zimmerman, 1956). Presumably, the Guilford-Zimmerman scale reduced human personality to 10 basic characteristics or dimensions: general activity, restraint, ascendance (leadership), sociability, emotional stability, objectivity, friendliness, thoughtfulness, personal relations, and masculinity. But despite the careful work and laborious effort that went into the Guilford-Zimmerman scale, the test failed to find widespread acceptance from either researchers or test users.

Cattell and Factor Analysis

Following Guilford’s early work, Raymond B. Cattell also used the factor-analytic method to ascertain and measure the fundamental characteristics of human personality. Cattell’s starting point consisted of an analysis by Allport and Odbert (1936) of over 4,500 adjectives applicable to human beings listed in an unabridged dictionary. Cattell first added to this list other descriptive adjectives taken from psychiatric and psychological literature and then reduced the list to approximately 170 items that he believed were relatively independent and captured the meaning of all the words on the original list. He then asked college students to describe their friends according to the terms on the reduced list and factor analyzed the results. Cattell reported that the items could be reduced to 36 dimensions that were labeled **surface traits** (see Cattell, 1957). Subsequent attempts to further reduce this list ultimately uncovered 16 dimensions, or factors, labeled **source traits**.

To study the organization of traits, many psychologists have turned to complex statistical methods such as factor analysis. The work of Raymond Cattell (1965) is among

surface traits In Cattell’s factor analyses of personality traits, clusters of responses or overt behaviors that are related or fit together.

source traits In Cattell’s factor analyses of personality traits, basic organizing structures that underlie and determine surface traits.

the best-known work of this type. In his search for the basic elements of personality, Cattell performed extensive factor analyses of three types of data: life records (ratings of behavior in everyday situations), self-ratings on personality scales, and scores on objective tests. To determine the nature and the organization of traits, Cattell first examined a list of 4,500 trait names and then reduced this list to less than 200 by grouping synonyms or near-synonyms. Then scores were obtained on the degree to which individuals possessed these traits, and the results were factor analyzed. This procedure yielded 36 *surface traits* (clusters of responses or overt behaviors that fit together) and a smaller number of *source traits* (more basic organizing structures that underlie and determine surface traits). Even the factors of the 16 P-F are intercorrelated, so that these 16 factors were themselves factor analyzed. The results of these additional factor analyses of the 16 P-F scale have yielded from 4 to 8 so-called second-order factors. Among the factors that were identified are introversion-extroversion, anxiety, affectivity, and free will versus resignation (Cattell, Eber, and Tatsuoka, 1970). Of these, the first two factors are best replicated, that is, most often found in other factor-analytic studies.

Various investigations by Cattell using life record and self-report data have produced a similar list of basic traits. Cattell had a fondness for coining words, to the extent that his technical titles needed to be translated into more popular labels. For example, the trait label *premsia* is short for “protected emotional sensitivity.”

Most of Cattell’s research was directed toward the identification of source traits, some of which he has called *environment mold traits*, or traits formed by the environment. Others, determined by factors within the individual, are called *constitutional source traits*. Another distinction Cattell made was between *specific* source traits, which describe how a person operates in a particular situation, and *general* source traits, which affect behavior in many different situations. Thus, in interpreting his factor analytic findings, the idea of trait consistency remains fundamental to Cattell’s work and is reflected in the concept of a general source trait.

Eysenck’s Hierarchy

Hans J. Eysenck is one of the more controversial figures in contemporary psychology. In his many active years as a psychologist, he took strong positions against traditional psychotherapy (Eysenck, 1952), was one of the earliest advocates of behavior therapy, and strongly supported the notion of intelligence as an inherited trait.

Eysenck’s view of personality is in many ways similar to Cattell’s, with behavior viewed hierarchically. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the *specific responses* that are actually observed. Just above these are *habitual responses*. *Traits*, at the next level of the pyramid, are analogous to Cattell’s source traits, and at the top level are types. *Types* for Eysenck are basic behavior dimensions which are continuous rather than typological categories. Eysenck identified three types or dimensions that he regarded as the basic units of personality: neuroticism, extroversion-introversion, and psychoticism.

Using a variety of data sources, such as ratings, questionnaires, and physiological measures, Eysenck repeatedly identified the same dimensions in factor analytic studies. Most of his attention was devoted to classifying people along the dimensions of neuroticism and extroversion-introversion. Since neuroticism can be viewed as corresponding to emotional stability, individuals were classified along a continuum from stable to unstable. An unstable personality is seen as moody, touchy, anxious, and restless, while a stable person is characterized as calm, even-tempered, and carefree. With regard to extroversion and introversion, extroverts are seen as sociable, active, outgoing, and optimistic, while introverts are characterized as passive, quiet, careful, and unsociable. In many respects, the basic personality dimensions identified by Eysenck are similar to those described by Cattell. Eysenck acknowledged this but also contended that his approach was more reliable and more theoretically meaningful and parsimonious.

A FOCUS ON EXTRAVERSION–INTROVERSION

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Eysenck believed that the differences in introversion and extraversion were due to differences in the reactivity of a brain structure called the **ascending reticular activating system** (ARAS, or RAS). The ARAS is one of the systems responsible for alertness and arousal. Organisms (including humans) have a particular range of comfortable arousal. Too much or too little arousal is aversive. Being groggy is uncomfortable, but so is being overstimulated. So humans seek out a comfortable level of arousal. Eysenck suggests that ARAS is chronically more aroused in introverts, and that stimuli are more arousing for introverts—that is, introverts start at a higher level of arousal than extraverts. Furthermore, because the ARAS is more arousable in introverts, the same amount of stimulation results in more stimulation for introverts. Thus, for introverts, it does not take much environmental stimulation to reach a comfortable level of arousal;

likewise, it does not take that much more stimulation to exceed the comfortable level of arousal. Extraverts, on the other hand, need more environmental stimulation to reach their comfortable state of arousal.

Geen (1984) found that the chosen volume of music was higher for extraverts while doing a cognitive task. He also found that introverts were more aroused than extraverts by the same volume level of music. Furnham and colleagues (Dobbs, Furnham, and McClelland, 2010; Furnham and Bradley, 1997) had introverted and extraverted British participants perform cognitive tasks in the presence or absence of music. Both of those studies found that extraverts performed better than introverts when music was being played. Other researchers have found similar effects (Cassidy and MacDonald, 2007). Interestingly, there have been failures to replicate in Chinese and Singaporean samples (Lim, Furnham, and McClelland 2022).

ascending reticular activating system

A neuronal circuit responsible for wakefulness and associated with attention. Eysenck's model suggests that differences in introversion and extraversion are based on the underlying responsiveness of this system. In this model, introverts have a more responsive system.

behavioral activation system

A system that is sensitive to signals about the likelihood of reinforcement.

behavioral inhibition system

A system that is sensitive to signals about the likelihood of punishment.

Gray and BAS and BIS

Gray, who was a student of Eysenck's, suggests a reorientation of Eysenck's dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism. Gray (1981) suggests that people differ in their sensitivity signals about reinforcements and punishments. In this model, there are two different systems: the **behavioral activation system** (BAS) and the **behavioral inhibition system** (BIS). The BAS is the system that is sensitive to signals about reinforcement. When the BAS notices signals about reinforcement, it activates behaviors in service of seeking that reinforcement. The BIS is the system that is sensitive to signals about punishment. When the BIS notices signals about punishment, behavior will be inhibited.



In Gray's model, people who have high behavioral activation and low behavioral inhibition are likely to choose rewarding activities although there may be negative consequences by doing so. Even if there is an exam the next day, a party will seem like a good idea.

Source: Jacob Lund/Shutterstock

Consider a few college friends on a Thursday night who have been invited to a party but have exams on Friday. One friend may have a really strong behavioral activation and can sense all the positive things about going to the party, which is an extraverted behavior. That friend is not going to worry about the exam. This would be high extraversion and low neuroticism in the Eysenck model, and high BAS and low BIS in the Gray model. Another friend doesn't see any point in going to the party, since it will be loud, crowded, and she won't know anyone; plus, there is an exam. This would be low BAS and high BIS in the Gray model. Finally, there is the friend who can't wait to go to the party, excited that she will meet new people and dance, but then can't have any fun while she is there because she is so concerned about the exam the next day. This would be high BAS and high BIS in Gray's model.

Congruent with this model, Larsen and Kettelaar (1991) found that people high in extraversion, compared to people low in extraversion, react more strongly to a positive mood induction and people high in neuroticism, compared to low neuroticism, react more strongly to a negative mood induction. It also appears that people who measure as high on BAS (Carver and White, 1994) process anxiety-related tasks more efficiently in the anterior cingulate nucleus and left lateral prefrontal cortex according to fMRI measures (Gray and Burgess, 2004). Again, we have a suggestion of a brain structure associated with these personality traits.

The Big Five

More recently, a number of researchers have converged on the idea that there are five basic trait dimensions to personality. This concept is increasingly referred to as the **Big Five** model of personality. Sometimes this concept is known as the **Five Factor Model** (FFM). For our purposes, we will not differentiate between the two and will use the term *Big Five*. The development of the Big Five model has its roots in the analysis of natural, everyday language (John, 1990). This is often known as the **lexical hypothesis**, the idea that important concepts will be represented within the language. A number of investigators over the years have collected words from the dictionary that represent personality traits (e.g., *strong-willed, assertive, introspective*) and then, using factor analysis, have sorted them into categories. Five factors have frequently appeared.

Others have arrived at a five-factor solution by factor analyses of personality tests. In a personality test, the subject rates the degree to which a statement describes someone. One of the most well-known examples of this type of research is the work of McCrae and Costa (1990; 2008), who have developed their "NEO-PI-R" personality inventory to measure their version of the Big Five. McCrae and Costa's five factors are: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. The factors are often labeled with one aspect of the trait, but recognize that there is also the other end of the dimension. The following list describes the basics of each of these five factors.

1. Neuroticism (versus emotional stability). People high on this scale may manifest anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsivity, or vulnerability.
2. Extraversion (versus introversion). People high on this scale might be sociable, talkative, active, person-oriented, optimistic, or fun-loving. People low on this scale might be reserved, independent, quiet, or aloof.
3. Openness to experience (versus conventional). People high on this scale are imaginative, curious, and willing to entertain novel ideas. People low on this scale tend to be conventional, conservative, and set in their ways.
4. Agreeableness (versus cold/hostile). People high on this scale tend to be good natured, altruistic, helpful, forgiving, and trusting. People low on this scale tend to be suspicious, uncooperative, irritable, cynical, or rude.
5. Conscientiousness (versus careless/unreliable). People high on this scale tend to be reliable, self-directed, punctual, scrupulous, ambitious, and hard-working. People low on this scale tend to be aimless, lazy, lax, negligent, and unreliable.

Big Five This is a term given to five basic personality traits that seem to reoccur in most factor analysis approaches and across many different cultures and languages.

Five Factor Model One of the models that posits that there are five major personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness.

lexical hypothesis The idea that important concepts will be part of the language, and by examining language researchers will then be able to discover those important components.



A person who is conscientious is going to be hardworking and reliable. This is the kind of person you want working with you on a group project.

Source: michaeljung/Shutterstock

The identification of these five basic traits has come from two sources: analysis of the *words* and analysis of the *descriptions* that individuals make of themselves and of others. An immediate question that occurs is the degree to which the Big Five represent how the average English-speaking person views personality compared to how people in other cultures view personality. In other words: how universal are these Big Five traits? Past studies have found overall congruence for the Dutch and German languages (Hofstree et al., 1997), as well as for Japan and China (John, 1990). Neuroticism and extraversion have been replicated for languages of the Solomon Islands and of India. De Raad (1992) found congruence between the Big Five and Dutch adjectives and nouns, but not as much support for Dutch verbs. In a subsequent analysis, De Raad and his colleagues (2010) found relatively strong support for three dimensions of personality across twelve different languages. These three dimensions were extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. John (1990)

notes that the weakest evidence for universality is found for openness to experience. However, the overall results are encouraging for some degree of universality.

Big Five Traits Have Facets

Big Five advocates view these traits as the basic structure of personality. However, if you look at the descriptions of the five factors, you will note that each broad factor includes a number of more specific traits. For instance, neuroticism includes such disparate emotional states as anxiety, hostility, and depression. This is because the five factors are conceived of as being *broad band* personality traits. That is, they are seen as forming the *general* underlying structure of personality, even though they encompass many more *specific* traits. For instance, the NEO PI-R (Costa and McCrae, 2008) has several **facets** for each of the five dimensions. John (1990) notes that the Big Five is similar to taxonomies in the natural world. The five factors are equivalent to terms such as *plant* and *animal*. Under *animal*, for instance, we have lions, tigers, dogs, and so on. In a similar manner, under *neuroticism* we have *anxiety*, *hostility*, *depression*, *self-consciousness*, and *vulnerability* (Lyon, Elliott, Ware, Juhasz, and Brown, 2021). Advocates of the Big Five do not

facets Components that are subfactors that make up a factor in the Five Factor Model.

APPLICATIONS OF PERSONALITY

Conscientiousness and Job Performance

Conscientiousness is likely to be the trait most closely related to academic and job performance, with the possible exception of cognitive ability. O'Connor and Paunonen (2007) have identified 20 different studies in which conscientiousness is a significant predictor of academic achievement.

In the work world, conscientiousness is a well-studied trait. Wilmot and Ones (2019) performed a meta-analysis that included over 2,500 different studies which had a total of over 1,000,000 participants (*one million*). In the meta-analysis, 98% of the results found that conscientiousness is a significant predictor of various work performance criteria. Conscientiousness has estimated correlations of .22 for work motivation, .23 for work attitudes, -.20 for counterproductivity (the opposite of productivity) and .17 for performance. Buried deep in their data is evidence that conscientiousness is negatively

correlated with job turnover. It would appear that conscientiousness is an important trait for predicting job performance.

Importantly, the complexity of a job interacts with conscientiousness and job performance. Low-complexity jobs that are skilled or semi-skilled are less impacted by conscientiousness than moderately complex jobs such as sales, customer service, and military and police. Health care is the occupational category with the highest relationship between job performance and conscientiousness. Interestingly, high-complexity jobs such as physicians, lawyers, and higher management have the lowest relationship between conscientiousness and job performance. It is likely that in those high-complexity occupations other traits and experiences influence job performance.

mean to imply that personality can be described *only* in terms of these five traits any more than the world of living beings can be described only in terms of plants and animals. In fact, many Big Five advocates have said that in order to actually predict an individual's behavior, the Big Five is too broad and general. One needs measures of the more specific traits within each factor.

Let us use the dimensions of conscientiousness to further explore the idea of facets. As seen in the box about applied traits, the trait of conscientiousness is a good predictor of academic achievement (O'Conner and Paunonen, 2007) and work performance (Wilmot and Ones, 2019). Different researchers will find slightly different facets that make up the conscientiousness factor. Researchers will also give very similar facets slightly different names. The names given are less important for our context than the idea that the multiple facets make up the factor. One model of conscientiousness (MacCann, Duckworth, and Roberts, 2009) identifies eight facets for conscientiousness: Industriousness, Perfectionism, Tidiness, Procrastination Refrainment, Control, Caution, Task Planning, and Perseverance (see Figure 8.1).

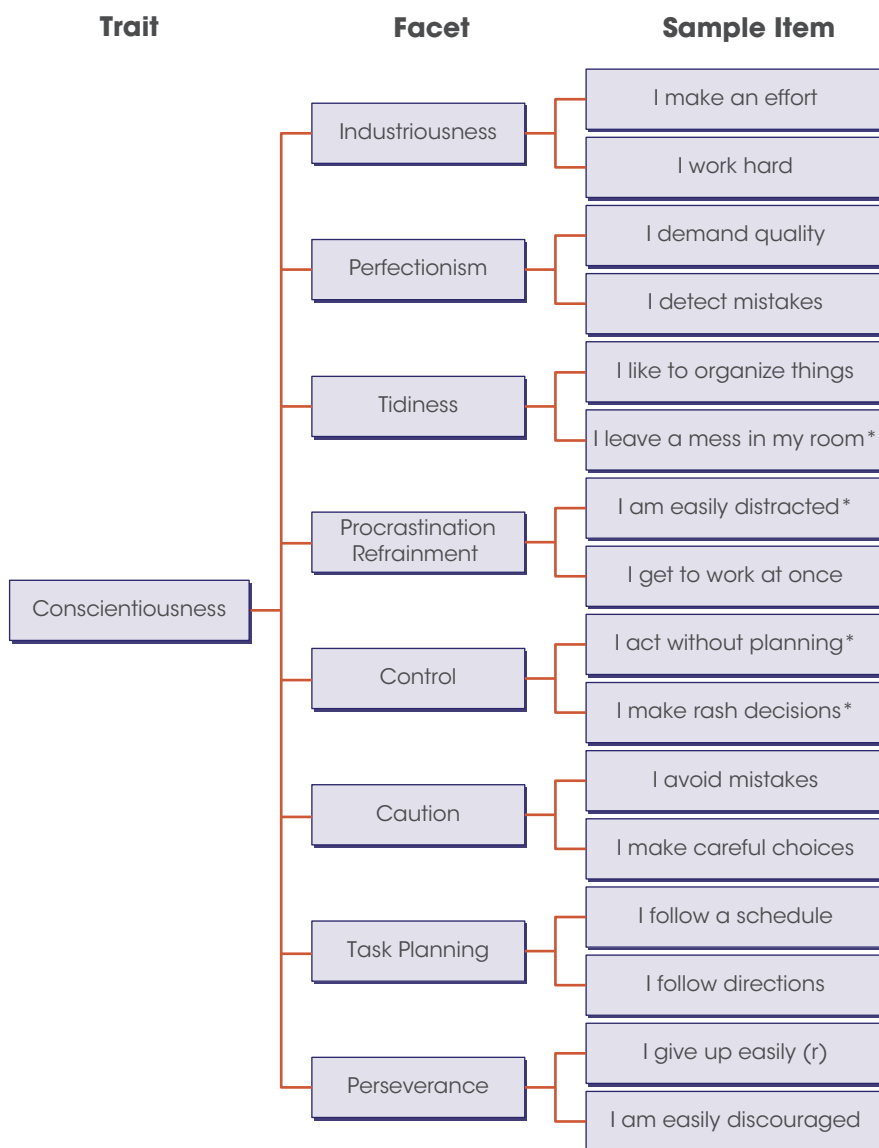


FIGURE 8.1

The trait of conscientiousness includes multiple facets. These are the facets identified by MacCann, Duckworth, and Roberts (2009). The last column includes sample items from a scale that would measure the facet. If there is an *, it means that the item should be reverse scored.

Criticisms of the Big Five

While writers such as McCrae and John (1992) have argued that the field should now assume that the Five Factor Model is the correct representation of personality trait structure and move on to using it to explore other topics, there are those (e.g., Block, 1995; 2010) who believe that this conclusion is premature. Others, such as Eysenck and Cattell, whose personality tests are based on three and sixteen factors, respectively, would agree. We shall briefly note some of the criticisms Block has raised concerning the Big Five.

First, advocates of the Big Five have argued that one of the strongest sources of evidence for the existence of the Big Five is that it has been found *empirically*. That is, it was not based on someone's theoretical preconceptions, but simply found by factor analyzing words and sentences people use to describe other people. However, Block has noted that before these factor analyses were done, investigators had made numerous assumptions that may well have biased the outcome in favor of finding five factors.

Second, while many investigators have found five factors, they are not the *same* five factors. Block notes some important discrepancies among the various five-factor models. For instance, McCrae and Costa place *warmth* under *extraversion*, but Goldberg (another five-factor theorist) places it under *agreeableness*. They place *impulsivity* in *neuroticism*, but Goldberg places it in *extraversion*.

Third, while advocates of the Big Five claim that five factors consistently emerge, others have disagreed. We have already mentioned that Cattell bases his personality test on sixteen factors and that Eysenck claims there are three main factors. Block's analysis of the personality assessment device he uses, the California Q Sort, finds eight factors. Hogan and Hogan (1992) have found that they must use six factors to describe their data adequately. Block argues that this suggests that there are important aspects of personality that are not being encompassed by the Big Five.

Beyond Five Dimensions

As we saw in the previous section, many models suggest different numbers of primary traits. It is certainly likely that particular facets or domains may be left out of a five-factor model. Consider a person's attitude about sexuality. There are individual differences about sexuality that are not well captured in the five dimensions (Shafer, 2001). Or, consider honesty. Is it a facet of conscientiousness? A really talented embezzler is likely to be very conscientious but dishonest.

One of the major alternatives to the Big Five is a model known as HEXACO (Lee and Ashton, 2004; 2020). The HEXACO model adds an honesty-humility factor that includes

aspects of personality like trustworthiness, lack of greed, and modesty. The HEXACO model includes the usual extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Their cross language data suggests that neuroticism is better interpreted as emotional vulnerability (Ashton et al., 2004). The last factor is a combination of intellect/imagination/unconventionality (Ashton et al., 2004; p. 363). The honesty-humility dimension is positively correlated with the proclivity to apologize (Dunlop et al., 2015) and negatively correlated with the use of impression management strategies in the workplace (Bourdage et al., 2015).

Zuckerman and Biological Explanations

The lexical hypothesis is descriptive; that is, it describes the aspects of personality. However, it is not explanatory. It is easy to fall into the **nominal fallacy**—that to name it is to explain it. It isn't especially useful to say someone is emotional because they are high in neuroticism or that we know they are neurotic because they are emotional. Eysenck's model moves away from this problem by using biological bases to explain

nominal fallacy A logical fallacy that confuses naming something with explaining something.



Honesty is added to variations on the other five traits in the HEXACO model of personality traits.

Source: pathdoc/Shutterstock

the source of his three dimensions. Other researchers have also turned to a biological basis to explain the source of traits. One such example is Zuckerman and his colleagues (Zuckerman, 2003; Zuckerman, Kuhlman, and Camac, 1988). In this approach, biological systems may interact with each other to result in the observed behavior. In general, Zuckerman provides evidence from brain activity and structure, neurotransmitters, hormones, and genetics as causes of the traits. Keep in mind that they will interact with each other and may be alternative levels of explanation.

Zuckerman's 2003 review of the literature identifies cortical arousal differences between introverts and extraverts, like Eysenck. Sensation seeking, which may be part of extraversion or a trait in and of itself, is closely linked to dopamine, a neurotransmitter. Monoamine oxidase breaks down dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine. Monoamine oxidase levels measured shortly after birth, which then tend to be relatively stable, are associated with activity and arousal. Later in life, monoamine oxidase is associated with sensation seeking, as well as dominance, sociability, and sexual activity. Likewise, the hormone testosterone is associated with dominance, sociability, and sexual activity. For neuroticism, it is known that emotional arousal is associated with activity in the limbic system, especially the amygdala. As we saw in Chapter 1, the serotonin transporter gene (5-HTTLPR) is associated with emotionality, which would be part of the trait of neuroticism. Zuckerman argues that it is overly simplistic to suggest that there will be a one-to-one correspondence between a neurotransmitter and a trait, or a brain structure and a trait. Instead, behavior is caused by interactions in a nervous system that is optimized by the evolutionary past for survival of the self and offspring.

One of the consequences of taking this approach to personality traits is that the traits shift a little from the typical structure of the Big Five model. Zuckerman (1992) identifies sociability, neuroticism-anxiety, aggression-hostility, activity, and impulsive-unsocialized sensation seeking. Sociability, which is their version of extraversion, contains both sociability and isolation intolerance. Neuroticism-anxiety is obviously the equivalent of the neuroticism-emotional stability dimension in other models. Aggression-hostility would be the opposite end of the agreeableness dimension. Sensation seeking would be related to openness to experience, although by adding the impulsive-unsocialized dimension, we are getting some of the opposite pole of conscientiousness. Activity doesn't have a clear link in the Big Five models, but as we saw in the HEXACO model, if important components are not included in the measurement, we can't find it in the data. People do vary in activity, and there are measurable biological differences correlated with activity.

Trait and Situational Theories

Mischel's Argument

Mischel's (1968) book on the assessment of personality has often been interpreted as an all-out attack on the concept of traits. Mischel (2009), however, repeatedly denied this extreme position. Rather, he maintained that the evidence for the existence of traits is weak and that the methods for their assessment need reevaluation. Furthermore, he acknowledged the value of cognitive traits, such as intelligence and speed of processing and encoding information.

The essence of Mischel's argument is that trait measures are not valid predictors of behavior in specific situations. Although personality tests do well at predicting how people will score on similar personality tests, they do poorly at predicting how someone will actually behave in a given situation. One finds that questionnaire and projective measures of aggression are not very effective predictors of an individual's aggressive behavior on the athletic field, in confrontations with authority, in response to a friend's arriving late for an appointment, and in a myriad of other concrete situations in which variations in aggressive behavior can be observed. Moreover, observational measures of aggression are not very effective in predicting aggressive behaviors



Measured traits may not be good predictors of behavior from situation to situation.

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in situations other than the one in which aggression was initially assessed. Similar low predictability of behaviors in specific situations can be found for measures of impulsivity, achievement motivation, anxiety, and other personality characteristics. It can be maintained that if such tests are really meaningful, they should be able to forecast how people will behave in the specific tasks that psychologists create for laboratory studies.

Mischel reported that many investigations demonstrate that the correlation between test scores and behavior in specific situations is rarely greater than .30, or that around 91% of the variance in behavior is unexplained by the test score. Mischel called these low correlations *personality coefficients* and suggested that knowledge of personal characteristics tells us little about how a person will actually behave. Mischel was more impressed with the amount of variation that would be explained by knowing about the situation in which the behavior is observed, rather than knowing about the person in that situation. Thus, he championed what is known as the **situational critique** of the concept of traits. Mischel's original position led to many responses, some in support, others in contradiction. Next, we consider other positions in response to his critique of traits.

situational critique The idea that the situation is a better predictor of an individual's behavior than personality.

Attribution Theory

Another perspective suggesting the need to modify traditional trait theories derives from **attribution theory**. Originally, attribution theory was primarily concerned with the judgments people make about others, particularly their inferences about others' intentions. However, research in this area now covers all aspects of how people attempt to understand the causes of events in their lives.

attribution theory A theoretical approach based on the view that people attempt to explain and understand behavioral events through attributing the causes of those events to characteristics of the person or to factors in the environment; these causal ascriptions significantly influence goal expectancies and behavioral responses.

The basic ideas of attribution theory were first formulated in the mid-1940s and 1950s (Heider, 1944, 1958) but came to prominence decades later (Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). Kelley offered a model to capture how the layperson determines causation. He suggested that events are perceived as caused by three potential sources: persons, entities (aspects of the environment), or circumstances. To determine which of these, or which combination of sources, has caused an event, the person uses three criteria called distinctiveness, consensus, and consistency. If, for example, we wanted to explain why John enjoys the food at a particular restaurant so much, it would be helpful to ask if he always feels this way in restaurants (distinctiveness), whether others in the same restaurant also enjoy the food (consensus), and whether John enjoyed the food when he ate in this restaurant before (consistency). If all people enjoy the food in this eating establishment, then John's enjoyment would be attributed to the entity (it is a good restaurant); if John always

enjoys food at restaurants, then the enjoyment would be attributed to him (he really likes food); if John usually dislikes this restaurant, then his present enjoyment would be ascribed to special circumstances, such as unusual hunger, the presence of friends, or some special dish (Kelley, 1967; Orvis, Cunningham, and Kelley, 1975).

Jones and Nisbett (1971) have suggested that the selection of a trait or a situational explanation for behavior also depends on the role played by the person making the judgment. When people are observers and are making judgments about others, they tend to use dispositional or trait explanations. However, they use fewer trait concepts and more situational concepts to explain their own behavior. Thus, one might say, “You hit him because you are aggressive” (a trait explanation), but, “I hit him because he did something wrong” (a situation explanation). Thus, we are likely to use the traits to explain other people’s behavior. Consequently, we see their behavior as due to that consistent trait.

Why should there be a difference between the attributions of actors and observers? Jones and Nisbett suggest that this is so because people know more about their own behavior than they know about the behavior of others. Searching through memories, a person can recall behaving differently in many different situations in the past. Information regarding the distinctiveness and inconsistency of behavior fosters situation attributions. Note, however, that this analysis assumes that individuals find little consistency in their behaviors across situations. Observers, on the other hand, are less likely to have the information available about others to rule out situational causes of behavior, and therefore make trait attributions for other people.

A classic demonstration of the actor-observer bias comes from Storms (1973). Participants were filmed, then shown that film of their own behavior from the perspective that other people would have. When a person views themselves from the viewpoint of other people, they tend to use trait explanations for their own behaviors, when typically this person would use a situational explanation.

Attribution Theory and Trait Psychology

Attribution theorists have not been concerned with the inadequacy of traditional trait tests for predicting behavior. Rather, traits are important because people use them to describe the behavior of others; they are part of the implicit or “naive” psychology that the layperson uses (see Chapter 6). Extensive research has demonstrated that both laypeople and experienced clinical psychologists favor explaining behavior in terms of enduring dispositions, instead of in terms of the situation. The tendency to overestimate the importance of traits and underestimate the importance of the situation in causing behavior has been labeled the **fundamental attribution error** (Ross, 1977).

Indeed, it appears that our first, relatively automatic reaction is to attribute what a person does to their traits. Only with conscious effort and thought do we take the situation into account (Gilbert, 1989). Gilbert has argued that when we are under cognitive load, we are more likely to ignore situational contributions to behavior and to overattribute the behavior to an individual’s personality traits.

For instance, in a study by Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull (1988), subjects watched a silent videotape of a woman engaged in conversation with a stranger. The woman exhibited various visual signs of distress and anxiety: tapping her fingers, twirling her hair, biting her nails. In one condition, where subjects were told that the woman had been asked to talk about her sexual fantasies, it was assumed that the subjects would attribute her distress to the *situation*, that is, to having to talk about one’s sexual fantasies to a stranger. In another condition, where subjects were told that the woman had been asked to talk about bland topics, it was assumed that the woman’s distress would be attributed to her *personality*, that is, the woman acts anxious because she is an anxious person. These differences in behavior attribution were found as long as the subjects were not under stress themselves. However, when subjects had to engage in a memory task as they watched the video, all subjects tended to attribute the woman’s anxiety to her personality, as if they had not bothered to take into account whether or not she was in an anxiety-producing situation (e.g., talking about sexual fantasies to a stranger).

fundamental attribution error This is a tendency to attribute behavior of other people to their personality rather than to the situation.

Other research even suggests that the manner in which we make judgments about others is not strongly associated with either past experiences or our observations of these others. For example, one study examined peer ratings given by different groups of men (Norman, 1963). One group had lived together in the same fraternity for three years, while another group was less closely associated. Although the two groups had differing amounts of contact, they used very similar dimensions for making judgments about one another. Indeed, these same dimensions of judgment emerge when subjects rate complete strangers (Passini and Norman, 1966). These studies demonstrate that the same dimensions or traits are used to rate others whether or not the subjects are familiar with the people they are evaluating. These findings do not necessarily mean that the trait dimensions are being misapplied; rather, they suggest that trait ratings might tell us more about the raters than about the people being rated. But whether or not traits are valuable for understanding behavior, observers *believe* that they are and tend to perceive information in a manner that supports trait interpretations.

Alternative Assessment Strategies

Despite problems with the notion of traits, few psychologists have actually shelved their faith in personality dispositions. While the concept of traits may still have utility, it does appear that a complete reliance on traits is an oversimplification that can lead to incorrect predictions of behavior in a variety of situations. Although there is consistency in our lives, better measurement techniques are needed to predict future behavior. This requires methodologies that consider and include the evaluations of situations, the interaction of traits and situations, and other approaches to trait assessment.

The Interactionist Position

It is meaningless to ask which is more important when it is evident that behavior is always a joint function of characteristics of the person and of the situation, as was discussed in Chapter 2. This **interactionist position** is a rapprochement between trait and situational approaches to personality assessment which acknowledges the importance of personality dispositions as well as the role of situations.

interactionist position The personality theory that views behavior as governed by both the properties of the person and the situation in which the person is acting.

The interactionist position takes several multiple forms, each with different implications. One such form is the *transactional* approach (Magnusson, 1990). Whenever interaction is described in these terms, it refers to the reciprocal sequence of actions that take place between person and situation. Each situation poses its own demands and cues that tend to call for a particular set of behaviors. The relaxed setting of an informal gathering will elicit very different behaviors than a formal dinner party; the athletic field elicits different responses than the classroom. Each individual brings their own set of unique personality traits to each of these situations. These traits influence how the situation is perceived; different people will see different aspects of the situation as most important. Thus, at the dinner party, person A, who is characterized by anxiety over status and acceptance by others, will be oriented to the seating arrangement and to the amount of attention given by the host and hostess; person B, an outdoorsy extravert, will find the stiffness and formality particularly frustrating.

Following the individual differences in perceptions of situations, people behave on the basis of these perceptions and their behaviors elicit reactions from others. The feedback from these behaviors and reactions will then influence subsequent behaviors. The behavioral outcome that is finally observed is a result of a sequence of reciprocal transactions between the individual, with their uniqueness, and the situation, with its uniqueness. This formulation of the trait-situation interaction is consonant with the views of situation-oriented theorists like Mischel, as well as with those of many trait-oriented theorists (Endler and Magnusson, 1976; Magnusson and Endler, 1977).

There is a common but more limited meaning of the term *interaction* that is also applicable to the trait-situation issue. In the statistical sense, interaction refers to a *differential* effect that the same situation may have on different people or the differential effect of the same disposition in response to different situations. For example, a highly insulting,

frustrating situation will elicit more aggressive behavior than a non-frustrating situation. However, the effects of the frustration are likely to be much more pronounced in individuals who have a strong disposition to respond with anger and aggression than in individuals who are low on this trait dimension. The difference in aggressive behavior between the high-aggressive and low-aggressive individuals under nonfrustrating conditions may be negligible; it is under conditions of frustration that the difference in personality traits becomes evident.

In comparison to the transactional model, the more limited interactional model is easier to investigate. Using this model, evidence for the interactionist position is obtained by comparing the proportion of variance in behavior that is explained by the person, by the situation, and by the interaction between person and situation. One might think of this by drawing a pie and dividing it to represent all of the different influences on human behavior. Figure 8.2 shows such a pie. One slice represents the proportion of variance attributable to personality traits; another slice represents the proportion of variance caused by situational influences; and a third slice is for the interaction between situational and dispositional influences. The interaction is due to unique combinations of traits and situations. Careful studies designed for application of the statistical method known as *analysis of variance* have separated the proportion of variance attributable to each of these factors. As shown in Figure 8.2, interaction accounts for a larger proportion of the variance in behavior than either person or situation (Magnusson and Endler, 1977).

Although it is revealing that unique combinations of persons and situations explain more of the variation than either influence by itself, the interaction position still explains only some of the behavior of some of the people some of the time (Bem and Allen, 1974). As Figure 8.2 reveals, the largest slice of the pie is reserved for error variance: the proportion of the total that is not explained in terms of the three specified sources of influence. Although the interaction is a better predictor than either the trait or the situation, it is only slightly better. Thus, there is still a need for measurement methods that can be used to predict more of the people more of the time.

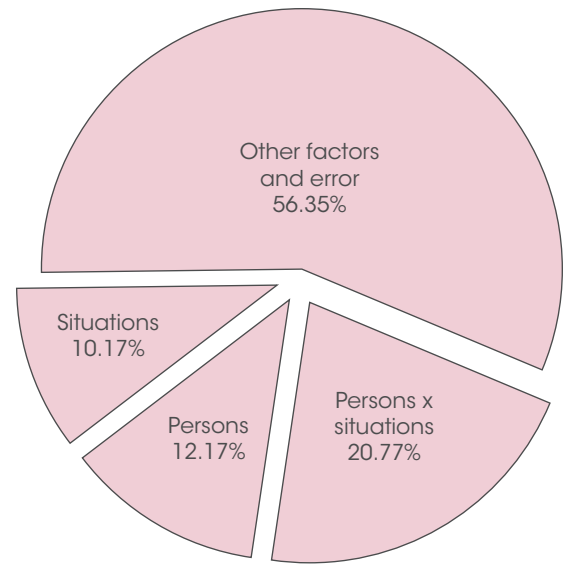


FIGURE 8.2
Factors Influencing Behavior



Personality and the situation are going to interact to create behavior. The stress of the situation interacts with the woman's personality to create her behavior.

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The Moderator Variable Approach

moderator variables These would be variables that will change the extent to which measured personality will be predictive of behavior. These could be things like the strength of the situation, or consistency of a particular individual's behavior overall.

One solution to the dilemma of accounting for such little variance in predicting behavior from traits is to propose **moderator variables** (i.e., identify factors that are responsible for the lack of predictability of trait indexes) and then take them into account when attempting to predict behavior (see Cheek, 1982). One such moderator proposed by Bem and Allen (1974) is the reported *consistency* of each person's behavior in each domain of activity. Bem and Allen proposed that some individuals may be very consistent with regard to some personality characteristics, yet very inconsistent with regard to others. That is, some traits characterize some people while other traits characterize other people. And some people might not be characterized by any traits at all!

To demonstrate individual differences in consistency, college students rated whether their behavior would be consistent or inconsistent across different situations for the traits of friendliness and conscientiousness. They then examined the correlations among friendliness measures (self-reports, peers' and parents' reports, and objective behaviors) separately for subjects high and low in self-reported consistency. In accordance with predictions, intercorrelations of friendliness measures were higher for the high consistency group than for those declaring that they were low in consistency. That is, reported consistency moderated the relation between trait indexes and behavior. However, this procedure did not yield the predicted differences in intercorrelations for conscientiousness. In addition, the findings were not replicated by Chaplin and Goldberg (1985) or Paunonen and Jackson (1985).

Guided by this approach, Zuckerman et al. (1988) demonstrated that self-reported consistency as well as subjective trait importance moderates cross-situational consistency. If the individual reports that they are highly consistent and the trait has high relevance, then there is cross-situational consistency in behavior and a relation between trait measures and actions. These investigators recommend that psychologists search for an array of moderator variables; predictions of behavior from traits will then be enhanced.

Situational Selection

situational selection People make choices about the situations that they enter. In the process of making the selection, the person chooses the situation that fits their personality.

Another way in which we see an interaction between personality and the situation is **situational selection**. Much of the time, people make choices of the situations to enter. For instance, when choosing what to do on a Thursday evening, an introvert and an extrovert might make different choices, likely choosing the situation that works for their personality. Bem and Funder (1978) introduced a descriptive system of measurement that could be used to take advantage of the ability to predict our own behavior in particular situations. Their approach, termed the template-matching technique, attempts to match personality to a specific template of behavior. To employ the technique, one must specify how a person would behave in a particular situation without any information about the particular person. For example, consider the question, "Should Cathy see the movie *All Quiet on the Western Front*?" Perhaps the best way to guide Cathy would be to describe the movie in terms of how several hypothetical people might react to it. People who are squeamish might enjoy the movie but have bad dreams about it for a few nights. People with certain political beliefs might not like it because it presents a specific perspective about involvement in wars. Cathy can now predict her own reaction to the movie by matching her characteristics with this set of "templates" that have been provided for her.

Bem and Funder (p. 486) proposed that situations can be characterized as sets of template-behavior pairs, with each template being a personality description of how an idealized type of person is specifically expected to behave in that setting. The probability that a particular person will behave in a particular way in a situation will be a function of the match between their characteristics and the template. For example, if Cathy's personality characteristics matched the template for those who would hate *All Quiet on the Western Front*, then she might be best advised to avoid it.

Similar models suggest that people choose the situation by imagining the typical person in a particular situation and then choosing the situation where they are most similar to that prototypical person. This approach has been used to examine teenagers' choice of whether to smoke (Chassin et al., 1981) or the choice of living situation at the University of

Wisconsin (Niedenthal, Cantor, and Kihlstrom, 1985). This last study is interesting in that a moderator variable, self-monitoring, is associated with how people make their choice. Remember that people who are low self-monitors (see Chapter 2) tend to not adjust their behavior to fit the situation. Consequently, it is low self-monitors who are more diligent in choosing a situation that fits their personality. Because high self-monitors can adjust their behavior, it isn't quite as important to find the situation that fits their personality the best.

Aggregation Techniques

The fact that behavior varies with situations suggests a strategy for reducing the variability contributed by the situation and maximizing the variability contributed by the person—namely, by averaging, or aggregating, behavior across different situations. This is essentially the strategy used in the development of objective personality tests, which typically have large numbers of items. In general, the larger the number of items, the more reliable the test. For example, each item of the MMPI scale of depression can be assumed to tap a generalized dimension of depression and also a reaction specific to that item. By using a large number of items, the influence of any single item relative to the general dimension of depression is reduced, and the reliability is thereby enhanced. Epstein (1979, 1980) has cogently argued that situations are analogous to questionnaire items, and that one can enhance the reliability of trait measures and their intercorrelations by averaging across situations.

There has been some controversy regarding the implications of this increased reliability for trait correlations when aggregated over many different situations, for aggregation seems to acknowledge that behavior in a specific situation cannot be predicted from a trait measure. However, a number of investigations have shown that aggregation procedures improve predictions and contribute to stronger trait relationships (Cheek, 1982; Rushton, Brainerd, and Pressley, 1983). For example, the correlation between self-ratings and ratings by fraternity peers on a number of personality dimensions increases as a function of the number of items being rated and the number of raters. When rated by one peer in one situation, the correlation tends to be about .29; when there are three raters for three items, the correlation tends to be about .44.

Measurement Error

Aggregation has been shown to make a difference in the implications of the classic series of studies conducted in the 1920s (Hartshorne and May, 1928, 1929; Hartshorne, May, and Shuttleworth, 1930). This large longitudinal study of honesty remains one of the most thorough and widely cited pieces of research in the field (see Chapter 12). Over the course of six years, a national sample of 8,000 children was repeatedly evaluated on a series of measures of honesty which included cheating during a game, cheating at school, cheating on a take-home exam, taking money, lying, and falsifying records. Epstein (1979) noted that this study is widely cited as evidence that personality is not general because honesty in any specific situation was not found to be a good predictor of honesty in any other specific situation. What is seldom mentioned, however, is that when several measures of honesty are combined into a single score, honesty at one point in time and across situations becomes a very good predictor of honesty at another time and across situations. In sum, the problems of inconsistency across situations and of instability over time may both result from measurement error. More reliable indicators can be created by averaging together behaviors in several situations.

Trait Psychology Revisited

It would now be worthwhile to review the various approaches that have already been examined in this chapter. First, we presented the work of traditional trait psychologists who felt that personality measures accurately assess personality traits. Next, Mischel's challenge to personality tests was presented. Although it appeared to many psychologists

that personality was neither stable over time nor consistent across situations, it was also suggested that most people do perceive stable and general personality patterns. Bem and Allen, Bem and Funder, and Epstein have now forced us to reconsider whether the notion of traits was ever completely wrong in the first place.

Again there is a paradox. On the one hand, few people seriously deny the importance of personality characteristics. On the other hand, there is still little evidence that personality tests can predict behavior in particular situations. Nevertheless, many psychologists remain unconvinced by Mischel's critique of trait psychology and believe that personality dimensions can be demonstrated to be meaningful predictors of behavior. In a strong defense of traits and the personality tests used to measure them, it has been acknowledged that poor research does not support the existence of traits but that many well-conducted studies are supportive (Hogan, DeSoto, and Solano, 1977). For example, Gough (1965) demonstrated that the sociability scale of his inventory correlated .73 with delinquency in a study of over 10,000 youths. Other investigators have reported that the creativity of architects as assessed by other architects' ratings can be predicted very well on the basis of a few personality variables (Hall and MacKinnon, 1969).

There is also evidence that behavior patterns are stable. Some studies, in which people's self-reports are monitored over the years, have found that people's views of themselves remain constant. However, consistency in self-perception may not mean consistency in behavior. Without resorting to self-report studies, there are well-conducted longitudinal studies that demonstrate the stability of behavioral patterns (see also Chapter 13). Perhaps the most important of these used a set of data maintained at the University of California, Berkeley. Subjects in this study were first evaluated in junior high school, then again in senior high school, and once again when they were in their mid thirties. In all, persons in the sample were rated on 114 personality variables by different observers at three different points in time. The results clearly demonstrated that many personality characteristics are stable. Indeed, between junior and senior high school, nearly 60% of the personality characteristics measured remained consistent.

A European study on aggressive behavior in boys produced even more convincing results with regard to personality stability. Over two hundred boys were rated on their tendency to start fights and other characteristics of aggressive behavior. The ratings were obtained when the boys were in the sixth grade and then again three years later. In each case, at least three raters were used. The results showed that aggressive tendencies were quite stable over the three-year period, with a correlation of .66 across the two time periods. When error of measurement was corrected, the correlation became even stronger, reaching a level of .80 (Olweus, 1973, 1974, 1977a, 1977b).

Finally, Funder (1989, 1991; Funder and Colvin, 1991) has forcefully defended the concept of traits. He has shown that if different people who know an individual well rate that individual's personality traits, there is considerable agreement among them. This is true even when the people doing the rating know the individual from different situations in their life. For instance, agreement on the item "enjoys aesthetic impressions" had a correlation of .64. In addition, Funder points out there are numerous correlations between trait ratings and specific behaviors. For instance, those individuals who took longest to complete the tests in his studies had been described by acquaintances as "tending to interpret basically simple situations in complex ways." Similarly, those who took the least time had been described by acquaintances as irritable, over-reactive, and prone to give up in the face of adversity.

states Transitory conditions of the organism such as emotions and moods that vary in intensity and fluctuate over time.

traits Enduring individual differences in behavior dispositions. These are typically thought to be arranged as a continuous scale.

State Versus Trait

One factor that has been responsible in part for the low correlations between some trait measures and actual behavior is the failure to distinguish between states and traits. **States** refer to transitory conditions of the organism, to emotions and moods that vary in intensity and fluctuate over time, such as anger, panic, depression, and boredom. **Traits** refer to more enduring individual differences in behavior disposition, in the individual's *tendency* to be angry, afraid, depressed, or bored. A clearer understanding of the manifestations of a trait and of the relationship of the trait to behavior is obtained when a state measure

is distinguished from a trait measure. This is best exemplified by the extensive amount of research that has been carried out on the distinction between state anxiety and trait anxiety (Spielberger, 1971a, 1971b; Spielberger, Gorsuch, and Lushene, 1970).

The difference between state and trait anxiety is made evident in the different ways in which they are assessed. Items on the state anxiety scale are answered in terms of the *intensity* of the individual's feelings and how the person feels at the moment. For instance, for the item "I am tense," the individual is given a choice among four alternatives ranging from "Not at all" to "Very much so." In contrast, items on the trait anxiety scale are answered in terms of the frequency of the feeling and how the individual generally feels. For example, for the item "I take disappointments so keenly that I can't put them out of my mind," the individual's four choices range from "Almost never" to "Almost always."

Spielberger and his associates (1970, p. 3) defined trait anxiety in terms of "differences between people in a tendency to respond to situations perceived as threatening with elevations in state anxiety intensity." Whether anxiety will be elicited at any particular time and its manifestation in behavior depends on the strength of trait anxiety and the presence of situational stimuli that will evoke state anxiety. Furthermore, the influence of trait anxiety and of external stimulus stressors are mediated by the process of *cognitive appraisal*. If a stimulus is perceived as nonthreatening (e.g., "He wants to get back at me but he's powerless"), then no anxiety is elicited. If the stimulus is appraised as threatening, then the individual may respond with feelings of anxiety or automatically react with defensive behaviors that minimize the experience of anxiety. Extensive research has been carried out on the process of cognitive appraisal, and it has been shown that it is possible to reduce physiological and other anxiety indicators by manipulating the cognitive appraisal of an ordinarily highly threatening stimulus. For example, people exposed to a stressful film depicting the subincision rites of a preliterate culture were asked to perceive the film within an anthropological context. This introduces a method of coping with anxiety similar to that of intellectualization, which lets the viewers detach themselves from a threat that is otherwise reacted to in personal terms (Lazarus and Alfert, 1964; Lazarus and Averill, 1972). In Spielberger's terms, the cognitive appraisal that mediates state anxiety can be modified by situational, experimentally induced, defensive approaches or by variations in trait anxiety and accompanying defensive tendencies.

In accordance with the theoretical attributes of state and trait anxiety, there is a substantial amount of research indicating that trait anxiety is a stable measure, while state anxiety varies markedly with changes in situational stresses (Lamb, 1978). There is also evidence that individuals who differ in trait anxiety also differ, as expected, in the intensity of their state anxiety reactions to stressors, particularly to psychological rather than physical threats. These, along with other relationships indicating the value of the state-trait distinction for the study of anxiety, suggest that a similar distinction can be fruitfully applied in helping clarify the trait-situation interaction for other personality attributes. Eliminating state components from the trait measure and taking state changes into account results in more stable trait indicators and stronger relationships between traits and behaviors. Assessing both trait and state also helps reduce measurement error.

Attribution theory, introduced earlier in this chapter, also has implications for the trait-state distinction. Chaplin, John, and Goldberg (1988) asked subjects to rate a series of acknowledged traits and states on a variety of characteristics. They found that stability over time, consistency of behavior, and perceptions of internal or personal causality were linked with traits, whereas instability, inconsistency, and external causality were associated with states. Hence, an anxious person is perceived as always anxious in a variety



Everyone feels anxious some of the time; that is state anxiety. However, some people are anxious far more often than others; that is trait anxiety.

Source: Antonio Guillem/Shutterstock

of situations and that reaction is caused by the self. However, when a person reacts with anxiety in a specific situation, then that reaction is perceived to be temporary, different than in other situations, and is caused by something external to the person. Chaplin et al. (1988) suggest that trait perceptions enable people to predict behavior over time and situations and thus lead to social actions based on the person (e.g., seek out or avoid people with that characteristic). On the other hand, state reactions, being unstable over time, cannot be predicted from past experience with the person, but may be controlled by manipulating the situation.

Conceptualizing Traits

A person's behavior in a given situation can be thought of as a "final common pathway" resulting from the interaction of many factors, just as many other events in the world are the final product of many interacting causal contributors. (Consider, for example, that many diseases, such as cancer, arise from complex interactions of genetic predispositions, environmental pollutants, and aspects of a person's lifestyle—such as whether or not they smoke.) In sum, while personality traits may be imperfect for predicting behavior in a given situation, they are not meaningless psychological constructs.

Summary

1. Sheldon contended that three body types—labeled *mesomorphic*, *endomorph*, and *ectomorph*—are related, respectively, to energetic, relaxed, and introverted personality types. Typologies no longer play a central role in psychology because they fail to capture the complexity of personality.
2. Trait psychologists believe that characteristics of individuals are general over situations and endure over time. Cattell distinguished a number of different traits and sources of traits, while Eysenck suggested three higher-order types of traits: neuroticism, introversion-extroversion, and psychoticism.
3. The Big Five model of personality traits has come to be widely accepted as the basic structure of personality. These five traits include neuroticism versus emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. However, not all personality theorists believe there are only five basic personality traits. Some models use three traits, some use sixteen, and some use six basic personality traits.
4. *Attribution theorists* believe that observers tend to see the behavior of others as caused by trait characteristics and their own behavior as due to environmental conditions. This disparity may be due to the greater information held by actors about themselves or to the differential perceptual focuses of actors and observers.
5. *Interactionists* contend that behavior is governed by both the properties of the person and the situation in which that person is acting. The *transactional* approach emphasizes the reciprocal influence of the person and the environment on each other. Interactionism, however, typically refers to the fact that variation in behavior is best accounted for by considering both the person and the environment simultaneously.
6. Individuals differ in the consistency of their behavior across situations. In addition, within any individual there may be consistency in some characteristics and inconsistencies in others across different settings.
7. *The template-matching technique* identifies ideal types who would be most likely to behave in a given manner in a given setting. Individuals can then be matched with this ideal type to predict their behavior in that setting.
8. *Traits* are distinguished from *states* in that states are unstable, temporary conditions of the organism. Anxiety is considered to be both a trait and a state. As a state, anxiety is assessed with queries about current intensity of feeling; as a trait, it is measured with questions about frequency and generality across situations.
9. Behavior appears to be more consistent over time and across situations when many instances are sampled. Small samples of behavior, like tests with an insufficient number of items, result in error of measurement, which reduces correlations between the behaviors under study.

Key Terms

ascending reticular activating system (p. 202)
attribution theory (p. 208)
behavioral activation system (p. 202)
behavioral inhibition system (p. 202)
Big Five (p. 203)
continuous distribution (p. 199)
facets (p. 204)
factor analysis (p. 199)
Five Factor Model (p. 203)
fundamental attribution error (p. 209)
interactionist position (p. 210)

lexical hypothesis (p. 203)
moderator variables (p. 212)
nominal fallacy (p. 206)
situational critique (p. 208)
situational selection (p. 212)
source traits (p. 200)
states (p. 214)
surface traits (p. 200)
traits (p. 214)
types (p. 198)

Answering the Key Questions

1. What are personality types?

Personality types are thought to be enduring individual differences in behavior. These differences are thought to be arranged as a set of relatively few discrete categories. Personality types can be thought of as being categorical.

2. What is the difference between a type and a trait?

A personality trait differs from a personality type in that traits are typically thought to be continuous instead of discrete categories. It is possible to have more or less of a trait, whereas in the case of types, a person is a particular type and how much they are of that type does not really matter.

3. What is factor analysis, and why is it important for understanding personality traits?

Factor analysis is a statistical technique for reducing a large data set to the underlying factors. Factor analysis has been used to identify the basic or core aspects of personality traits. After the factor analysis has identified which terms belong to which factor, the researchers need to interpret those factors.

4. How many traits are there?

Different researchers may find a different number of core traits. Cattell identified 16 traits, Eysenck identified three traits, and the HEXACO model has six. However, many different researchers, working in many different languages, have often found five traits that tend to show similarities across researchers.

5. What are the traits identified in the Big Five/Five Factor Model?

The traits identified in the big five model can have slightly different names. One of the best-known models lists the traits as Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Other models might label the traits with slightly different terms; for instance, Extraversion might be replaced with Sociability, and Neuroticism might be replaced with Emotional Stability.

6. What is the nature of Mischel's critique of traits?

Mischel's critique of traits is that traits predict a relatively small amount of variability in behavior. Instead of focusing on traits, it is more useful to focus on the situations in which behavior takes place.

7. How does the interactionist position address Mischel's critique?

The interactionist position recognizes the interplay of traits and situations. Some situations make strong demands on behavior. Sometimes people will pick situations that fit their personality. The interactionist position also recognizes the interaction of the trait and situation. As a result, the interactionist position will include the effect of moderator variables and the importance of aggregation of behavior across multiple situations.

8. What is the difference between a state and a trait?

A state is typically considered to be temporary, whereas a trait is considered to be relatively enduring. One of the typical examples of the difference between a state and trait is that of anxiety. People who are typically not very anxious might still be anxious in some situations, whereas people who are frequently anxious might feel very relaxed in certain situations.

Quiz Yourself

- One of the key differences between traits and types is that
 - traits have a continuous distribution.
 - types have a continuous distribution.
 - traits have a basis in biology.
 - types have a basis in biology.
- In Eysenck's model of personality, what part of the brain is responsible for the differences between introverts and extraverts?
 - the amygdala
 - the ascending reticular activating system
 - the pons
 - the limbic system
- Choosing to go to a party, despite having an exam the next day, is the kind of behavior we might expect from someone with a ___ behavioral activation system and a ___ behavioral inhibition system.
 - strong; strong
 - strong; weak
 - weak; strong
 - weak; weak
- The idea that natural language will help to inform researchers about the existence of the key personality traits is called
 - the descriptive model.
 - the lexical hypothesis.
 - the ideographic model.
 - the meta hypothesis.
- A person who is described as *warm hearted* would probably score high on the trait of
 - neuroticism.
 - extraversion.
 - openness to experience.
 - agreeableness.
 - conscientiousness.
- A person who is described as *careless and unreliable* would probably score low on the trait of
 - neuroticism.
 - extraversion.
 - openness to experience.
 - agreeableness.
 - conscientiousness.
- Charles would prefer things to remain relatively stable. He figures there is no reason to try new foods, since he already knows what he likes. He would probably score low on the trait of
 - neuroticism.
 - extraversion.
 - openness to experience.
 - agreeableness.
 - conscientiousness.
- Vince is watching his school's team play in the championship basketball game. He is wildly cheering his team on to victory, talking to everyone around him, even though they are strangers, and shouting at the referees for making bad calls on his team. From Mischel's perspective, Vince is primarily behaving due to
 - his extremely strong competitiveness and extraversion.
 - the extremely strong effects of the immediate situation.
 - his extremely strong long-term commitment to the basketball team.
 - the extremely strong effects of the six tacos he ate for lunch.
- We would expect there to be a higher correlation between a trait and a related behavior
 - if the behavior is measured only once.
 - if the behavior is measured several different times.
 - if the trait is a surface trait.
 - if the trait is actually a state.
- A person who tends to be anxious fairly often would have ___, while a person who is feeling anxiety because they are waiting to hear about the results of an important test would have ___.
 - state anxiety; trait anxiety
 - trait anxiety; state anxiety
 - trait anxiety; type anxiety
 - type anxiety; trait anxiety

Answers can be found in the end-of-book Answers section.

Personality Development



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Chapter 9

The Development and Functions of the Self

Chapter 10

Identity

Chapter 11

Personality Development Across the Lifespan

Part 4 is concerned with the genesis, or antecedents of personality, and changes in personality that occur during the course of life. The development of the self is presented as a key process for the development of personality because it contributes in different ways to almost all of the personality theories that have been reviewed. To understand personality, one should have some understanding of its developmental roots. There is a vast gap in behavior and personality between the newborn and the adult. Children must be socialized through the process of child-rearing and other influences so that they function effectively in a particular social and cultural setting. As children grow older, they are confronted with new requirements and new problems that must somehow be mastered. Personality development does not end in childhood or adolescence. The adult years also present unique demands and opportunities for personality growth and change.

The chapters in Part 4 examine the major changes in personality that take place over the developmental life span, and the various processes involved in bringing out these changes. Developmental changes are examined from the perspectives of (1) behavior changes that characterize most individuals in an age group and (2) individual differences in personality development.

Part 4 begins with Chapter 9 on the development of the self and its significance for personality. Chapter 10 addresses the development of identity in general and various aspects of identity, such as gender and ethnic identity, in particular. Chapter 11 begins with a discussion of attachment and its role in the beginning socialization of the child. It then continues with a discussion of topics such as moral development, the antecedents of other prosocial behaviors such as empathy and caring, and the influence of child-rearing practices on socialization. The chapter further explores personality and change across adolescence to old age. Overall, these chapters are based on the ideas that personality undergoes constant change and development and that particular experiences are associated with particular ages.

The Development and Functions of the Self

CHAPTER

9



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Key Questions

1. What is the self?
2. What is the evidence that the self-concept is a memory?
3. How does the self change in childhood and adolescence?
4. What does it mean to say there are multiple self-concepts?
5. What are the consequences of self-awareness?
6. What is self-esteem?
7. What are the self-motives?

Most of us have had the experience of knowing someone and then spending time with them when they are with a different group of people. Sometimes we walk away from that situation feeling like the person we “know” was a completely different person in that situation. While people were working from home during COVID, this phenomenon has been very noticeable for people and oftentimes problematic for relationships. People are used to their partners or friends being their partners or friends, yet when they are working from home, they have to put on their work persona. Because this is a different version of themselves, experiencing this other version of that person is often disconcerting. This experience can be stressful in some instances, whereas in

Chapter Outline

The Self

- Culture and the Self
- Definitions of Self
- The Self as a Concept
- Self as Agent

Development of the Self-Concept

- Self-Awareness
- Further Developments of the Self-Concept
- Self-Schemata
- Multiple Self-Concepts
- Possible Selves
- Complexity of the Self-Concept
- Self-Esteem
- Variability of Self-Esteem

Self-Processes

- Self-Monitoring
- Self-Control
- Positive and Negative Effects of Self-Awareness
- Self-Consciousness

Self-Motives

- Self-Enhancement
- Self-Consistency

Personality Theories and the Self

- The Self in Personality Theories



The first of the three Delphic maxims was “Know thyself.”

Source: Stas Moroz/Shutterstock

other cases, it can be a positive revelation of a new side of the person. In this chapter we focus on the self, including the different selves that a person has.

The self has an interesting history in psychology. William James devoted a chapter to the self in his *Principles of Psychology* (James 1890/1952). However, the rise of American behaviorism in the early part of the twentieth century caused the psychological study of the self to fall out of favor in the United States. Freud’s theory did not specifically have a concept of self. Instead, it partitioned the mind into id, ego, and superego. We should point out that Freud used the German word for *I*, which is *ich*, while writing about the topic. Skinner was hostile to the self being a topic worth studying, which is still an approach taken by some cognitive neuroscientists (see Metzinger, 2010). After that fallow period, the self has increasingly become a central topic of both theory and research in psychology. Carl Rogers emphasized the self, and then with the development of cognitive psychology and a social-cognitive approach to personality, the study of the self and its different forms has blossomed. An indication of this increased attention is that the number of topics that include the prefix *self* (for example, *self-concept* or *self-esteem*) in the Psychological Abstracts increased from eight in 1969 to thirty-three in 1989 (Hoare, 1990) to fifty-six in 2016.

However, the concept of self is anything but easy to define and study (Klein, 2012). The first part of this chapter will address the various meanings of the term *self*. We then proceed to discuss how the self develops, followed by the development of an experiential sense of self, the self-concept, and self-esteem. Next, we study various self-processes and motives, including self-monitoring, self-control, self-awareness, self-consciousness, self-enhancement, and self-consistency. We conclude by considering the role of the self in various theories of personality.

The Self

We all have an intuitive sense of the importance of the self for the understanding of human experience and behavior. To help make this intuitive sense more concrete, it is instructive to perform the following “thought” experiment. Imagine that you had no sense of self or self-concept. What difference would that make in your plans? You could not think meaningfully about getting a degree, or going to graduate school, or getting married, or becoming rich or famous, because planning for each of these objectives requires that you project *yourself* into the future. You would be different in a great many other ways as well. If you are religious, your worship would become rote and devoid of significance. Whatever is personal in the religious experience—grace, redemption, sin, guilt—would be lost. A basic element in the human tragic experience, the knowledge of one’s mortality, would be gone.

Culture and the Self

In spite of the intuitive reasonableness of the idea of a “self” to those raised in Western culture, this concept is held with lesser degrees of strength and certainty in other cultures (Vignoles et al., 2016), and it has evolved and changed over time. We have already seen

in Chapter 2 how different cultures have vastly different views of what the self is. Western culture sees the self as an inner entity, occupying an inner space, capable of controlling the body and of actualizing itself. It is bounded, separated from others, and should be autonomous, firmly defined, and stable. In contrast, many other cultures see the self as more inclusively defined in terms of one's connections with others.

In addition, the American emphasis on the importance of self-esteem may be culture-specific. Both Campbell (1993) and Markus and Kitayama (1993) have suggested that self-esteem may be a Western concept. Markus and Kitayama, for instance, have found that Japanese students did not exhibit the “false uniqueness” bias commonly found among Americans (Taylor and Brown, 1988). That is, when asked to compare themselves to others, most Americans tended to see themselves as “above average,” whereas Japanese students did not. Self-effacement, rather than self-enhancement, seems to be more prevalent in Japanese society than in American society. Psychologists' emphasis on the importance of high self-esteem and on the tendency of individuals to strive to enhance and protect their self-esteem may be culture-specific (see the section later in this chapter on protection and enhancement of the self).

There have been efforts to trace the historical development in Western society of the concept of self and of self-related issues (Baumeister, 1987). The development of the individual, autonomous self is seen as beginning in the sixteenth century, with the emergence of the Renaissance. Changes that appear to have taken place between the medieval and modern eras in one's conception of the self and view of self-knowledge, and in the conception of self-fulfillment and means of attaining fulfillment, are outlined in Table 9.1. One notes that the



In the Romantic era, we see the beginnings of the importance of self-discovery.

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TABLE 9.1 Issues of Selfhood and Historical Stages

Historical Era	Self-knowledge, Self-conception	Fulfillment
Late medieval	Unproblematic Increased sense of unity of single life	Christian salvation (in heaven) (Possible public acclaim)
Early modern (16th to 18th century)	Unproblematic for own self; for others, question of inner <i>true</i> self vs. out <i>apparent</i> self Increased interest in individuality, uniqueness of self	Christian salvation Incipient secular fulfillment, as in creativity
Puritan	Self-consciousness Concern with self-deception (henceforth, self-knowledge uncertain)	Christian salvation: but individual is helpless Inner struggle to overcome sin and weakness
Romantic (late 18th, early 19th century)	Need to discover own destiny and fulfill it (duty)	Creativity Passion (“romantic” love) Thus, hope for secularized concept of fulfillment
Victorian (mid and late 19th century)	Repression, hypocrisy Involuntary self-disclosure	Seek fulfillment alone (transcendentalism) Private, family life is paramount
Early 20th century	Devaluation of self Impossibility of complete self-knowledge (Freud)	Society prevents fulfillment (alienation) Emotional fulfillment in family Work as unfulfilling
Recent 20th century	Belief in personal uniqueness Values of self-exploration	Quest for celebrity Quest for means of self-actualization

Adapted from Baumeister (1987).

notion of an “inner” self that is hidden and inaccessible to the conscious self is a relatively recent one, and that issues of self-deception do not emerge until the Puritan era. One also notes dramatic changes in how one seeks fulfillment—from being guided by religious and societal goals and standards to more personal, individualistic objectives. The sense that society can deter self-fulfillment, with consequent feelings of alienation and separation of work from self-fulfillment emerges after the Industrial Revolution. Although scholars may not necessarily agree with the self attributes and issues that are ascribed to particular time periods, there seems little doubt that self issues and attributes vary as a function of historical context and culture.

Definitions of Self

Two different meanings of the self have been used by psychologists. Sometimes the term *self* is used as an *object*, in which case an individual is depicted as having knowledge of and evaluating the self-as-object in much the same way one has knowledge of and evaluates another person. One can like or dislike another person; one can like and dislike oneself. We entertain beliefs about and concepts of other people, such as “She’s bright,” “He’s ambitious,” “The instructor is fair.” Similarly, one has such beliefs about oneself. In this sense, the self becomes the object of one’s attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. This set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the self is referred to as the **self-concept**.

self-concept A description of who one is. It includes feelings, attitudes, desires, judgments, and behaviors that the individual considers to be characteristic of themselves.

Is the self-concept always conscious, part of our phenomenal experience? The answer is no. We, of course, do have a conscious self-concept, but there may well be feelings about ourselves of which we are unaware. For example, we may have an unconscious perception of ourselves as physically unattractive, based on childhood experiences, even though we have physically changed and consciously judge ourselves, in accordance with the feedback from others, as attractive.

The Self as a Concept

When considering the self as object, we are looking at the self as a concept like any other concept. The concept could be “personality psychology,” or it could be “myself.” As a concept in memory, we will use the tools of cognitive psychology to study the self-concept. One way to study memory is to examine whether information is stored in memory. Another important way to study memory is to measure the amount of time it takes to retrieve the information from memory.

One of the classic demonstrations of the self as a concept in memory comes from the self-reference effect (Rodgers, Kuiper, and Kirker, 1977). It is well known that connecting information to a memory structure leads to better encoding and retrieval of that information (Craik and Lockhart, 1972). In the typical example of the self-reference effect, people are presented with a list of words and then unexpectedly they are asked to recall the words later in the experiment. Prior to the words being presented, people have been randomly assigned to experimental conditions in which they might be asked “Does the word mean the same as shy?” or in a different experimental condition asked “Does the word describe you?” or “Does the word describe your personality instructor?” Typically, people will remember the words far better if those words are connected to the self-concept—that is, “Does the word describe you?” (see Symons and Johnson, 1997, for an overview).



The self is both a concept and an agent—that is, something that chooses to behave.

Source: avebreakmedia/Shutterstock

The *self-reference effect* is a powerful phenomenon; it turns out that in most variations, words connected to the self result in superior recall. This is interpreted as an indication that the self-concept is one of the most elaborated and well-developed

concepts that we have. That should not come as a surprise, since the self is a concept that is activated in many different contexts, whereas other concepts are only occasionally activated. When we consider the self-concept, it is useful to consider this *concept* about the self as similar to other pieces of information stored in memory. Some knowledge of the self is like episodic memory where we remember the event itself. You might remember meeting your professor on the first day of class or that time you did something embarrassing. Some have suggested that our sense of “self” is due to the continuity of these episodic memories (Becker et al., 2018; James, 1890/1950; Sedikides, Hong, and Wildschut, 2023). Alternatively, some pieces of information can be drawn from memory that are similar to semantic memory. We may know when and where we were born but certainly not remember the event, nor are we likely to remember when we learned that information.

Self as Agent

Another usage of the self is as an *agent* or *process*; that is, as a mechanism that does something. Thus, the self is said to influence perception and judgment, and to screen out threatening or inconsistent information. Related to this usage is the notion of the self as an organized structure or personality component. And, as we indicated in the chapters on personality theories, there are even broader usages of self—for example, in the motive for self-actualization and in the search for self-identity.

Sometimes the question is asked: “Why do we need a concept of self as agent? Isn’t the whole person the agent?” In fact, however, sometimes we experience some of our behaviors as self-initiated, while we experience others as outside the self. For example, one maybe beset by an impulse or an idea that is experienced as “foreign” and that one cannot control. One may feel a loss of agency or responsibility for one’s behavior, and even a loss of individuality. Hence, the organism does not always conceive of itself as an agent, and a concept of self is needed.

The terms “*self*” and “*self-concept*” are often used interchangeably. It may be helpful to restrict the term *self* to its properties as an agent and organized structure of personality and the term *self-concept* to the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the self as object. From this perspective, the self-concept becomes one component, a very important one, of the self-system. It then becomes meaningful to refer to the self-concept of the self.

It is our view that the concept of the self is critical to any comprehensive theory of personality development and function. The self provides a key to much of human motivation, social understanding, and personality disturbances. Basic to the personality development of both the child and the adult are changes in the self. Hence, this chapter examines the process of the development of the self and its significance in the understanding of personality.

self-awareness A recognition of oneself, or the process of noticing the self and how others might view the self.

Development of the Self-Concept

Self-Awareness

The development of the capacity for **self-awareness** appears to be crucial for the development of the self-concept (Lewis, 1990). This capacity, as we have said, seems to develop around eighteen months of age; and it appears to be unique to humans and higher primates. This conclusion is based on a series of clever research studies by Gallup (1970, 1975, 1979) in which animals and human infants observe themselves in mirrors.

Many of us have seen a dog staring at, sometimes snarling at, and approaching a reflection of itself. For most animals, seeing their own image in a mirror acts as a social stimulus. But does the dog recognize itself, or does the reflection simply signal a



Humans and higher primates display recognition of the self in mirrors.

Source: GUDKOV ANDREY/Shutterstock

potential companion or threat? The evidence indicates that dogs and almost all other non-humans do not recognize themselves. In his series of experiments, however, Gallup has shown that the chimpanzee does have this capacity. Gallup exposed chimpanzees in a small cage to a full-length mirror for ten consecutive days. It was observed that over this period of time the number of self-directed responses increased. These behaviors included grooming parts of the body while watching the results, guiding fingers in the mirror, and picking at teeth with the aid of the mirror. Describing one chimp, Gallup (1975, p. 324) said, “Marge used the mirror to play with and inspect the bottom of her feet; she also looked at herself upside down in the mirror while suspended by her feet from the top of the cage; . . . she was also observed to stuff celery leaves up her nose using the mirror for purposes of visually guiding the stems into each nostril.”

The researchers then devised a further test of self-recognition. The chimps were anesthetized and marks were placed over their eyebrows and behind their ears, areas the chimps could not directly observe. The mirror was temporarily removed from the cage, and baseline data regarding their attempts to touch these areas were recorded. The chimpanzees touched themselves in those spots very little (about once) without the mirror, but touched themselves over twenty-five times when the mirror was reintroduced. The data clearly suggest that chimps do recognize themselves, or are self-aware, for their attempts to touch the marks increased when they viewed themselves. Orangutans have also passed this mirror test (Suarez and Gallup, 1981). However, there is mixed data from other species such as gorillas, Asian elephants, and dolphins, with some passing the test and others not passing.

An analogous procedure to study human infants clearly reveals the role of developmental influences on this form of self-recognition (Lewis and Brooks-Gunn, 1979). Heavy rouge was applied to the noses of ninety-six infants, ranging in age from nine months to twenty-four months. The infants’ actions when exposed to a mirror were observed prior to and after the application of rouge. While the nine- and twelve-month-old infants usually did not touch their noses when presented with a mirror, a dramatic change in responses indicative of self-recognition occurred during the latter half of the infants’ second year, with an increase of over 50% in nose touching for twenty-one and twenty-four-month-old infants. This is usually taken as evidence that this is the age at which children are developing a sense of self that is differentiated from others.



Two-year-olds recognize their images in a mirror.

Source: Ole.CNX/Shutterstock

Further Developments of the Self-Concept

The self-concept can be considered one's description of who one is. It includes feelings, attitudes, desires, judgments, and behaviors that the individual considers to be characteristic themselves.

Developing a concept of who one is as a person is important. Consider what happens when one behaves in a way that is very different from one's typical patterns—for example, a sudden outburst of rage and profanity in a man who sees himself as calm, rational, and well-spoken. He might say, "This isn't like me," "Something must have come over me," or "I wasn't myself." If his behaviors persist, he may change his self-concept, integrating these new feelings and behaviors into his conception of his personality. However, this integration is not always easily accomplished, and the individual could feel that he is beset by strange, incomprehensible feelings, even that he is going crazy. What is important in terms of the development of personality is that a developing concept of who we are as people is a useful tool for helping us understand and predict our reactions to situations and experiences in our life. We learn to recognize and to count on our images of who we are, much in the same way we learn to recognize and count on our physical selves. Additionally, we work to maintain stability in these self-images.

The self-concept develops over time as the child has experiences that interact with its increasing cognitive understanding and development of language. There are changes in the content of the self-concept from childhood through adolescence (Harter, 1990). In childhood, the self-concept is primarily focused on the social exterior—what is observable from outside. Young children describe themselves primarily in terms of their behaviors, their achievements, their preferences, their possessions, and their physical attributes. For instance, a young child might define themselves by saying, "I like dinosaurs." Older children tend to emphasize traits such as "shy" and "outgoing."

In adolescence, when the ability to think abstractly increases, a number of changes in the self-concept occur. First, the psychological interior is emphasized. The self-concept includes an increasing emphasis on emotions, attitudes, beliefs, wishes, and motives.

Second, the self-concept becomes more complex and multidimensional. In early and middle childhood there are four general domains of the self-concept. By adolescence this has become differentiated into at least nine: scholastic competence, job competence, athletic competence, physical appearance, peer social acceptance, close friendship, romantic appeal, relationship to parents, and behavioral conduct (Harter, 1990).

Third, aspects of the self-concept become more abstract. For instance, a nine-year-old might describe herself as a girl with brown hair, who loves sports and has three brothers. A twelve-year-old would describe herself as a human, a girl, a truthful person, tall for my age. And as a seventeen-year-old, she would describe herself as indecisive, ambitious,



Adolescence is a time when people are figuring out who they truly are.

Source: Evgeny Atamanenko/Shutterstock

an individual, lonely, and radical. The early descriptions are rather concrete, and at each stage become more complex and even contradictory, which leads to our next point.

Fourth, adolescents struggle to integrate their self-concept. Harter (1990) notes that children around the age of eleven do not detect conflicts in their personality. By ages fourteen through sixteen, however, adolescents are vividly aware of contradictions among various aspects of their self-concept and they are troubled by these contradictions. In fact, it is at this age that individuals experience the most conflict over contradictions. It is hard for them to reconcile, for instance, the fact that they are “cheerful” with their friends but “depressed” with their parents. In late adolescence they are able to begin to create abstract systems of self-descriptions that integrate the contradictions experienced at an earlier age. For instance, “cheerful” and “depressed” may be synthesized as “flexible” or “moody.”

Finally, one other aspect of the development of the self-concept at adolescence is the increased importance of the distinction between the “true” and “false” self. Harter (1990) reports that sixth-graders have little insight into the true-false self distinction. However, by eighth grade virtually all adolescents find the distinction compelling. Harter found that most of her adolescents defined the true self as one who acts naturally, or is what one is inside, while a false self is one who acts primarily to please others.

Self-Schemata

Currently, the self-concept is thought of in cognitive terms in psychology. It is conceived of as a “knowledge structure” and consists of cognitive generalizations about the self. This is often referred to as a **self-schema** (see Markus, 1977). These schemata are believed to filter incoming information, organize new experiences, and guide subsequent action. For example, a person with a self-schema of independence is likely to interpret personal behaviors as indicative of being independent and is not likely to accept evidence from others that they are dependent. In addition, information will be readily available from memory to support the self-perception of independence. It has been demonstrated that people who regard themselves as masculine, or as feminine, can recall many instances in their lives when they acted in accordance with this self-perception. On the other hand, androgynous individuals (persons not sex-typed) or those without a schema with regards to gender (that is, gender is not a salient aspect of their self-concept) have few memories of instances in which they acted in a masculine or feminine manner (Markus, Crane, Bernstein, and Siladi, 1982).

self-schema A knowledge structure that consists of cognitive generalizations about the self.



When a person has a self-schema for “independence,” they process information about independence faster.

Source: siro46/Shutterstock

There is a substantial body of research documenting the selective effects of the self-structure on the processing of information (Markus and Wurf, 1987). For example, in one study subjects were presented with a series of pairs of letters, each pair containing a letter from either their first or last name (Nuttin, Jr., 1985). The subjects' task was to choose which letter of the pair they preferred as quickly as they could. While the subjects displayed no awareness of the relationship between their name and the letter pairs, they nevertheless selected more often letters from their own name. Because of this lack of awareness, this name-letter effect has become a common measure of implicit self-esteem (see Bosson, Swann, and Pennebaker, 2000; Krizan and Suls, 2008).

Other cognitive processes that have been shown to be selectively influenced by self-relevant stimuli include discrimination, memory, and judgment (Markus and Wurf, 1987). One also tends to more efficiently process information that is congruent with one's own personality. Thus, individuals scoring higher on a personality scale measuring manipulative tendencies and given stories to read were significantly faster in reading a story depicting high manipulative tendencies than in reading one depicting low manipulative tendencies. The opposite difference was obtained for low manipulative individuals (cited in Markus and Wurf, 1987).

Through the agency of the self, the self-concept acts as an important filter, selectively screening the information that we receive from the external and internal environment. The self selectively influences information processing, not only through a self-defense function, but also, as we have seen, through its sensitivity to self-relevant stimuli. At a later point in this chapter, some important self-processes will be discussed in greater detail.

Multiple Self-Concepts

In referring to a person's self-image, it is common practice to use the singular term: *self-concept*. However, current psychological perspectives suggest that the self-concept is multiple. Distinctions can be made between the unconscious and conscious aspects of the self-concept; between our perception of our past self, our perception of our current self, and our imagination of the future self; and between our implicit and explicit self. There is articulation between the different elements that constitute the psychological self. There are all the different roles that constitute vital parts of our self—our role as a student, as an offspring, as a male or female. One can also speak of our social self, our work self, our play self, and our athletic self. While these different aspects of the self may be interrelated and organized into a unitary self-structure, different features of the self become more salient and operative depending upon the particular context and circumstances.

A number of studies provide evidence that the self-concept is multiple. Research by Harter (1990) and Rosenberg (1985) shows that the self-concept appears to have multiple dimensions. Rosenberg (1985), based on his study of 5,000 adolescents, identifies the following components of the self-concept: self-esteem, a sense of "mattering" to others, a sense of certitude about who one is, feelings of control, "plane coordination" (the degree to which different aspects of the self are coordinated), how vulnerable one feels as a self, and the degree of anxiety or self-consciousness one feels.

A study by Smollar and Youness (1985) shows that we experience ourselves somewhat differently in different relationships in our lives. The authors asked adolescents to complete the statement "When I am with my (mother/father/close friend), I am ____." The adolescents showed much variability in who they experienced themselves to be in reference to different contexts. With fathers, for instance, adolescents typically reported being "capable, serious, and anxious." These aspects did not show up in reference to best friends, where they viewed themselves as "intimate and spontaneous," qualities that they did not typically experience with their parents.



Pick your favorite letters in this image. Chances are good that you picked letters associated with your name.

Source: struvictory/Shutterstock



Our working self-concept will change to fit the current role expectations.

Source: Drazen Zigic/Shutterstock

working self-concept The version of the self-concept that is being used at that time.

Markus and Kunda (1986) have suggested that we have a whole set of self-concepts but that at any one time in any given context one self-concept is active and is the **working self-concept**. They use a computer metaphor: A computer may have many programs, but usually at a given moment only one is being used. Returning to the vignette that opened the chapter, we can use an example from the Smollar and Youness study to illustrate the idea of the working self-concept. With one's close friend, one's concept of self as intimate and spontaneous is being used; that is, it becomes active and guides one's behavior. With one's father, one's concept of self as serious is active and being used. While on the phone with one's supervisor, one's concept of self as efficient and competent is active.

To say that we have multiple self-concepts is not to say that there is no overlap among them. Physically, one will see oneself as a man or as a woman with both one's father and one's close friend, while psychologically, one may see oneself as reliable in both relationships. Therefore, while we may have multiple self-concepts, in most cases they are not completely distinct from one another, or exclusive.

ideal self The self one wants to be.

The richness and complexity of the self-concept, or self-concepts, are further conveyed by the distinction that has been made between one's representation of: (a) one's actual self, (b) one's **ideal self**, the self one wants to be, and (c) one's **ought self**, the attributes and behaviors that we believe are our obligations or duty to possess (Higgins, 1987). Discrepancies between these self-concepts and the actual, ideal, and ought concepts that significant others (parents, close friends) have of you can be a source of discomfort and distress. It is certainly possible that the ought self that one's best friend has of you is different from the one that parents hold. In one study, college students were administered these different self-concept measures. Six to eight weeks later, they completed a questionnaire in which they indicated the frequency with which they experienced various emotional-motivational states (Van Hook and Higgins, 1988). The students were divided into two groups depending upon whether there was a marked discrepancy between any pair of self-concept measures. The discrepancy-present group experienced more negative feelings than the discrepancy-absent group. This difference was especially marked for confusion-related items (i.e., unsure of self, uncertain about goals, confused about identity).

ought self The self one feels an obligation to be.

Possible Selves

possible selves Positive and negative versions of the self that can be imagined for the future.

Still another way to conceive of self-concepts that may function as important guides to behavior and sources of motivation and conflict is the notion of **possible selves** (Markus and Nurius, 1986). There are possible selves that we hope for and possible selves that we fear. Thus, we may hope for a particular career, lifestyle, income level, and close interpersonal relations while we may fear loneliness, failure, or other life possibilities that we perceive as negative. Although there may be some overlap between these possible selves and the ideal self, there are sufficient differences to warrant a different label and,

most importantly, a different measure. They found that one's perceptions of one's "now" self and of one's "possible" future selves correlated with one's current emotional and motivational state. However, images of possible future selves may sometimes predict a person's current behavior better than does the person's current self-concept. For instance, Oyserman and Markus (as referenced in Markus and Nurius, 1986) found that juvenile delinquents had positive current self-images (positive self-esteem) but were deficient in their images of positive possible future self-images. This is reminiscent of members of gangs, who may have positive self-concepts but act in an antisocial and dangerous manner because they believe that they will probably be dead by age twenty.

Complexity of the Self-Concept

We have seen that the self-concept includes a variety of aspects and dimensions. How a self-concept is organized in terms of its complexity, integration, and clarity is important in terms of how well it functions. Linville (1985) has found that those who have more complex self-concepts show greater emotional stability in the face of both emotionally positive and negative experiences. Linville measured self-complexity by having individuals sort cards, each of which had the name of a personality trait on it, into piles describing the self. The same trait could be placed in multiple piles. More piles indicated greater **self-complexity**. Subjects were then exposed to either a success or a failure experience and then rated their mood. Subjects whose self-complexity scores were low showed greater change in mood following success or failure than subjects who scored higher in self-complexity. She then replicated and extended this research in another study in which she had participants complete the self-complexity measure along with measures of stressful events and illnesses at two different times, two weeks apart. People with high self-complexity who experienced stressful events were less likely to fall ill than people with low self-complexity who experienced stressful events (Linville, 1987). She suggests that the complexity of the different selves serves to buffer the other positive or negative events happening to one aspect of the self. Another study combined the idea of possible selves and self-complexity, finding that when given false feedback about the present, a person's current self-complexity moderated the person's emotional reaction, while when the feedback is about the future, it is a person's possible self-complexity that predicts the person's emotional reaction (Niedenthal, Setterlund, and Wherry, 1992). This would seem to indicate that the emotional reaction about the future is influenced by how the person thinks about their self in the future.

Other studies have found that individuals high in cognitive complexity in general are less likely to become depressed (Marsh and Weary, 1989) and that those with more integrated (Showers, 1992) and more clearly articulated (Campbell, 1993) self-concepts have higher self-esteem.

Self-Esteem

While self-concept refers to a complex, multifaceted organization of percepts regarding oneself, *self-esteem* usually connotes a generalized, overall attitude toward oneself. **Self-esteem** is usually thought of as the value that one places on oneself. Just as there are variations in the degree to which one values another person, whether we hold them in high or low regard and feel that they are worthy or unworthy, so there is variation in the degree to which one values oneself.

Neither children nor adults feel neutral about all their self-characteristics. Positive and negative values are placed on particular attributes that we see in others and in ourselves. It is good to be tall (but not too tall), attractive, strong, intelligent, and socially skillful, and it is bad to be unathletic, shy, or poor. The evaluations we place on these self-attributes contribute to our feelings of self-esteem. Self-esteem is closely related to and depends on the self-concept, but self-esteem is not the same as self-concept. We can have beliefs about ourselves that are important elements in our self-concept but that do not affect the value we place on ourselves (self-esteem). For example, one may perceive oneself as introverted or emotionally expressive without feeling particularly good or bad about that self-perception. Whether success or failure at an activity will affect self-esteem is very



Possible selves include things that a person can imagine in the future. These can include positive possibilities to pursue, as well as negative possibilities to avoid.

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self-complexity The number and interconnectedness among different ways that a person thinks about the self.

self-esteem A generalized evaluation of one's self.

much dependent on how important one perceives that activity to be (Crocker and Wolfe, 2001; Harter and Engstrom, cited in Harter, 1983).

Crocker and her colleagues (Crocker and Wolfe, 2001) have suggested that there are seven different dimensions on which college students tend to base their self-worth. These dimensions are: academics, physical appearance, competition, family support, being virtuous, being loved by God, and receiving approval from others. Different individuals will value these dimensions in various ways. Some people will find academics to be crucial to self-worth, whereas others will emphasize physical appearance. They find that college students will allocate their time to the dimensions that person most values (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, and Bouvrette, 2003). Remember that these are tendencies found across all the research participants; an individual might have a different dimension that is unique to themselves that they base their self-worth on.

The relationship between overall self-esteem (the degree of high or low regard in which one holds oneself) and the positive and negative values placed on specific components of the self-concept remains an interesting and unresolved issue. Some individuals' view of their academic skills might be the most important contributor to self-esteem, while for others it might be perceived popularity. However, there is a connection between one's appraisal of specific self-attributes and one's overall self-esteem. Studies have shown that the sum of an individual's evaluations of specific attributes—school performance, athletic skills, social interactions, physical attractiveness, and so on—is predictive of the person's overall sense of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967). Although people with high self-esteem rate themselves as more attractive, thinner, and intelligent, objective measures yield correlations near zero on all those dimensions (see Baumeister, Campbell, Kruger, and Vohs, 2003, for a review). Though predictive of general self-esteem, it is important to recognize that the different dimensions of self-esteem are not the same as *general* self-esteem.

Many studies have found correlations between high self-esteem and positive outcomes, or low self-esteem and negative outcomes (Donnellan et al., 2005). We should recognize that this does not mean that self-esteem causes the positive outcome nor necessarily that the positive outcome raises a person's self-esteem. The state of California created a series of programs with the underlying idea that self-esteem is the cause of many social problems, and thus, raising self-esteem would reduce those problems. This has sometimes been termed "The Self-Esteem Movement." The problem with this approach is confusing correlation with causation. If we used the Sociometer theory approach (Leary and Baumeister, 2000) that was discussed in Chapter 1, it would seem likely that violations of expectations and norms would lead to reduced feelings of belonging, and



Crocker's research suggests that college students base their self-esteem on things like competitiveness or physical appearance, as well as academics.

Sources: Ljupco Smokovski/Shutterstock; Motortion Films/Shutterstock

consequently lead to lower self-esteem. In sociometer theory, the direction of causality is exactly the reverse of the Self-Esteem Movement model. Yet, we also know that low self-esteem in adolescence does seem to predict poorer outcomes in adulthood (Donnellan et al., 2005; Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

Since self-esteem will be based on a person's interactions with the world, we might expect that people who experience discrimination would experience low self-esteem. However, it appears that African Americans have higher self-esteem than white Americans (Crocker and Major, 1989). This appears to be due to people's ability to reduce the importance of particular aspects of the self.

Variability of Self-Esteem

People clearly differ in their level of self-esteem. Some people have high self-esteem, others have low self-esteem. People also differ in the stability of their self-esteem (Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry, and Harlow, 1993). Some people have stable high self-esteem; that is, they have high self-esteem all the time. But other people have unstable high self-esteem; their self-esteem is high but will vary considerably depending on what is going on in their lives. People with low self-esteem can also have stable or unstable self-esteem. Because people like to maintain positive feelings about themselves (we will discuss that in a few pages), this variability in stability has an impact on decisions people will make for themselves and how they react to criticism. People with unstable high self-esteem are more likely to act aggressively when their self-view is threatened (Baumeister, Smart, and Boden, 1996). People with unstable high self-esteem are more defensive when receiving negative



Many things can influence self-esteem, but social exclusion is one of the factors most associated with low self-esteem.

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independent variable

The variable that is being manipulated by the researchers in an experiment.

dependent variable

The variable that is measured by the researchers; it is presumed to depend on the level of the independent variable.

A FOCUS ON STATISTICS AND METHODS

Experiments

Because personality usually assumes stability and that individuals are different from each other, experiments are not the usual technique for research in personality psychology. Often the experiments that are conducted are to examine how differences in some aspect of personality show up under different conditions, or to test the hypothesized underlying process that leads to differences as a result of personality. In an experiment, the researcher will typically manipulate one or two variables systematically. The manipulated variable is termed the **independent variable**. In a well-conducted experiment, if the only difference is that independent variable, then it can be presumed that any differences in the outcome are due to that manipulated independent variable. The independent variable has its impact on the **dependent variable**.

A simple example of a manipulated difference and the effect on different aspects of personality is from Belojevic, Slepcevic, and Jakovijevic (2001). Introverts and extraverts were exposed to quiet or noisy conditions. The amount of noise was the independent variable. Performance on a mental arithmetic test was the dependent variable. The results indicated that for introverts, performance decreased in the noisy condition

compared to the quiet condition. For extraverts, noise did not have an effect on performance.

An example of testing the process leading to differences is research by Setterlund and Niedenthal (1993). Two studies found that people with high self-esteem make choices where their self-concept matches people in particular situations. For instance, a person with high self-esteem will prefer the type of car that people like "them" drive. However, people with low self-esteem do not use the self-concept to guide their decision-making. Campbell (1990) found that people with low self-esteem had less self-concept clarity than people with high self-esteem. If the self-concept is unclear, it would be difficult for people to use the self-concept as a guide to make choices. To examine this hypothesis, in a third study Setterlund and Niedenthal used a manipulation of self-concept clarity prior to participants making choices. Some participants had their self-concept made clearer, whereas other participants had their self-concept made unclear. After the manipulation, people with the unclear self-concept did not use the self-concept to guide decision-making, regardless of whether they had high or low self-esteem. People who had the self-concept made more clear used the self to guide decision-making, even when they were low in self-esteem.

feedback (Zeigler-Hill, Chadha, and Osterman, 2008). Unstable self-esteem is associated with higher rates of depression (Franck, & De Raedt, 2007; Kernis, Grannemann, and Mathis, 1993).

Self-Processes

The development of self-awareness leads not only to the development of a self-concept but also to the development of several other important personality processes. In Western culture in particular, the development of the ability to reflect upon oneself is seen as a useful skill (Landrine, 1992). It can be used to examine one's internal states and behavior and to enhance one's ability to control oneself. This ability can function in both positive and negative ways, though. Negatively, it can lead to painful self-awareness and self-consciousness. But positively, it can lead to strivings to protect one's self-esteem and to maintain self-consistency. In this section, we consider each of these self-processes.

Self-Monitoring

One of the unique properties of humans to which we have already alluded is the capacity to observe and regulate our own behavior. When faced with temptation, young children can say to themselves, "Don't take a cookie; opening the cookie jar is naughty." For the older child and adult, these various prohibitions have been internalized in the form of a "conscience," which functions as a built-in self-monitor, as it were. Monitoring can also be a guide as well as a defense. Long-distance runners observe when they need to slow down and pace themselves for the end of the race; dieters record their caloric intake and modify their eating behavior accordingly. **Self-monitoring** in varying degrees is an important part of our everyday activities and, as we have seen in the review of social learning theories, can be an important component of a cognitive behavior modification therapeutic approach.

Snyder and his associates (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974; Snyder and Gangestad, 1986) have focused on a specific aspect of the general activity of self-monitoring. They have developed a scale assessing individual differences in self-monitoring tendencies. This scale has focused on the monitoring of the social presentation aspects of the self. It was designed to assess the degree to which individuals regulate their social behavior in order to make a particular social impression.

self-monitoring The degree to which individuals regulate their social behavior in order to make a particular social impression.



People high on self-monitoring will change their behavior so they can act in a way to fit the current situation.

Source: LightField Studios/Shutterstock

The items address the ability to control or manage expressive behavior, e.g., “I would probably make a good actor;” the tendency to perform in social situations and attract attention, e.g., “In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention” (scored in the reverse direction); and the tendency to behave as others expect, and contrary to the way one might feel, e.g., “I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.”

High self-monitors would be expected to alter their behavior in response to specific situational demands, and therefore, display less consistency in their actions. While there are some exceptions, the data are generally consistent with this prediction (Snyder, 1987). There are numerous studies ranging from responsiveness to advertising, to dating behavior, to the degree of consistency between beliefs and actions, that verify the utility of this measure. However, there is considerable controversy as to the personality dimension or dimensions that are being assessed by the self-monitoring instrument (Briggs and Cheek 1988). There is debate as to whether the scale measures one personality dimension or is a combination of several different dimensions. For example, the self-monitoring scale is significantly correlated with such personality factors as extroversion and exhibitionism (Briggs and Cheek, 1988). The fact that there is a significantly greater correlation between identical twins on the self-monitoring measure than between fraternal twins is suggestive of a genetic basis for this trait (Gangestad and Snyder, 1985).

Perhaps one of the most interesting parts of self-monitoring as a personality trait is that it has an impact on the consistency with which we see expression of other traits; for this reason, it is sometimes thought of as a meta-trait (see Chapter 8). Niedenthal and her colleagues (Niedenthal, Cantor, and Kihlstrom, 1985) found that people who are high self-monitors are less careful about choosing housing situations at college, which would be expected since they can adapt to many different situations, whereas a person low in self-monitoring would need to be more careful to pick a situation that fits their personality. As such, there may be good reasons to believe that the ability to change to fit the situational demands can have positive outcomes, yet we are probably going to be worse at predicting the high self-monitor’s behavior across situations.

APPLICATIONS OF PERSONALITY

Consumer Psychology

The self-concept has been of interest to people interested in consumer behavior for decades. One of the key ideas of interest for these researchers is the extent to which people will use consumer products to serve as indicators of who they are (Mittal, 2006); that is, the consumer products tell something about one’s self to others. A Toyota Prius and a Tesla S and a lifted Ford F-150 convey very different messages about the drivers. Dunning (2007) makes the argument that at times the audience receiving the message *is the self*. It is as if the person is trying to convince themselves that “I am the type of person who is concerned about the environment.” Other times a consumer product might be chosen to indicate belonging (Mead et al., 2011).

The other way in which the self-concept is of interest in consumer psychology is the relationship to various products. Among the topics that have examined the relationship to self-concept are tourism (Cohen, Prayag, and Moital, 2014; Todd, 2001), wine (Roe and Bruwer, 2017), luxury products (Kim and Joung, 2016), and



Choice of a type of vehicle can tell both ourselves and others about us.

Source: nitinut380/Shutterstock

clothing (Solomon and Schopler, 1982). Regardless of topic, the general finding is that people are more likely to choose a product or vacation location if people like themselves are likely to choose it.

Self-Control

There is a close relationship between self-monitoring and *self-control*. We have already alluded to the internal monitor or conscience. Self-monitoring refers primarily to the attention paid to one's behavior and feelings, while self-control refers to the ability to inhibit immediate gratification and alter one's behaviors appropriately. Self-control is also frequently used synonymously with self-regulation to connote future planning and the guiding of one's behavior in accordance with one's standards and situational demands. A number of theoretical explanations of self-control or self-regulation consider the monitoring of behavior as the first step in a three-stage cycle (Bandura, 1978; Kanfer, 1970). For the second step, the observed behavior is then judged against a criterion based on one's own standards or the standards of significant others. The last step consists of the person reinforcing or criticizing the self for the behavior. Self-criticism then leads to efforts to modify the behavior so that it meets the standard.

Some theories consider the role of the third stage to be in its information value rather than reward value (Carver and Scheier, 1982). A significant discrepancy between the observed behavior and the standard then elicits a motivation to reduce the discrepancy, resulting in efforts to modify the behavior. That motivation to modify the behavior should result in a reduction of the discrepancy between the behavior and the expected standards.

Positive and Negative Effects of Self-Awareness

There are conditions under which individuals appear to function more effectively if they are not self-aware. For instance, athletes usually attempt to blot out awareness of the self. Baseball hitters cannot be conscious of every aspect of their batting techniques while swinging the bat and still be successful. There is a movement among athletic coaches to emphasize the Zen aspect of the sport; that is, to have players transcend any awareness of the self and to lose their identity by completely merging with the game. A best-selling tennis book stressed that the player should be aware of the seams on the tennis ball and nothing else. Self-statements after missing a shot, such as "I am a lousy player" or "I can't seem to hit a backhand today," are believed to impede performance.

There is a large body of research addressing the effects of self-awareness on personal functioning. One clear finding is that focusing awareness on the self produces more acceptance of oneself as the cause of events. For example, Duval and Wicklund (1973, p. 26) had subjects read several scenarios, such as:

1. Imagine that you have selected and purchased a race horse. You enter the horse in a major race and hire a good jockey to ride him. The horse wins first place. To what degree did your actions cause the victory and to what degree did the actions of the jockey cause the victory?
2. Imagine that a friend of yours wants to get you a date. You tell her what characteristics you like in a date and she selects one of her friends. You go out with him and have a very good time. To what degree did your actions cause the successful date and to what degree did the actions of your friend cause the successful date?

Half of the subjects read these stories under normal conditions; the remainder read the passages in front of a conspicuous mirror. The presence of a mirror was expected to shift the focus of attention to oneself. In accordance with their predictions, Duval and Wicklund found that individuals in the mirror condition made relatively more self-attributions than did subjects in the normal condition.

Duval and Wicklund also proposed that heightened self-awareness is an aversive state, as it makes us consciously aware of our shortcomings. In a related theoretical development, Wine (1971) and Sarason (1978) contended that when a stressful event arouses self-preoccupying thoughts, there will be performance decrements because task-relevant

thoughts are diminished. Further, they stated that highly anxious people focus on the self during test performance, which may account for their relatively poor scores in test situations. In this regard, Hamilton and colleagues (1993), Barlow (1988), and Baumeister (1990), among others, have argued that excessive self-awareness plays a role in depression, anxiety, suicide, substance abuse, and other psychological disorders (Mor and Winquist, 2002). Among other things, self-awareness intensifies emotions. If one is feeling anxious or depressed, then excessive self-awareness will magnify those feelings. In addition, because self-awareness increases the tendency to see oneself as the cause of some event, if something goes wrong one is more likely to blame it on oneself. At the extreme, this can lead to excessive self-criticism and self-blame. Excessive self-focused attention can be so aversive under certain circumstances that one will strive to escape it by abusing substances or even dying by suicide (Baumeister, 1990).

However, the effects of self-awareness on behavior are far from settled. Carver, Scheier, and their colleagues (e.g., Carver, Blaney, and Scheier, 1979a, 1979b) have argued that if self-confidence and performance expectancy are high, then self-focus of attention will increase performance, whereas low confidence combined with self-focus will give rise to performance decrements. To test these ideas in an experimental investigation, people with snake phobias were asked to approach and pick up a snake. Some of these individuals were confident about their ability to overcome the phobia, while others were quite apprehensive and doubting. In one of the experimental conditions a mirror was present to heighten self-awareness. Indeed, the mirror enhanced the likelihood of picking up the snake among the confident subjects but impeded snake handling among the non-confident subjects, relative to the behavior of persons without feedback from a mirror. Silvia and Phillips (2004) also found that self-awareness interacted with beliefs, such that those who believed that there was an opportunity to grow and improve did not see a decrement in performance caused by self-awareness.

In sum, common situations such as placement in front of a mirror, camera, or audience can heighten self-awareness. Changes in awareness or self-consciousness can have profound positive or negative behavioral effects. We next consider some of the negative aspects, of the related concept of self-consciousness.

Self-Consciousness

Self-awareness, in addition to its reflection in self-evaluation, is also manifested in *self-consciousness*—the extent to which awareness of self enters into one's thoughts and behaviors. For example, one is less likely to feel self-conscious joining a group of good friends who are having a party than joining a group of strangers. In the latter case, thoughts of the impression one is making are more likely to arise as one interacts with the group. Of course, one can be self-conscious with one's friends—e.g., wondering about their reaction to some new clothes one is wearing, or expecting congratulations from them regarding a recent award.

In addition to situational factors affecting self-consciousness, there are also personality differences in the tendency to be self-conscious. Some individuals are more insecure about the impression they make, constantly worrying what others think about them. A personality scale has been developed to assess these individual differences, distinguishing between public self-consciousness and private self-consciousness (Fenigstein, 1987). Individuals who are highly conscious of the public aspects of one's self as contrasted to being conscious of private aspects, such as one's feelings and desires, display much more sensitivity to the behavior of others. For example, such individuals may react in a very personal and negative manner when ignored.



Heightened self-awareness can be an aversive state, as it can remind one of one's shortcomings.

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Self-Motives

Self-Enhancement

One aspect of awareness of the self is that it can lead to a tendency to want to protect and enhance the self. We want to engage in behaviors and seek situations that will maximize feelings of self-esteem and minimize threats to our self-esteem. There are many ways in which self-esteem can be enhanced or threatened, depending on the particular culture and on one's personal values and competencies. One can achieve self-esteem through financial success, through fame, through popularity, through mastery of a difficult task, through social dedication, and so on. How we maintain and enhance self-esteem is highly influenced by learning, but the need for self-esteem is a consequence of the emergent development of the self-concept.

basking in reflected glory A pattern in which people associate themselves with other people or groups that are positively evaluated in order to be positively evaluated themselves.

We know that people are motivated to try to maintain positive self-evaluations. There are many ways in which people may attempt to do this. People may associate themselves with positive things. This is sometimes known as **basking in reflected glory** (Cialdini et al., 1976). A common example of this is how people will talk about athletic teams they support, using phrases like, “We won!” or “They lost.” Notice how the phrasing connects the self to the win but distances the self from the loss. People will also shift the importance they place on aspects of the self following failure on those dimensions (Crocker and Wolf, 2003; James, 1890/1953).

People generally prefer and seek out positive feedback and attempt to reduce the impact of negative feedback (Snyder et al, 1983). Studies of success and failure indicate that we tend to attribute success to our personal efforts and ability, while we are likely to attribute failure to the difficulty of the task or to bad luck (Weary, 1978). Research on what is called the “social comparison process” indicates that people tend to make downward comparisons when they compare themselves to others in order to assess how well they are doing. That is, they compare themselves with others perceived as less able than, inferior to, or less fortunate than themselves, to enhance their own self-esteem (Gibbon, 1986).

By trying to maintain positive feelings about one's self, people may engage in maladaptive behaviors. People may perceive failure as reflecting on the self instead of an opportunity to improve. It may lead to people being more likely to cheat on academic work. The maintenance of self-esteem has costs that may actually stand in the way of success (Crocker and Park, 2004).

Taylor and Brown (1988) argued that humans show a tendency to have unrealistically positive views of the self. When negative aspects of the self are acknowledged, these aspects tend to be dismissed as inconsequential. A study by Lewinsohn, Mischel, Chaplin,



Sports fans will associate closely with a team when winning but distance themselves when the team is losing in order to maintain positive feelings about the self.

Source: Gorodenkoff/Shutterstock

A FOCUS ON INTROVERSION–EXTRAVERSION

One fairly well-established finding is that self-esteem and extraversion are positively correlated. Self-esteem also tends to be negatively correlated with neuroticism, or to think of the other end of the dimension, self-esteem tends to be positively correlated with emotional stability (Bagley and Evan-Wong, 1975; Furr and Funder, 1998; Swickert, Hittner, Kitos, and Cox-Fuenzalida, 2004; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2015). Knowing that things are correlated tells us nothing about why they are correlated. One explanation is that self-esteem is simply a different way of measuring

extraversion and emotional stability. Another possibility is that society in general is built for extraverts, and consequently extraverts fit into the world slightly better than introverts. Some have suggested that social support is a pathway between self-esteem and extraversion (Swickert, Hittner, Kitos, and Cox-Fuenzalida, 2004). Finally, it may be that extraverts may more successfully engage in social comparison processes that allow themselves to maintain their positive views of self compared to introverts (Vaughan-Johnston et al., 2021).

and Barton (1980) is illustrative of people's tendency to have unrealistically positive self-views. In this study, observers watched subjects complete a group-interaction task. Each subject was then rated on a number of personality dimensions by the observers, as well as by the subjects themselves. Subjects' self-ratings were significantly more positive than the observers' ratings.

There is much controversy over what actually causes us to “self-servingly” interpret information in this fashion. While some have argued that we do it because of our self-serving desire to enhance or protect the self-image, others suggest that it has to do with how people process information. For instance, those who are used to success might logically attribute success at a particular task to their own efforts and failure to external factors. Numerous studies have tried to determine which of these two explanations is correct. The conclusion drawn by most psychologists is that both factors are involved. People interpret evidence in a manner favorable to their self-concepts, both because they are acting logically based on the way they interpret experience and because they are trying to enhance their self-images. Once again, we caution that the phenomenon of a self-serving bias may be culture-specific.

Even in our culture, not all individuals interpret evidence in a manner favorable to a positive self-image. Taylor and Brown (1988) point out that depressed individuals are actually often more “realistic” in their self-assessments than nondepressed individuals,



People tend to attribute success to their own behavior and failure to something outside of the self.

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who distort information positively. Swann and colleagues (1987), based on their view of self-consistency (see next section), have suggested that individuals with low self-esteem will actually reject positive information about themselves in order to preserve their negative self-image and, conversely, will accept negative information about themselves. Many decades ago, Lecky (1945) proposed that an important factor governing socially maladaptive behavioral symptoms in children was their tendency to act consistently with a negative self-image. Thus, children who see themselves as poor spellers or stutterers may spell poorly or stutter to maintain consistency with their self-images. Similarly, children who believe themselves to be “bad” may behave delinquently in accordance with their self-concepts, perhaps without being conscious at all of the process. Therapies based on Lecky’s approach attempt to help the child become aware of these maladaptive efforts to maintain consistency and, in addition, to help the child modify a negative self-concept. The fact that some individuals appear to strive to maintain a *negative* self-image is compatible with the self-consistency motive, to which we now turn.

Self-Consistency

self-consistency A motivation to maintain consistent ways of thinking about the self.

How we perceive ourselves shapes our judgments and behaviors through still another psychological mechanism: the motivation for **self-consistency**. Psychologists have found that inconsistencies in one’s beliefs or between one’s beliefs and behavior are a source of tension and discomfort (Heider, 1958). People are motivated to resolve such inconsistencies and to maintain consistency. For example, miserly individuals who see themselves as very generous can maintain consistency between their behavior and self-image by perceiving themselves as very poor, by exaggerating the significance of any pittance given to charity, by believing that people will be corrupted by gifts, by viewing others as exceptionally greedy and demanding of his resources, and so on. The motivation for cognitive consistency appears to be quite pervasive and is central to a number of classic personality and social psychological theories (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958). Inconsistencies need to be understood before one can be concerned about them. In addition, the motivation for consistency is probably influenced by social learning inasmuch as children are encouraged to be logical and consistent.

The striving for consistency has been documented in a series of experiments by Swann and his colleagues (Swann, 2012; Swann et al., 1987; Swann and Hill, 1982; Swann and Read, 1981). For example, in one study (Swann and Hill, 1982) college students participating in an experiment were given feedback from an experimental confederate that they



When people are given information incongruent with how they see themselves, they will often accentuate the self-consistent view of the self.

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seemed either dominant or submissive. When the feedback confirmed the self-concept, the appraisal was accepted. However, if it was discrepant, the students resisted the feedback by exaggerating the behaviors indicative of the personality that they felt truly characterized them. Thus, subjects who saw themselves as dominant and were told they were submissive responded in an especially dominant manner while those with a submissive self-concept, who were labeled dominant, became especially submissive.

This research suggests that there are at least two motives relevant to the self-concept: the motive to enhance one's self-esteem and the motive to preserve the consistency of one's view of the self. The challenge is to determine, particularly for negative self-concept, low self-esteem individuals, the conditions under which each of these tendencies will be paramount. There has been some effort to address this problem. There is evidence that cognitive responses tend to be mediated by self-consistency and affective responses by self-enhancement (Swann et al., 1987). Subjects, after their self-esteem was assessed, were asked to make a brief speech and then given positive or negative feedback regarding their self-confidence. Both the high and low self-esteem subjects felt happier and less hostile and anxious after positive rather than negative feedback, manifesting a preference for self-enhancing information. However, as one would predict from a consistency model, the cognitive reactions of the high and low self-esteem subjects differed. The high self-esteem subjects rated the favorable feedback as more accurate than the unfavorable feedback, and their evaluation of the feedback procedure was commensurate with this difference. The low self-esteem subjects, in contrast, considered the unfavorable feedback to be more accurate than the favorable feedback. They also viewed the evaluator providing the unfavorable feedback as more competent than the favorable evaluator.

Personality Theories and the Self

The *self* has become an increasingly important concept in the study of personality and social behavior. One will find the properties of the self-structure relevant to issues concerning personality development and personality dynamics that will be considered in the ensuing chapters. The self is also pertinent to personality measurement in that many measurement procedures require individuals to appraise themselves, and most of the personality traits that are measured are self attributes.

The Self in Personality Theories

We have seen that properties of the self are important in almost all of the personality theories that have been reviewed in the preceding chapters. The only theorist who does not employ any self-related concepts is Skinner. However, the other learning theorists all refer implicitly or explicitly to some aspect of the self in their theoretical models. For Dollard and Miller, self-references are largely implicit. However, the notion of self-based motivations and affects such as pride, achievement, dependency, insecurity, in addition to defenses that reduce threats to the self are quite compatible with their theoretical approach to personality. In the case of Rotter, we find more explicit references to self-based motivation such as needs for recognition, dominance, and dependency. In addition, Rotter introduces an important self-agency concept in his distinction between belief in internal versus external control of reinforcement. For Bandura, the self enters into his theory primarily through its agency functions. Self-efficacy beliefs and self-monitoring and self-regulation of one's behavior in terms of one's standards and goals have assumed an increasingly important place in his social learning theory (Bandura, 1989).

For the phenomenological theorists, the self is a central concept. However, the phenomenologists differ as well as share similarities in their treatment of the self. Whereas Rogers and Maslow both emphasize self-actualization and Kelly does not, both Rogers and Kelly place importance on one's self-concept and its function as a frame of reference.

Freud was well aware of self-based motives, but these were completely subordinated to instinctual, id motives, and hence self-based motives are not specified in the table. Adler was certainly aware of self-love, and both Freud and Adler recognized that personal

attributes functioned as a frame of reference, but these were not central processes in their theories. In one instance, Freud's concept of narcissism was cited, although not previously introduced in the text, since Freud coined the term and since it has an important although not a central role in his theory.

It is apparent that most personality theorists address some aspect of the self. It is of interest that most of the differences between personality theorists lie in the particular function of the self that is emphasized rather than in different interpretations of the same function.

Summary

1. An experiential sense of self as distinct from other objects, as an agent, and as an interpersonal organism, develops very early.
2. The self-concept, one's description or image of oneself, begins to develop at around eighteen months of age. It appears to begin to develop when human infants become self-aware, and it continues to develop into adulthood, becoming more complex and differentiated.
3. *Self-schemata* are cognitive generalizations about the self that serve to filter incoming information, organize experience, and guide subsequent action.
4. Of the many components and features that make up the self-concept, only a small segment is germane to a particular situation and becomes accessible at any given moment. The self-concept that is operative is referred to as the *working self-concept*.
5. Discrepancies between the *actual self*, the *ideal self* and the *ought self*, and between *actual* and *possible* selves are an important source of motivation and of one's affective state.
6. *Self-esteem* is based on one's generalized positive and negative evaluation of the various features of the self-concept. Not all elements of the self-concept contribute to self-esteem inasmuch as many elements of the self are only descriptive.
7. *Self-awareness* is a prerequisite for the development of self-monitoring and self-control. Self-awareness can function in positive and negative ways.
8. The *self-monitoring scale* is predictive of a wide range of behaviors bearing on the social presentation aspects of the self. High self-monitors are more responsive to situational demands and tend to display less consistency in their behavior.
9. The motivation for *self-consistency* can conflict with the motivation for *self-enhancement* in individuals with low self-esteem. There is some evidence that cognitive responses in situations in which these tendencies are operative are mediated by self-consistency while affective responses are mediated by self-enhancement.
10. The *self* is a key concept for almost all personality theories. However, the particular property of the self that has been addressed varies markedly with the personality theory.

Key Terms

basking in reflected glory (p. 238)
dependent variable (p. 233)
ideal self (p. 230)
independent variable (p. 233)
ought self (p. 230)
possible selves (p. 230)
self-awareness (p. 225)

self-complexity (p. 231)
self-concept (p. 224)
self-consistency (p. 240)
self-esteem (p. 231)
self-monitoring (p. 234)
self-schema (p. 228)
working self-concept (p. 230)

Answering the Key Questions

1. What is the self?

The self is a concept about one's self but is also the actor and perceiver about one's self. There is the self that is part of memory, and there is the self that

observes one's own behavior. There is the self that is portrayed to others, and these selves might be very similar or very different. The self can serve as a guide to current and future behaviors.

2. What is the evidence that the self-concept is a memory?

The self-reference effect is good evidence that the self-concept is a concept in memory. People remember words better when compared to the self. Self-schemas are another case where people process information more quickly when they have a well-elaborated schema about the self.

3. How does the self change in childhood and adolescence?

Younger children often describe the self in terms of physical characteristics and other things that are directly observable. Older children start to use traits to describe the self. In adolescence, the self becomes more complex and abstract. The description of the self begins to include motivations, attitudes, and beliefs. The adolescent may integrate ideas that are seemingly sets of opposites.

4. What does it mean to say there are multiple self-concepts?

Many of the important ideas about the self-concept deal with the idea that the self-concept is not the same thing all the time. That we have different versions of ourselves in different situations and with different people is captured in the idea of the working self-concept. We have different versions of ourselves in the future; for instance, we have an idea of who we would ideally like to be as well as ideas about what we ought to be like. We can also imagine different versions of the possible

selves in the future that might be positive or that might be negative. Ideal and ought.

5. What are the consequences of self-awareness?

Self-awareness has both good and bad consequences. Performance can either increase or decrease as a result of self-awareness, depending on self-confidence. Self-awareness can lead to maladaptive consequences like depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Self-awareness can also provide an opportunity to grow and improve.

6. What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the general evaluation of the self. It is typically based on either a global evaluation of the self, or based on important characteristics of the self or group membership.

7. What are the self-motives?

Two of the major self-related motivations are self-enhancement and self-consistency. The self-enhancement motive is a motive to have others and oneself to look upon the self in a positive way. The self-consistency motive is the motive to have others and oneself look on the self the same way as the person does. In the instance of someone who sees themselves positively, both the self-consistency and self-enhancement motive will be congruent and positive. However, a person with a negative self-view will prefer to be seen in a negative way when considering the self-consistency motive, but prefer to be seen in a positive way when considering the self-enhancement motive.

Quiz Yourself

- The self is often used in two ways. What are those ways?
 - Self as object and self as agent
 - Self as agent and self as actor
 - Self as actor and self as motivator
 - Self as motivator and self as object
- The self-concept can be considered to be
 - what a person knows about themselves.
 - a collection of information about one's self.
 - a memory concept.
 - all of the above.
- What is the self-reference effect?
 - The need to connect any information back to one's self.
 - The way in which some people always bring the conversation back to themselves.
 - People who connect information to the self remember that information better.
 - People who write diaries have a more stable mood.
- Kelsey tends to think of himself as smarter than most of his peers and to often label his peers as dumb or the occasional someone as brilliant. We would probably say that Kelsey ____
 - is agentic.
 - has intelligence as part of his self-schema.
 - is aschematic for intelligence.
 - is fixated.
- While in class, you may think of your student self. While at your job, you use your employee self. These differences reflect
 - the self-schema.
 - the working self-concept.
 - the self-reference effect.
 - low self-monitoring.

6. Beth has a difference between what she believes herself to be and what she wants to be. It is likely that Beth
- A. will experience positive emotions as a result.
 - B. will experience negative emotions as a result.
 - C. will use denial to ignore the discrepancies.
 - D. will use reaction formation to deal with the discrepancies.
7. People with greater self-complexity show
- A. greater emotional stability in response to negative events.
 - B. greater emotional stability in response to positive and negative events.
 - C. less emotional stability in response to negative events.
 - D. less emotional stability in response to positive and negative events.
8. If we know that there is a correlation between self-esteem and positive outcomes, we know that
- A. raising self-esteem will lead to positive outcomes.
 - B. positive outcomes lead to people having high self-esteem.
 - C. having low self-esteem will always lead to negative outcomes.
 - D. negative outcomes will cause low self-esteem.
 - E. none of the above.
9. Most people tend to hold
- A. an unrealistically positive view of the self.
 - B. a realistic view of the self.
 - C. an unrealistic negative view of the self.
 - D. an unrealistically negative view only when depressed.
10. The self-enhancement motive appears to work ____; the self-consistency motive appears to work ____.
- A. on an emotional level; on a cognitive level
 - B. on a cognitive level; on an emotional level
 - C. under conscious awareness; nonconsciously
 - D. nonconsciously; under conscious awareness

Answers can be found in the end-of-book Answers section.



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Key Questions

1. What is identity?
2. According to Erikson, when is identity the key crisis?
3. What are the stages of identity development for Marcia?
4. What is narrative identity?
5. How is the development of ethnic identity and sexual orientation identity similar?
6. What is sexual orientation and how is it measured?
7. What is the difference between sex and gender?
8. What is gender schema theory?

During my college years, I had the pleasure of meeting a fascinating individual. We met in a history course during our first semester. At that time, I had set my sights on pursuing a chemistry major and a pre-med curriculum, while he had initially intended to embark on an accounting career due to his father's advice. One notable characteristic of his was his impeccable attire—always

Chapter Outline

Identity Formation

Marcia's Stage Model of Identity

Advances and Limitations

Narrative Identity

Social Identity Theory

Racial and Ethnic Identity

Sexual Orientation

Models of Sexual Identity

Development

Gender

Gender Identity

Gender Differences

Studies of Gender Differences

Gender Typing: Development

of Gender Differences and

Gender Identity

Gender Schema Theory

Androgyny

Conclusions on the Development

of Gender Identity and

Gender Typing

donning neatly pressed khaki pants, a crisp white button-up shirt, and polished black shoes. After the first semester, I didn't see him again until the next year. He was nearly unrecognizable at times. Sometimes he wore a style that we would now call "grunge," and other times he dressed like someone who would spend the summer following the Grateful Dead. Sometimes he went back to the white shirt and khakis. It was never certain which version of him we were going to see. The only constant was the college choir. He dropped the plan to be an accountant and eventually settled on a philosophy major. Years later, I was looking at jazz CDs (back when that was still a thing) and saw a name that seemed familiar. It was that guy from college. He's now a Grammy-winning jazz vocalist.

As we saw with Erikson's model of developmental stages in Chapter 4, the development of identity is an important stage. The opening vignette of this chapter encapsulates various concepts from Erikson's theory, particularly the notion of searching for an identity that works for the person. Returning to my personal journey, it became apparent to me that medicine was not my identity when I discovered that I hated scalpels in a biology course. I was fortunate to find a new identity that was a better fit. That effort to find an identity is something I see often in my students. I see the struggle of students who had one idea of their identity and then realize it isn't going to work for them. They may have thought that they were really smart but then failed college courses. Or they planned on one major and realized they really didn't like it. There are those who aspired to become physicians, only to recoil at the sight of using a scalpel on lifeless creatures. These situations necessitate a recalibration of one's identity. For certain students, the search for a new version of themselves proves elusive, leading them to drop out of college. However, others embrace the discomfort that accompanies this process, persisting in their journey, and often finding greater contentment as a result. Who knows? They might even achieve a Grammy-worthy accomplishment along the way.

In the previous chapter we considered the development and functions of the self. In this chapter we consider aspects of the development of identity.

identity The goals, values, and roles that are the key descriptors of who we are to ourselves.

Identity deals with that which we consider to be most basic to our sense of self—the things that identify who we are, both to ourselves and to others. It includes our most basic values and goals and our ethnic and gender identifications. As fans of science-fiction movies or amnesia victims know, there is nothing more terrifying than the sense of losing one's identity. Identity involves the fundamental sense of *continuity* in one's life: I am who I was yesterday, and I am who I will be tomorrow. It provides a framework for taking action in the future.

Self-concept and identity are closely related ideas. Both can provide answers to the question "Who am I?" Yet they differ. *Self-concept* is one's *description* of who one is. *Identity* is one's *definition* of who one is (Baumeister, 1986); it consists of those things that most basically define who we are. Something can be part of one's self-concept ("I am sloppy") but not part of one's identity ("I don't consider sloppiness an integral part of who I am"). Identity is defined by our connection to various aspects of our life, and it helps us locate ourselves in terms of who we are and where we belong (Lewis, 1990). Identity encompasses a wide range of elements, which can include significant social group affiliations such as ethnic identity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and personally chosen groups. However, it is important to note that one's identity is not solely confined to these social identities. It can also encompass skills, abilities, and even personality traits that hold importance to the individual. For instance, an individual may identify themselves as "super organized," highlighting a specific personality trait within their overall identity framework.

Many psychologists believe that adolescence is the key developmental time period for the formation of identity. While individuals begin to develop an identity in early childhood and may continue to modify their identities throughout their lives, adolescence is thought to be the most crucial organizational period for forming an identity.

This view characterizes the perspectives of Erik Erikson, James Marcia, Dan McAdams, and those who have developed models of ethnic identity formation. However, gender identity, as we shall see, appears to develop considerably earlier.

Identity Formation

Erik Erikson has been the most influential theorist of identity (see Chapter 4). Erikson emphasized the ability to experience oneself as having continuity and sameness as an important aspect of identity. Identity includes one's bodily identity, the ability to sustain loyalties, and a sense of having a future. It also includes having a stable sense of self versus feeling self-conscious, being able to pursue a career versus feeling paralyzed in terms of work, being able to experiment with various roles versus rigidly locking oneself into only a single fixed role, feeling clear about one's sexual identity versus being confused about one's sexual identity, and having ideological commitments versus being confused about one's values.

Erikson's theory posits that identity development occurs during adolescence through a variety of processes. One such process involves the rejection of childhood identities, whereby teenagers may no longer consider their parents or their parents' occupations as integral parts of their own identity. Additionally, identity formation can result from the amalgamation of existing identities. For instance, an adolescent who excels in sports, music, and academics may construct an identity centered around being a "hard worker." Moreover, adolescence offers the opportunity for the emergence of entirely new identities that had not previously existed. For instance, a teenager might come to realize their leadership potential and adopt that identity as a result of being selected as team captain.

Erikson believed that late adolescence was the time of identity achievement, although earlier developmental periods played a role. Identity achievement precedes the development of the capacity for intimacy, which occurs in early adulthood. However, Erikson theorized that this sequence is more characteristic of men than of women. For women, interpersonal aspects are at the core of their identity. Men therefore achieve identity first and intimacy second, while women achieve identity and intimacy concurrently, or intimacy first. Erikson also assumed that women do not complete an identity in adolescence because marriage and having children complete their identities. It is important to acknowledge that the term *identity* encompasses a range of identities. While an individual may possess a singular primary identity, it is common for people to hold multiple identities concurrently. For example, a person may identify as a father, gay, a passionate supporter of the Denver Nuggets, and an avid outdoors enthusiast. It is reasonable to expect variations in the composition of individuals' identities, with some individuals having a diverse array of identities, whereas others may possess fewer components within their overall identity framework (Pasupathi, Fivush, Greenhoot, and McLean, 2020).

Marcia's Stage Model of Identity

James Marcia (1980), using an interview format, followed Erikson's ideas on the development of identity in adolescence. Others have subsequently developed objective measures based on Marcia's interview format (Grotevant and Adams, 1984). An example of items from one of these measures is given in Table 10.1.



One person might have "organized" as part of their identity, whereas for another person, "organized" is descriptive but not an important part of identity.

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