Theories of Personality

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

“Persona” (Latin) means mask

Exercise “Who Am I?”

Identify any of the self-descriptive terms that do not really qualify as personality characteristics.

Physical Self (e.g., sex, age)
Social Self (e.g., family, membership)
Reflective Self (e.g., values, likes, dislikes)
Identity Self (e.g., who you are)

What makes a personal quality part of your personality?

What is Personality?

“Every theory of personality can be viewed as an attempt to define personality”
These definitions differ from one another

What is Personality?

“Every human being is like every other human being. What do we all have in common? What is human nature?”
Like some other human beings
How do we satisfy our needs?
Like no other human being
How do our individual genes and personal experiences contribute to our uniqueness?

Human Nature and Individual Differences

Description (What)
Components of human nature
Characteristics of individual differences
Explanation (Why)
Why do these components and characteristics come to be (origins)? How do they move? How do they change over time? How are they functionally significant?

What is Personality?

The goals of personality theory are to describe what humans are like and to explain why we are like that.
No single theory successful at either
Different theories emphasize different determining factors and offer:
different descriptions
different explanations
different methods of study

Understanding personality may require the composite of many theories rather than one theory
What determines personality?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven Determinants of Personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learned traits: Genetically determined traits. Differing levels of influence (Wade ppt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven Determinants of Personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most common lay explanation of personality:
- Ex: "He has an Irish temper"
- Genes do play a substantial role (Bouchard)
- Twin and adoption studies
- Common family environmental influences play minor role.
- Nativism-empiricism controversy
  - Nativist: Genetically determined (heredity)
  - Empiricist: Created by experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven Determinants of Personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concept Check
Nativists or Empiricists?
- Emphasize the learning process in explaining personality...
- Believe IQ level is determined by experience...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven Determinants of Personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________
I am _____________

Review your "I am..." list to explore the upcoming questions.
### Seven Determinants of Personality

- Genetics
- Traits
- Sociocultural
- Learning
- Personal choice
- Unconscious mechanisms
- Cognitive processes

#### Concept Check

- What prescribed roles are associated with each of your qualities?
- Which societal norms are associated with those roles?
- What consequences occur if deviating from these norms?
- How do societal expectations play a part in normal and abnormal behavior?

#### Different rewards and punishments = different personalities

- Personality is pliable
  - Control patterns of reward and punishment and you can control personality development
- Similar to Sociocultural view, both believe personality results from life experiences
  - **Environmentalism**

### Chance circumstances:

- Socioeconomic status
- Family size
- Birth order
- Ethnic identification
- Religion
- Regionalism
- Parent’s education level

### Concept Check

- Which kind of personality researcher is interested in knowing what organizations you belong to and the economic level of your family?

### Concept Check

- Would those that emphasize the learning process in their explanation of personality more likely to be nativists or empiricists?
- **Empiricists**
- **Why?**
  - **Nativism-empiricism controversy**
  - Nativist – Genetically determined (heredity)
  - Empiricist – Created by experience

### Concept Check

- Which theorists would say “We are what we have been rewarded for being?”
- **Behaviorist?**
  - Yes, and behaviorist emphasized LEARNING
John Watson’s Famous Quote

“Give me a dozen healthy infants, well formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take any one of them at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and the race of his ancestors.”

Seven Determinants of Personality

- Genetics
- Traits
- Culture
- Learning
- Personal choice
- Unconscious mechanisms
- Cognitive processes

Existential-Humanistic view
- What does it mean to be you?
- Assumes that a person knows a great deal about the determinants of his or her own personality
- What is the significance of your awareness that you ultimately must die? (Existential)

Seven Determinants of Personality

- Genetics
- Traits
- Culture
- Learning
- Personal choice
- Unconscious mechanisms
- Cognitive processes

Assumes the person knows few (if any) determinants of his or her own personality

Psychoanalytic theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung claim the ultimate causes of behavior are unconscious

Seven Determinants of Personality

- Genetics
- Traits
- Socioculture
- Learning
- Personal choice
- Unconscious mechanisms
- Cognitive processes

Cognitive patterns & beliefs structure reality and determine personality
- How information is perceived, retained and acted on determine personality
- Self-regulated behaviors
  - Internal (self) rewards and punishments due to goal outcomes
  - Focus on the present experience and effect of goals on behavior and personality

Cognitive processes

Personality

1. What is the relative importance of the past, present, and future?

Alternative questions:
- How are childhood experiences related to adult personality characteristics?
- Are there critical irreversible stages of personality development?

Freud (2) – ‘Past’
- Personality essentially developed by 5 years

Teleological behavior
- Goal directed or future directed behavior (pulled by future rather than pushed by the past)
- Jung(3), Alport(7), Bandura & Mischel(11)

Skinner(9) – ‘Present’

11 Questions Addressed by Personality Theorists
### 11 Questions Addressed by Personality Theorists

#### 2. What motivates human behavior?
- What is the ‘master’ motive or major driving force behind most human behavior?
  - **Hedonism**
    - Tendency to seek pleasure and avoid pain
    - Freud (2), Skinner (9), Dollard & Miller (10)
  - **Self-Actualization**
    - Impulse to realize our full potential
    - Jung (3), Maslow (15), Rogers (14)
  - **Superiority**
    - Adler (4)
  - **Meaning and reduction of uncertainty**
    - Kelly (13)
  - **Express evolved mechanisms**
    - Buss (12)
  - **Develop Cognitive processes**
    - Bandura and Mischel (11)

#### 3. How important is the concept of self?

#### 4. How important are unconscious mechanisms?

#### 5. Is human behavior freely chosen or is it determined?
- Are we free to choose, to be masters of our fate, or are we victims of biological factors, unconscious forces, or external stimuli?

#### 6. What can be learned by asking people about themselves?

#### 7. Uniqueness versus Commonality
- **Idiographic research**
  - Intense study of the individual case
- **Nomothetic research**
  - Study of the average performance of groups of individuals

**Sources of data:**
- Direct observation
- Self-report / self-description
- Observations / perceptions of others
- Psychological testing
8. Are people controlled internally or externally?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person variables</th>
<th>Situation variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control a person’s behavior internally</td>
<td>Control a person’s behavior externally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. How are the mind and body related?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative question:</th>
<th>Physical Monism</th>
<th>Parallelism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are mental events and bodily events related to each other?</td>
<td>The mind does not exist (so, really no problem)</td>
<td>External events trigger independent mental and bodily events at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphenomenalism</td>
<td>Mental events are merely irrelevant byproducts of bodily events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactionism</td>
<td>The mind influences the body and the body influences the mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What is the nature of human nature?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical theory</th>
<th>Rational theory</th>
<th>Animalistic theory</th>
<th>Evolutionary theory</th>
<th>Existential theory</th>
<th>Humanistic theory</th>
<th>Mechanistic theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>people become what they experience</td>
<td>behavior is under control of thoughtful, logical, rational thought processes</td>
<td>humans possess same impulses as other animals, particularly primates</td>
<td>we inherit predispositions from our past, but these can be modified by rational thought or cultural influence</td>
<td>humans can choose courses of action and assign meaning to the events in their lives</td>
<td>we are born basically good</td>
<td>human response is automatic and machine like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. How consistent is human behavior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What constitutes consistency?</th>
<th>Traditionally, humans thought to be consistent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What accounts for individual differences in consistency?</td>
<td>New findings show behavior is too inconsistent and question the explaining behavior in terms of traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What variables account for inconsistency?</td>
<td>Some are consistent in some ways and not in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the importance of person vs situation variables?</td>
<td>Types of consistency vary from person to person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Do We Find the Answers?

Science as an epistemological pursuit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>The study of knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How Do We Find the Answers?

Science as a combination of rationalism and empiricism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationalism</th>
<th>Empiricism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The belief that one gains knowledge by exercising the mind (thinking, reasoning, logic)</td>
<td>Sensory experience is the basis of all knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information must be sorted before conclusions are drawn</td>
<td>We know only what we experience (extreme)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**How Do We Find the Answers?**

### The roles of scientific theory

- **What is Theory?**
  - "an interrelated set of concepts used to explain a body of data"
  - Hypothesis (predictions) are derived from theories

- **Scientific Theory**
  - Empirical observations
  - Meaningful organization (rationalism)
  - Verification
  - Self-correcting process

- **Scientific Evidence**
  - Confirmations "support" theory
  - Contradictory Evidence
    - "fails to support" or "refutes" the theory
  - Theories are never "proven" or "disproven"

- **Scientific Evidence**
  - The (most*) important question to ask when evaluating the usefulness of a personality theory is "Does it generate empirical research?"

- **The Principle of Verification**
  - All scientific explanations must be capable of being tested objectively and empirically
  - Testing of scientific explanations must be available to any interested person (capable of public verification)
  - Some personality theories may contain terms and propositions that are not precise enough to verify
  - Still, they typically generate research hypotheses that are capable of empirical verification
  - Ultimately, personality theories are concerned with generating empirical verifications

---

### Science and Personality Theory

**Thomas Kuhn’s View of Science and Scientific Paradigms**

- **Psychology**
  - Biographical
  - Sociocultural
  - Evolutionary
  - Humanistic
  - Psychoanalytic
  - Trait
  - Learning
  - Piaget
  - Bandura
  - Dollard

**Sociocultural**

- Alfred Adler
- Karen Horney
- Erik Erikson

**Trait**

- Gordon Allport
- R.B. Cattell
- H.J. Eysenck

**Learning**

- B.F. Skinner
- John Dollard
- Neal Miller
- Albert Bandura
- Walter Mischel

**Evolutionary**

- David M. Buss

**Humanistic**

- George Kelly
- Carl Rogers
- Abraham Maslow

---

**Science and Personality Theory**

**Karl Popper’s Philosophy of Science**

- To be scientific, a theory must make risky predictions
  - Predictions that have a chance of being incorrect
  - The refutation risk allows progress in science

- **Principle of falsifiability**
  - All scientific theories must be falsifiable
  - Protects against pseudoscientific explanations
  - Claims that can not be tested or falsified

- Personality is complex and has many subjective components
  - Many theories can not pass the test of falsification**
  - All contribute to an understanding of personality
  - May lead to more rigorous scientific explanations

---

*Pegoraro’s principle of falsifiability is similar to the principle of verification.*
Concept Check

Which of the following would Popper consider to be nonscientific?
- A) astrology
- B) Freud's theory of personality
- C) Einstein's theory of relativity
- D) both A and B

Science and Personality Theory

Self-Correction in Science
- What does the statement “progress occurs when theories are wrong” imply?
- Why would Popper believe that many personality theories are not scientific?
- To say that a theory is not scientific is not to say that it is useless.
- Personality theories vary in terms of their scientific rigor, yet all contribute to our understanding of personality

Preface to the study of Personality Theorists and their theories

- Personality theories often reflect the biographies of their authors.
- To understand the theories it is important to recognize the influence of the theorists' lives on their work.
- Personality theories can help us enhance our own self-understanding.
- Do not search for the "correct" theory, as there is not one that adequately accounts for all personality.
- Much about personality remains unknown.
- Which personality theory is "best" depends on what aspect of personality one is trying to explain.
- The best available explanation of personality comes from a composite of all the major theories…an "eclectic" view.
- Personality theory needs a grand "synthesizer".
- The person who is in the best position to judge which concepts contained within the various personality theories are useful and which are not is YOU.

Think about it

What are the most important questions about human personality? What questions about human nature should be contained in a theory of personality?