

The many-trait approach

- “Wide net” approach considering 100 traits at once
- California Q-set
 - Set of 100 phrases on cards that describes an aspect of personality to characterize a particular individual
 - The phrases are more complex than personality traits (usually single words)
 - I.e. item 1: “Is critical, skeptical, not easily impressed”
 - I.e. item 2: “Is a genuinely dependable and responsible person”
 - I.e. item 3: “Has a wide range of interests”
 - Raters sorting them into 9 categories ranging from “not characteristic” (1) of the person being described to “highly characteristic” (9)
 - The rater must be a friend, a researcher, or a psychotherapist (“I” data) or the person of their own personality (“S” data)
 - An advantage of Q-sorting is that it forces the judge to compare all of the items directly against each other within one individual, rather than just relatively across individuals
 - Restricted to identifying only a few items as important for characterizing a particular person

The many-trait approach –delay of gratification

- Males less prone to delay gratification than females in our society
- 116 4 y.o. kids (59 boys/57 girls) tested in 2 delay-of-gratification experiments
 - Exp 1: each child shown a wrapped gift and promised they could receive it after completing a puzzle. The gift was set down just w/in reach and the researchers measured how long the child was able to resist before reaching out and grabbing it
 - Exp. 2: each child told forbidden to play with an attractive toy. Experimenters left the room and observed whether the child approached the toy anyway. The more the child moved toward playing w/ forbidden toy, the lower their delay-of-gratification score
- The 2 delay scores were averaged and correlated with the Q-sort personality descriptions from when the kids were 3 y.o., 4 y.o., 7 and 11 y.o.
- Personality correlates of behavior measured when kids were 4 y.o. could be detected through personality assessments from a year earlier and 7 yrs later-- stay fairly consistent across development in childhood
 - Girls and boys--ones that are playful, reflective, and reasonable and **not** emotionally unstable (labile) likely to manifest the most delay
 - Girls who delay most are intelligent, competent, attentive, resourceful--missing in boys
 - Boys who delay most are shy, quiet, compliant, and anxious--missing among girls
- Two broader personality attributes
 - Ego control (AKA self-control or inhibition)
 - In both sexes kids that delayed the longest had high levels of ego control (as one would expect)
 - Ego resiliency (AKA healthy psychological adjustment)
 - In the girls only, ego resiliency, or adjustment, was also related to delay
 - The boys who delayed the most showed varying levels of psychological adjustment
- This difference may be because girls are taught in our society that they must learn self-control and delay of gratification, whereas boys don't receive this lesson

The many-trait approach—nature of delay

- Study that compared 2 different theoretical views of delay of gratification
 - 1st view--delay behavior as general tendency to inhibit impulses --**ego control**
 - 2nd view--delay as cognitive/intellectual **ability** to control impulses when necessary
- From **ego-control perspective**, delay might sometimes be by-product of tendency toward overcontrol and inhibition, which can lead a person to delay more than is good for them
- From **ability perspective**, delay is a flexible and adaptive skill of which person can't have too much--just like can't have too much intelligence
- Exp.: 14 y.o. offered the choice of being paid a small amount of money after each of several experiments, or being paid a single, larger lump sum after all sessions were over
- The results support elements of **both** views
- Adolescents who opted for the larger, delayed payment seem to have been smarter, more ambitious, **and** relatively inhibited and overcontrolled
- When a study uses rewards that are strongly desired (i.e. money) **and** gives the subjects something to gain by waiting then both ego control and intelligence will be related to delay
- When rewards are small and unexciting, delay is following instructions, and only intelligence matters
- When the rewards are great, an impulse must be kept in check and ego control will matter more and only those able to control their feelings will be able to delay
- Self-control implication
 - It's good to be able to wait for rewards when such waiting serves a useful purpose, but controlling oneself too much can cause needless self-denial of the pleasures of life

The many-trait approach –drug abuse

- One study looked at adolescents who were using illegal drugs by 14 y.o.
 - Almost a decade earlier they had been described with Q-sort items as being relatively restless and fidgety, emotionally unstable, disobedient, nervous, domineering, immature, aggressive, teasing, and susceptible to stress
 - These correlates imply that whatever the immediate effects of peer pressure and other external influences, adolescents most likely to use suffered from other significant problems that were visible years earlier
 - This implies that some of the effort to prevent drug abuse should be redirected away from campaigns such as “just say no” toward identifying and remedying the L-T problems and susceptibility to stress that underlie drug abuse

The many-trait approach--depression

- Women seriously depressed at 18 y.o. had been described at 7 y.o. by such Q-sort items as shy and reserved, oversocialized, self-punishing, and overcontrolled
- Men depressed at 18 y.o. were identified at 7 y.o. and even as early as 3 y.o. as unsocialized, aggressive, and undercontrolled
- This pattern implies that women become at risk for depression when they are overcontrolled and don't venture outside the box society has prepared for them
- For men, the risk factor is undercontrol
 - Unless they can somehow get control of their emotions and behavior they may be constantly in trouble and have difficulty finding a useful or comfortable niche in life
- Society's different expectations for women and men can affect their psychological development and physical health

The single-trait approach

- "Fishhook" approach looking at the nature, origins, and consequences of **single** traits of special importance
- 3 traits
 1. Authoritarianism
 - Hitler and Nazi Germany
 - Theorized to be a basis of racial prejudice and even fascism
 - People scared to make personal choices and so turn their will over to external authority (i.e. gov't or church) and take the comforting attitude that "I am just following orders"
 2. Conscientiousness
 - Predicting who will be productive employees
 3. Self-monitoring
 - Measures the relationship between inner reality (private self) and external reality (self presented to others)

The single-trait approach—California F (fascism) scale

- Measures antidemocratic orientation of political **pseudoconservatism**
 - Contradictions between acceptance of conventional values
 - I.e. authoritarians are deferential to/respectful of people with higher rank, but act the opposite way with anybody ranking lower
- Measures 9 facets of authoritarianism that together make up auth
 1. Conventionalism--unthinking, inflexible tendency to follow mainstream values
 2. Authoritarian submission--submissive to/uncritical of societally endorsed moral authorities
 3. Authoritarian aggression--want to punish those who don't obey authority
 4. Anti-"intraception"--aversion to looking w/in self and general suspiciousness of anything philosophical, humanistic, or subjective
 5. Superstition and stereotypy--believe fate is determined by mysterious, supernatural forces, combined with a tendency to think in rigid categories
 6. Power and toughness--fascination with the idea of bosses, power, and domination and awe of powerful individuals and institutions
 7. Destructiveness and cynicism--lack of faith in value of people + hostile attitude
 8. Projectivity--believe wild/dangerous things are going on in the world which were interpreted as an outward projection of their repressed impulses
 9. Sexual repression--concern with sexual issues, especially supposedly immoral things other people might be doing (Nazis intended to exterminate not only Jews, but also homosexuals)
 - Acquiescence response set--tendency to agree with statement regardless of content
 - Proposed that authoritarians will answer true to **any** statement, but others found that acquiescence is not the sole basis of authoritarianism b/c auth. is related to measures of prejudice and social behavior

The single-trait approach--conscientiousness

- Survey of employee qualities ranked in importance by employers found that 7/ top 8 were conscientiousness, integrity, trustworthiness, and other similar qualities
- Beyond observations of dress, can administer personality tests
 - These "integrity tests" measure qualities including responsibility, L-T job commitment, consistency, moral reasoning, hostility, work ethics, dependability, depression, energy level, and proneness to violence—all may boil down to 1 trait—conscientiousness
 - General conscientiousness may be a good **predictor** of job perf and also a **cause** of excellence
 - I.e. highly conscientious employees seek out opportunities to learn about the company they work for and acquire skills and knowledge beyond the present job—can lead to getting promoted
 - I.e. years of education can be used as a "signal" of conscientiousness
 - A person who has completed many years of education is likely high in conscientiousness

The single-trait approach—self-monitoring

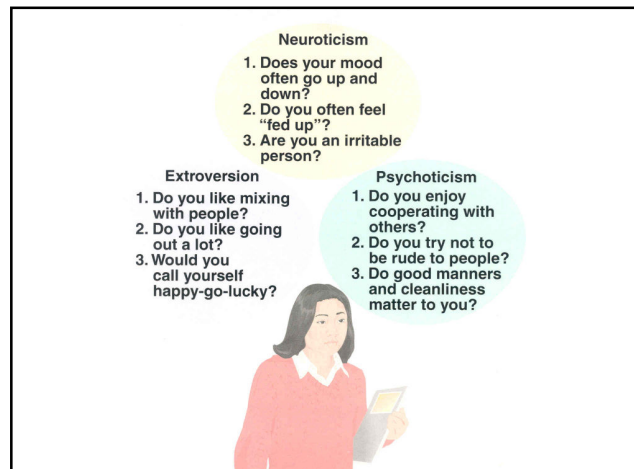
- High s-m analyze situation for cues about appropriate way to act & adjust behavior
 - Described as adaptable, flexible, popular, sensitive, able to fit in wherever **and** wishy-washy, two-faced, without integrity, slick
- Low s-m tend to be more consistent regardless of the situation b/c behavior is guided more by their inner personality
 - Described as self-directed, having integrity, consistent and honest **and** insensitive, inflexible, stubborn
- Pros and cons to both
- College students ave score between 12 and 14 (14+ high & 12- low)
- Original 25 item scale reduced to 18 items of a more pure measure of s-m
- More than 1,000 studies on s-m are based almost entirely on the 25 item scale vs. the 18 item scale

The essential trait

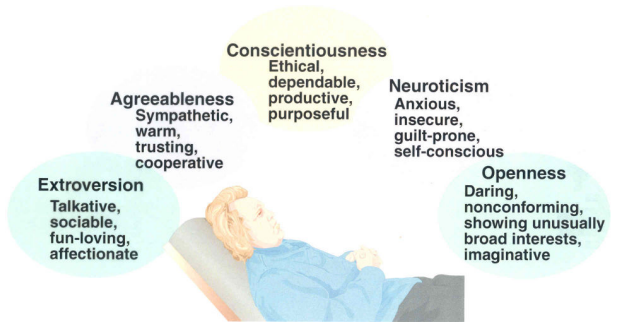
- Allport 17,953 traits in the dictionary→100→ “big 5” truly essential traits
- Reducing the many to the few
 - Murray (TAT) theorized 20 **needs** essential for understanding personality
 - Aggression, autonomy, exhibition, order, play, sex, etc.
 - Block’s theory of 2 essential characteristics of personality
 - Ego resiliency (general adjustment)
 - Ego control (impulse control)
 - Factor analysis—more empirical, logical—Cattell’s 16PF
 - Eysenck’s 3 traits (PEN model)
 - Extraversion, neuroticism (or unstable emotionality), psychoticism (blend of aggressiveness, creativity, and impulsiveness)
 - The Big 5
 - Factor analysis by McCrae and Costa, Goldberg (U of O), etc.

Eysenck’s 3 factor theory (PEN)

- Factor analysis, yielding only three factors:
 1. Introversion-Extraversion
 2. Neuroticism (stable-unstable)
 3. Psychoticism (vs. socialization)
 - Originally a two-factor theory; psychoticism added later
 - Psychoticism a lot like agreeableness + conscientiousness (Big 5)
- Biological underpinnings to all 3 traits



The Big 5 (Costa & McCrae)



The Big 5

1. Neuroticism
 2. Extraversion
 3. Openness
 4. Agreeableness
 5. Conscientiousness
- OCEAN
 - “Orthogonal” traits—getting a high or low score on any one of these traits implies nothing about the chances of getting a high or low score on any of the others
 - Tests of “integrity” were reduced into the single, Big 5 trait of conscientiousness
 - Multiple questionnaires that are supposed to assess happiness, well-being, and physical health correlate strongly (and negatively) with neuroticism (negative emotionality)
 - The higher the level of neuroticism, the more likely people are to report being unhappy, anxious, and even physically sick

The Big 5

- Sex differences have been found on 3 of Big 5
 - Women scored consistently higher than men in neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness
- The Big 5 are also associated with several different behaviors
 - Extraverts are consistently rated as more popular and more physically attractive than introverts (they also exercise more)
 - People high in conscientiousness get better grades and are seen as more honest
 - People high in openness to experience are more likely to play a musical instrument
 - Highly agreeable people are consistently found to smoke less

The Big 5

- The Big 5 are useful, but still controversial
 - One objection is that the Big 5 *do* seem to correlate with each other to some degree—in many samples people who score high on extraversion tend to score low on neuroticism—so it’s not clear that the Big 5 are “orthogonal” (separate and independent)
 - There is more to personality than just 5 traits
 - I.e. could summarize authoritarianism as a combo of high neuroticism, high conscientiousness, low openness, and low agreeableness, but that summary misses the essence of the construct
 - I.e. s-m could be recast as a combo of high extraversion and high agreeableness, but that summary also misses much

The Big 5

- Why 5? They may respond to 5 essential, universal questions people need to ask a stranger they are about to meet:
 1. Is X active and dominant or passive and submissive (Can I bully X or will X try to bully me?)—extraversion or surgency
 2. Is X agreeable (warm and pleasant) or disagreeable (cold and distant)?—agreeableness
 3. Can I count on X (Is X responsible and conscientious or undependable and negligent)?—conscientiousness
 4. Is X crazy (unpredictable) or sane (stable)?—neuroticism
 5. Is X smart or dumb (How easy will it be for me to teach X)?—openness (sometimes called "intellect")
- Are these universal questions?
- Personality questionnaires translated into various languages yielded at least 4/5 factors—all except openness
- The fact that the Big 5 traits keeps popping up no matter what measures are used or what populations are studied, have led these traits to be characterized as making up the essential "structure" of personality
 - The Big 5 are types of **traits**, not of people

Typological approaches to personality

1. The structure of personality traits **across** individuals is not the same thing as the structure of personality as it resides **within** people
2. It is possible that important differences between people are qualitative, not just quantitative
 - The trait approach usually characterizes all people on a common scale of measurement
 - You might score high on extraversion, and I might score low, but we are compared on the same scale
 - But what if some differences between people are matters not of degree but of kind?
 - If your extraversion is different from my shyness, then to summarize this difference by comparing our extraversion scores might be like comparing apples to oranges by giving both of them scores on "appleness" and concluding that oranges score lower
 - Snyder proposed that s-m is a type rather than a trait
 - People don't differ from one another in how high or low they are in s-m, but rather fall into one of two types, high or low
 - Your s-m score, in this interpretation, doesn't reflect how much s-m you have, but rather reflects the probability that you are in fact a high s-m

Typological approaches to personality

- Block used the Q-set 100 items to compare each person in his sample to every other person by correlating the 100 scores that characterized each of them
- He then examined the subgroups of people who resembled each other the most and gave them labels
- Block identified 5 personality types among male participants
 1. Ego-resilients—well adjusted and interpersonally effective
 2. Vulnerable overcontrollers—rigid, uptight, and maladjusted
 3. Unsettled overcontrollers—impulsive and antisocial
 4. Belated adjusters—maladjusted during childhood but functioning effectively in adulthood
 5. Anomic extraverts—well adjusted in childhood but maladjusted as adults
- This typology was found only among males who were almost all white, intelligent, and relatively affluent

Typological approaches to personality

- Across 7 different studies with varying participants all over the world, 3 basic types out of the 5 identified by Block show up repeatedly
 - Type I
 - Well-adjusted person
 - Adaptable, flexible, resourceful, and interpersonally successful
 - Type II
 - Maladjusted overcontrolling person
 - Too uptight for their own good, denying themselves pleasure needlessly, and being difficult to deal with at an interpersonal level
 - Type III
 - Maladjusted undercontrolling person
 - Too impulsive, prone to be involved in activities such as crime and unsafe sex, and tends to wreak general havoc on other people and on themselves
 - These types have received wide attention by researchers and have been found repeatedly in samples of participants in North America and Europe

Typological approaches to personality

- Keep 2 questions in mind about personality types
 1. Are different types of people **qualitatively** and not just quantitatively different from each other?
 - Are they different from each other in ways that conventional trait measurements can't capture?
 - The apple-vs.-orange issue
 - Knowing a person's personality type adds nothing to the ability to predict their behavior beyond what can be done by knowing how they stand on the traits that define the typology
 2. Is it useful to think about people in terms of personality types?
 - Yes, each personality type serves as a summary of how a person stands on a large number of personality traits
 - The adjusted, overcontrolled, and undercontrolled patterns in the **typology** all make it easy to think about how the **traits** within each **type** tend to be found together, and how they interact
 - **Types** may be useful in how they summarize "many **traits** in a single label" making it easier to think about psychological dynamics
 - Even though traits may add little for conventional psychometric purposes of measurement and prediction, they still may have value as aids in education and in theorizing

Where do traits come from? The question of development

- Personality development is the basis of the whole field of developmental psychology and it has no easy answers
- Individual differences
 - Personality traits describe ways in which people differ from each other, not ways in which they are all the same
 - So when looking for the source of a trait, must look for the influence that differs across individuals and can make one person turn out differently from another
 - I.e. hostile adult—not grew up in a hostile society
 - This would explain why all people in this society tend to be hostile, but **not** for explaining why one person is more hostile than another
 - He watched more violent tv as a child than others did

Where do traits come from? The question of development

- 3 kinds of influences can cause people to turn out differently
 1. The way a person was raised—parents' child-rearing practices and the childhood family environment
 - This influence may be stronger at the bad end than the good end: a truly terrible (or absent) set of parents or a pathological family situation
 - It's less certain that once these influences are "good enough" that it makes a difference whether have excellent parents or just good ones
 2. Early experiences that weren't shared with other family members ("non-shared" expts)—friends and others encountered outside the home, and the way one child may have been treated differently from another by their parents
 - Not all aspects of early experience are the same, even for siblings who grow up together
 - I.e. different friends and teachers than your siblings, and it's also likely parents treated each of you somewhat differently
 3. Genetic—personality is to some extent biologically inherited
 - For many personality traits, people are more similar to each other the more closely they're related biologically
 - Where does authoritarianism come from?
 - Kids typically take on the values of their parents and authoritarian parents tend to have punitive child-rearing styles
 - Parents and kids are genetically related and so parent-child similarities that seem to come from child-rearing patterns may really be due to genetic similarity
 - The auth scores of parents and their bio kids are correlated at about .40 and bio siblings scores are correlated to about .36
 - Adoptive parents and siblings are correlated between .00 and .14—some degree of genetic basis for auth
 - Better evidence is available that once a trait does begin to develop, people will tend to select themselves into environments that will strengthen that trait
 - Corresponsive principle
 - People enjoy experiences that are congruent with their personality traits because they seem validating and engaging
 - I.e. a budding authoritarian might join a group already dominated by authoritarians and find it validating which tends to increase their auth tendencies