Theories of Personality
Defining personality and traits

**Personality**
Distinctive and relatively stable pattern of behaviors, thoughts, motives, and emotions that characterizes a person throughout life

**Trait**
A characteristic of an individual, describing a habitual way of behaving, thinking, and feeling
Learning objectives

14.1 – Freud’s theory of the structure and development of personality

14.2 – Carl Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious

14.3 – The nature of the “objects” in the object-relations approach to personality

14.4 – Why many psychologists reject most psychodynamic ideas
Psychodynamic theories

Theories that explain behavior and personality in terms of unconscious energy dynamics within the individual

Psychoanalysis

A theory of personality and a method of psychotherapy developed by Sigmund Freud; it emphasizes unconscious motives and conflicts.
The structure of personality

**Id**
Operates according to the *pleasure principle*
Primitive, unconscious part of personality

**Ego**
Operates according to the *reality principle*
Mediates between id and superego

**Superego**
Moral ideals, conscience
Defense mechanisms

Methods used by the ego to prevent unconscious anxiety or threatening thoughts from entering consciousness

Repression
Projection
Displacement
Regression
Denial
Your turn

Your math instructor caught you with the textbook open during a test. Despite the fact that you know he knows you were cheating, you protest your innocence. This defense mechanism is:

1. Denial
2. Reaction formation
3. Regression
4. Displacement
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Personality development

Freud’s stages
Oral
Anal
Phallic
Latency
Genital

Fixation occurs when stages aren’t resolved successfully.
What do you know?

Freud’s stages of personality development are the id, ego, and superego.

A. True
B. False
Jungian theory

Collective unconscious
The universal memories, symbols, and experiences of the human kind, represented in the archetypes or universal symbolic images that appear in myths, art, stories, and dreams.

Archetypes
Universal, symbolic images that appear in myths, art, stories, and dreams; to Jungians, they reflect the collective unconscious.

Two important archetypes are maleness and femaleness, which Jung believed existed in both sexes.
The Object-Relations School

Emphasizes the importance of the infant’s first two years of life and the baby’s formative relationships, especially with their mother.

Emphasizes children’s needs for a powerful mother and to be in relationships.
Evaluating psychodynamic theories

Three scientific failings

Violating the principle of falsifiability

Drawing universal principles from the experiences of a few atypical patients

Basing theories of personality development on the retrospective accounts of adults
What do you know?

Freud rigorously followed the scientific method to develop his theory of personality structure and development.

A. True
B. False
Learning objectives

14.5 – Whether you can trust tests that tell you what “personality type” you are

14.6 – How psychologists can tell which personality traits are more central or important than others

14.7 – The five dimensions of personality that describe people the world over
Popular personality tests

**Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**

Popular in business, at motivational seminars, and with matchmaking services

Assigns people to one of 16 different types, depending on how the individual scores on the dimensions of introverted or extroverted, logical or intuitive

Low reliability

**Objective tests (inventories)**

Standardized questionnaires requiring written responses; they typically include scales on which people are asked to rate themselves.
Objective personality scales

Answer a series of questions about self
“
I am easily embarrassed” True or False
“I like to go to parties” True or False

Assumes that you can accurately report

No right or wrong answers

From responses, develop an account of you called a personality profile
Core personality traits

Openness to experience vs. resistance to new experience

Conscientiousness vs. impulsivity

Extroversion vs. introversion

Agreeableness vs. antagonism

Neuroticism vs. emotional stability
Which is correct?

John has a very messy dorm room, is always late for class, and can never find the notes he took in lecture. Which of the following best describes John’s personality?

A. Conscientious
B. Impulsive
What do you think?

There are drastic changes in an individual's personality as they progress through the life span.

A. True
B. False
Consistency and change in personality

![Graphs showing consistency and change in personality.](image)
Learning objectives

14.8 – Whether animals have “personalities” just as people do

14.9 – The extent to which temperamental and personality differences among people are influenced by genes

14.10 – Why people who have highly heritable personality traits are not necessarily stuck with them forever
What do you think?

Dinah, a Russian Blue cat, is very shy around strangers. Although she is exceptionally snuggly with her owner, she runs and hides any time she meets a new person. It appears that Dinah could best be described as an introverted cat.

A. True
B. False
Biology and animal traits

Evolutionarily adaptive for animals to vary in their ways of responding to the world and those around them.

Like humans, bears, dogs, pigs, hyenas, goats, cats, and of course primates have distinctive, characteristic ways of behaving that make them different from others in their species.

Evidence has been found for most of the Big Five factors in 64 different species, including the squishy squid.
Puppies and personality

Ongoing research at the Animal Personality Institute

For additional information go to: Animal Personality Institute
Heredity and temperament

Temperaments

Physiological dispositions to respond to the environment in certain ways

Present in infancy, assumed to be innate

Relatively stable over time

Includes

Reactivity
Soothability
Positive and negative emotionality
What do you think?

Your father is highly anxious and reactive. It is likely that your personality will be exactly the same as his.

A. True
B. False
Heredity and traits

Heritability
A statistical estimate of the proportion of the total variance in some trait that is attributable to genetic differences among individuals within a group

Heritability of personality traits is about 50%
Within a group of people, about 50% of the variation associated with a given trait is attributable to genetic differences among individuals in the group.

Genetic predisposition is not genetic inevitability.
What do you know?

If your parents are extraverted, there is a 50% chance that you will be as well.

A. True
B. False
Learning objectives

14.11 - How social-cognitive theory accounts for personality change

14.12 - The extent to which parents can—and can’t—influence their children’s personalities

14.13 - How your peers shape certain of your personality traits, and suppress others
Reciprocal determinism

Two-way interaction between aspects of the environment and aspects of the individual in the shaping of personality traits
Non-shared environment

Unique aspects of a person’s environment and aspects of the individual in the shaping of personality traits
What do you think?

The primary influence on the development of our personality is our parents.

A. True
B. False
The power of parents

The shared environment of the home has little influence on personality.

The non-shared environment is a more important influence.

Few parents have a single child-rearing style that is consistent over time and that they use with all children.

Even when parents try to be consistent, there may be little relation between what they do and how their children turn out.
The power of peers

Peers play a tremendous role in shaping our personality traits and behavior, causing us to emphasize some attributes or abilities and downplay others.

Our temperaments and dispositions also cause us to select particular peer groups (if they are available) instead of others, and our temperaments influence how we behave within the group.
Learning objectives

14.14 – How culture influences your personality, and even whether you think you have a stable one

14.15 – Why men in the South and West are more likely to get angry when insulted than other American men are

14.16 – How to appreciate cultural influences on personality without stereotyping
Culture, values, and traits

Culture

A program of shared rules that govern the behavior of members of a community or society

A set of values, beliefs, and attitudes shared by most members of that community
Culture, values, and traits

**Individualist cultures**
Cultures in which the self is regarded as autonomous, and individual goals and wishes are prized above duty and relations with others

**Collectivist cultures**
Cultures in which the self is regarded as embedded in relationships, and harmony with one’s group is prized above individual goals and wishes
Culture and traits

When culture is not appropriately considered, people attribute unusual behavior to personality.

Timeliness

Monochronic cultures: time is ordered sequentially, schedules and deadlines valued over people

Polychronic cultures: time is ordered horizontally, people valued over schedules and deadlines
What do you know?

Children in the U.S. are more egocentric and less altruistic than children in non-Western cultures.

A. True
B. False
What do you think?

Paul accidentally steps on Bob’s foot. Bob proceeds to call Paul an “idiotic moron.” Paul responds by punching Bob in the face. Where in the U.S. do you think Paul and Bob are from?

A. Northeast
B. Midwest
C. Southwest
D. None of the above
Aggressiveness

Emphasis on aggressiveness and vigilance in herding cultures, creates culture of honor.

Used to explain increased likelihood of fighting in the South and the West, versus the North and Midwest.
Aggression and cultures of honor

![Graphs showing percent change in cortisol and testosterone levels for Southern and Northern subjects in control and insult conditions.]
Evaluating cultural approaches

Cultural psychologists face the problem of how to describe cultural influences on personality without oversimplifying or stereotyping.

People vary according to their temperaments, beliefs, and learning histories, and this variation occurs within every culture.
Learning objectives

14.17 – How humanist approaches to personality differ from psychodynamic and genetic ones

14.18 – The contributions of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May to understanding our “inner lives”

14.19 – How your life story affects your personality—and vice versa

14.20 – How psychological scientists evaluate humanist views of personality
Abraham Maslow

Humanistic psychology
An approach that emphasizes personal growth, resilience, and the achievement of human potential

Peak experiences
Rare moments of rapture caused by the attainment of excellence or the experience of beauty

Self-actualization
Striving for a life that is meaningful, challenging, and satisfying
Your turn

You are on your way to a restaurant to meet some friends, and you are hungry. As you are walking from your car to the restaurant, you are looking forward to talking with your friends. Just then, you hear a gunshot. According to Maslow, your primary motivation would be determined by

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2. Your desire to converse with your friends
3. Your desire for safety
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Carl Rogers

Unconditional positive regard
A situation in which the acceptance and love one receives from significant others is unqualified

Conditional positive regard
A situation in which the acceptance and love one receives from significant others is contingent upon one’s behavior.
Rollo May

Shared with humanists the belief in free will and freedom of choice but also emphasized loneliness, anxiety, and alienation.

Existentialism

Free will confers on us responsibility for our actions.
Narrative approaches

Life narrative
The story that each of us develops over time to explain ourselves and make meaning of everything that has happened to us.

These stories are the essence of your personality, capturing everything that has happened to you and all the factors that affect your biology, psychology, and relationships.
Evaluating humanist and narrative approaches

Hard to operationally define many of the concepts

Added balance to the study of personality

Encouraged others to focus on “positive psychology”

Fostered new appreciation for resilience