# Personality 2013

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# Question:

## What is personality?

# According to dictionary.com:

## The visible aspect of one's character as it impresses others:

## *He has a pleasing personality.*

## A person as an embodiment of a collection of qualities:

## *He is a curious personality.*

## Psychology.

## the sum total of the physical, mental, emotional, and social characteristics of an individual.

## the organized pattern of behavioral characteristics of the individual.

## The quality of being a person; existence as a self-conscious human being; personal identity.

## The essential character of a person.

## Something apprehended as reflective of or analogous to a distinctive human personality, as the atmosphere of a place or thing:

## *This house has a warm personality.*

## A famous, notable, or prominent person; celebrity.

## Application or reference to a particular person or particular persons, often in disparagement or hostility.

## A disparaging or offensive statement referring to a particular person:

## *The political debate deteriorated into personalities.*

# Question:

## What *isn’t* personality?

# Standard psych definition:

## Characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and acting.

# Scope of the course

Cultural – Personal – Sub-personal

# Intersecting domains

## **Cultural Domain**

## Scaffolds our memory processes [**p**]

## Provides audience for our stories [**p**]

## Shapes sense of self [**p**]: autonomous, extended,

## Shapes our gender identity, body image.

## Source of morality: shame & guilt [**sub-p**] which influence the stories we tell [**p**] & our unconscious processes [**sub-p**]

## Shapes our sexual desires

## **Personal Domain** Narratives and sense of self shaped by sub-personal processes like:

## our impulses, emotions

## chronically accessible schemas regarding our own worth, likelihood to succeed, lovability

## **Personal Domain** Narratives and sense of self shaped by cultural processes like:

## Audience uptake

## Cultural expectations of our age, gender, cultural subgroup

# Broader Psych Dichotomies

## Nature vs Nurture – where does our personality come from? Are we born with it? Does it come more from the environment? Interactionist approach.

## Determinism vs Free Will – personality change as a possibility?

## Methodological Issues

### Nomothetic vs Idiographic Approach

### Explanation vs Prediction vs Description

### Collection of Traits vs Single Trait

### Generalities (eg. OCEAN) vs. Individual Differences (If-Then Contingencies)

### Self-Report vs Observation

## Normal vs Abnormal

## Conscious vs Unconscious

## Differences in Theoretical Perspectives

## Change vs Stability – state vs trait aspects of personality – how free are they to vary?

## Irrationality vs Rationality

# One of my colleagues once said

## **The big five:** that’s all there is to personality really….

## OCEAN: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism

## You’re going to hear a lot about them in a moment

## But no – that is NOT all there is

# Question

## Who do you think has charisma?

# Lindholm – Charisma (1990)

## Charisma offers

## "an ecstatic experience of self-transcendence through a relationship with a beloved other" (p.3).

## Lover finds the beloved to be:

## Magnetic

## Compelling

## Operating outside of the range of ordinary logic

## Special

## Extraordinary

## Remarkable in every way

# Views of charisma

## Historically Charisma was seen as

## “a gift of grace”

## Something that linked you to the universal

## An unknown source of power

## Beyond merely human power

## Uncanny power

# What’s uncanny?

## What does it mean?

# Uncanny – in-you-out-there

## When you feel turned inside out

## When something familiar,

## that is within you,

## *unique to you* –

## is found outside of you,

## in the world

# Uncanny – in-you-out-there

## Someone says something you feel no-one else could have known

## Something *already there* in your own unconscious

## It’s like they have seen right through you

## You feel a unique bond – even if you are in a crowd

# Before you know it

## You are saying – they are supernaturally right!

## But what does that have to do with personality?

## Everything.

## La Barre (1980) says

## ‘Charisma, which seems to be a 'supernatural rightness' streaming from the charismatic individual, is merely the **emotional welcomeness of his message**’ (1980, p.29).

# Charisma as uncanny power

## Charisma is something you give (or accord) to a person

## You see them as having it – or not

## It’s a lock and key fit

# Some attributes make it likely that you will accord charisma to those with those attributes:

## Courage to oppose the ordinary

## A certain freedom of libido

## An ‘explosive novelty’ of being that carries other people along with them…

# How?

# Charisma as skill – an ability

## To give voice to a message that’s right for the time in history

## To appeal to unspoken fears and longings

## To understand people enough to see into their hearts

## To carry them along so they are prepared to sacrifice:

## Labour

## Wealth

## Life itself

# Uncanny power

## Speak to what they think no-one else knows about them

## Deep fears

## Promise a resolution of those fears

## Solve the fears before they even have to admit to having them

# Feel merged with leader

## This makes people feel no longer separate

## If the leader knows what I am thinking – I must be part of her or him

## If s/he is divine or beyond death – then (as part of her or him) I will never die either…

# Feel merged with a group

## Part of something larger than oneself

# The message

## How it is said really matters

## Martin Luther King –

## *I have a dream*…

## [Civil rights activist, influenced by Gandhi’s non-violent opposition to foreign domination]

## “I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, **I still have a dream**. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream”.

## “**I have a dream** that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “… that all men are created equal."

# Charisma is good if…

## The leader’s personality can handle the worship of the followers

## If the leader stays focussed on something larger than self-interests

## If the right checks and balances are in place to limit power

# Idi Amin

## Sent his critics home in body bags to their wives

## Surrounded himself with yes-men

## Got a bit grandiose

# Idi Amin’s title [for himself]

## ‘His Excellency President for life…lord of all the beasts of the earth, and fishes of the sea, and conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in general and Uganda in particular’

# Dangerous to get what you want sometimes

## Narcissism: Leader’s Ego bulges with adoration

## Tyrant: Believe you are beyond the law

## Splitting – world of angels (us) & demons (them)

## (and we dump our own unconscious, shameful aspects of our own group onto the scapegoats as well)

# Lock & key fit

## Needs of follower – ideal hungry

## Needs of leader – mirror hungry

# Narcissism in leaders

## They see followers as means to an end

## Don’t see them as full humans in their own right

## Use and exploit them

## And do not set them free…

# Worthy of emulation

## It is one thing to have attributes that are worthy of others’ wanting to be like that too

## It is another thing to wish to have power over others

# Many wish to have power

## Psychopaths – callous unemotional power because they don’t have the full range of feelings

## Machiavellians – cynically manipulate you by flattery & by appealing to the worst in you

## Narcissists – to get from you the adoration they felt they missed out on

# Charisma is a true test

## Like fame – it tests the personality of those who have it – many don’t pass the test

## The society challenged by it

## The independence of mind of those who follow

# Today’s focus

## Traits

## Many think this is ‘what personality is’

## The big five

## The EPQ (Eysenck Personality Questionnaire)

## Tellegen’s MPQ (Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire)

## Very useful measures, but assessing a very small part of personality.

# The scales

## The five factor model: OCEAN

## Tellegen’s MPQ: PA, NA and Constraint

## EPQ: Extraversion-Introversion, Emotional instability, Psychoticism

# Examples of some MPQ items

## 7. If people criticize me, I usually point out their own weaknesses. (a) true (b) false

## The best way to achieve a peaceful world is to improve people's morals. (a) true (b) false

## I often keep working on a problem even if I am very tired. (a) true (b) false

## Of the following two situations, I would like least: (a) Running a steam presser in a laundry for two weeks (b) Being caught in a blizzard.

# Traits – what are they?

## Tellegen (1991) traits are inferred from behaviours and are the basis for inference to other behaviours

## Pervin suggests that a trait is 'a disposition to behave expressing itself in consistent patterns of functioning across a range of situations' (Pervin, 1996)

## He argues that:

#### no trait will manifest itself regardless of situation

#### it is a disposition to respond

# Sub-personal domain: Traits

## Traits are **descriptive** units of personality

## Defined as a predisposition to respond

## In most studies they are self-reports about what a person **believes he or she would do** in a given context

## Self-reports are powerfully shaped by a person’s frame of reference

# Frames of reference

## Trait endorsements are influenced by:

## observing one's own behaviour

## what one would like to believe one is (i.e. Self-deceptive enhancement)

## what one claims publicly to be (impression management & associated cognitive dissonance)

## the roles one comes habitually to play in social situations

## what others say one is (reflected appraisals)

## what we believe admired others would like us to be

## current mood

## current view of our past

## one’s folk theory of personality

# What are we exploring when we use self-report as an assessment?

## A person’s personality?

## Or what s/he thinks about her/his personality?

## Folk Psychology or scientific psychology?

## Tellegen (1993) notes that we need to distinguish between

## 'natural language constructs' – folk concepts or common sense ideas or folk wisdom concerning personality shared within a culture

## Psychological constructs – scientific concepts advanced to describe or explain phenomena

## Both are worthy of investigation, but they are conceptually distinct.

# Assessment Issues

## **Issue of validity**

## when we use numbers to represent a person's response we assume that the numbers mean the same thing for different people at different times

## if you don't specify the frame of reference, numbers might mean different things

## ->not measuring consistently (reliability)

## not measuring what you think you are (validity)

## Dangerous slippage between what you take the numbers to mean and what the person filling out the form takes them to mean

## Methods can impose a lot on your data. Important distinction to be made between imposed structure and discovered structure.

## Likert scales:

## impose dimensionality

## Factor analysis:

## imposes hierarchy on you data

## simplifies your data

## can do a factor analysis of your factors and so on

## ->hierarchical structure

## traits derived on inductive basis from factor analysis which

## simplifies large data structures

## Drawback of factor analysis

## labelling of factors highly subjective

## can rotate factors in all sorts of ways until get the desired solution

## can limit factor number

## one atypical act gets treated as a residual eg. one act of violence in an otherwise passive person (Wiggins, 1973), yet important if going to Antarctica with this person

## much disagreement over how many factors to describe personality adequately

# Disagreement - how many factors to describe personality?

## Those who say 3: Eysenck (1990) Gray (1987) Tellegen ('85, '91), Zuckerman ('88)

## Those who say 7: (Tellegen, 1993)

# Is personality just a matter of traits?

## Traits describe rather than explain.

## To assume that everything about personality can be assessed by descriptive trait questionnaires is to assume that:

## self-report is a valid way of assessing traits

## The structure provided by stats is the only structure we need to know about

## There is nothing important to personality that a person cannot report on when directly asked

## **Traits and motives are different**

## despite impressive efforts to link the two (Costa & McCrae, 1988) they are fundamentally different notions

# Murray’s motives:

## Murray dissociated himself from trait point of view

## for him the trait concept too concerned with consistent patterns of overt behaviour

## neglecting needs that might not be expressed overtly

## Motives may or may not be expressed

## may combine in complex ways

## may conflict

# **Disconfirming evidence**

## if use one trait model as the ordering schema of other trait questionnaires, need to be very careful to take seriously any sign of disconfirming evidence. eg an item which loads highly on more than one factor (as in the FFM attempt to assimilate Murray's personality report form (the PRF) to a five factor solution)

## the motive items like ***submission*** and ***dominance***, loaded significantly on three factors

## this is not a clean factor structure

# Do trait ratings reflect our actual behaviour?

## **Problems here for the five factor model:**

## predictive power not good (correlations between C and job performance .20 - .22)

## dispute as to whether A or C predicts job performance

## issue of self report data

## easy to fake good for job

## no lie scale

## frame of reference issue mentioned above

## **What underpins traits?**

## genetics, heritability demonstrated for E and N

## Need more levels of explanation than the factor analysis and an appeal to DNA

## Tellegen has done many twin studies over the years.

## Eysenck recognised the importance of explanation as well as description & suggested possible underpinning biological mechanisms over the years

## the ARAS (Ascending Reticular Activating System)

## the limbic system

## the cortex

## but no conclusive findings

# Sub-personal domain: Traits

## Descriptive units of personality

## McAdams (1992) calls trait psychology – the psychology of the stranger

## It provides information you would like to know if you knew nothing about a person

## It doesn’t portray the dynamic aspects of personality

## Trait psychology doesn’t explain how or why a person came to act in a particular way

## Too simple to assume that traits have a constant impact on behaviour

## Traits have to be activated in a given context

# Interactionism

## What kinds of input from the environment is a particular personality sensitive to?

## How does personality shape the outcomes in response to these inputs? i.e. how does personality help us to adapt or not?

# Two faces of adaption

## Adaption, **from a psychological point of view**, refers to negotiating the current environment (adaption is always relative to environment)

## Certain personality traits imply an ineffective negotiation of life tasks:

## Neuroticism (Eysenck, 1953)

## Emotional Instability (Norman, 1963 – his factors are identical to the five factor model!)

## Trait Anxiety (Spielberger, 1972)

## Central to any taxonomy of personality:

## high levels of subjective distress

## intra-psychic discomfort

## large fluctuations in mood or affect

## relative inability to terminate negative subjective states

# Two faces of adaption

## Adaption, biologically defined, sounds a bit different – 'effectiveness with which reproductive problems are solved‘

## This provides a biologically anchored meaning of adjustment [and a highly partial one]

# Unexpected predictive power of inhibition as an adaptive ability

## 1976 – Walter Mischel tested 4 year olds to see whether they could wait 15 minutes before eating marshmallows

## He didn’t ask for self-report – he just observed

# Findings

## 30% of children able to successfully delay gratification

## 1981 – Follow-up questionnaire sent out to parents/teachers/academic advisors of 653 Ss

## Low-delayers – more likely to have behavioural problems, obtained lower SAT scores, had difficulty paying attention, struggled in stressful situations, had trouble maintaining friendships

## High-delayers – SAT scores 210 points higher, on average, than child who could only wait 30 seconds

## Allocation of attention and tolerance of emotional states underlies inhibition of behaviour

## Mischel – “If you can deal with hot emotions, then you can study for the S.A.T. instead of watching television. And you can save more money for retirement. It’s not just about marshmallows.”