

Chapter 4: Personality

Imagine you are filling out a dating profile. When you are asked to describe yourself, do you include characteristics such as extroverted/introverted, down-to-earth, adventurous, laid back, etc.? Do you discuss the things that are important to you, such as being an honest person, loyalty, speaking up for yourself, being respectful? What about a job interview, do you use descriptors such as hard working, punctual, efficient? Questions such as these on a dating profile or in a job interview are attempting to reveal aspects of your personality. Personality has been a major topic and research area of modern psychology since the early 20th century. Having a good understanding of your own personality is beneficial to how you interact with others.

To further build upon our foundation for understanding human relations we will now examine the role that our personality plays and the personalities of others in our personal and professional experiences. In this chapter you will explore various theoretical perspectives of personality, major trait theories of personality, how values, behaviors, and attitudes affect the workplace, and the influence of culture on personality. To begin, we will look at the definition of personality and the various theoretical perspectives of personality.

4.1 Introduction to Personality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define personality.
- Compare and contrast Psychodynamic, Learning and Cognitive, Biological, Inherent Drives, and Sociocultural factors that influence personality.

When you first think of personality, what comes to mind? When we refer to certain people as being “personalities,” we usually mean they are famous, people like movie stars or your favorite band. When we describe a person as having “lots of personality,” we usually mean they are outgoing and fun-loving, the kind of person we like to spend time with. But does this tell us anything about personality itself? Although we may think we have an understanding of what personality is, professional psychologists always seek to move beyond what people think they know in order to determine what is actually real or at least as close to real as we can come. In the pursuit of truly understanding personality, however, many personality theorists seem to have been focused on a particularly Western cultural approach that owes much of its history to the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud (Figure 4.1).

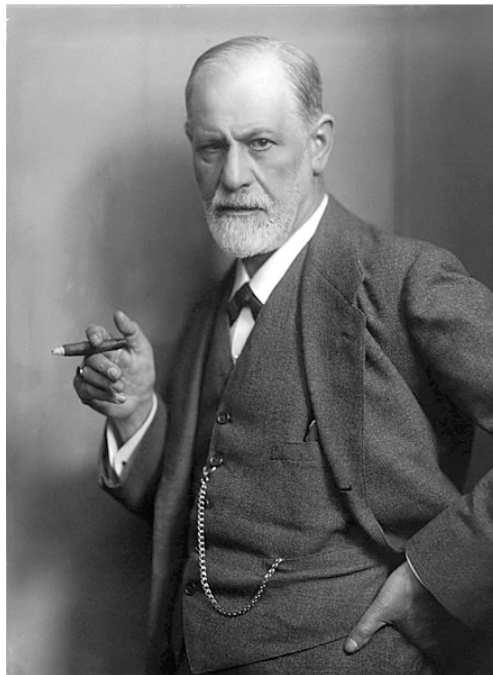


Figure 4.1 Sigmund Freud (cropped).
[Sigmund Freud](#) – [Max Halberstadt](#) – [Public Domain](#)

Freud trained as a physician with a strong background in biomedical research. He naturally brought his keen sense of observation, a characteristic of any good scientist, into his psychiatric practice. As he worked with his patients, he developed a distinctly medical model: identify a problem, identify the cause of the problem, and treat the patient accordingly. This approach can work quite well, and it has worked wonderfully for medical science, but it has two main weaknesses when applied to the study of personality. First, it fails to address the complexity and uniqueness of individuals, and second, it does not readily lend itself to describing how one chooses to develop a healthy personality.

Quite soon in the history of personality theory, however, there were influential theorists who began to challenge Freud's perspective. Alfred Adler, although a colleague of Freud's for a time, began to focus on social interest and an individual's style of life. Karen Horney challenged Freud's perspective on the psychology of women, only to later suggest that the issue was more directly related to the oppression of women as a minority, rather than a fundamental difference based on gender. And there were Carl Jung and Carl Rogers, two men profoundly influenced by Eastern philosophy. Consequently, anyone influenced by Jung or Rogers has also been influenced, in part, by Eastern philosophy. What about the rest of the world? Have we taken into account the possibility that there are other, equally valuable and interesting perspectives on the nature of people? Many fields in psychology have made a concerted effort to address cross-cultural issues. By the end of this chapter, you will have a broad understanding of the field of personality, and an appreciation for both what we have in common and what makes us unique, as members of our global community.

Definition and Descriptions of Personality

Personality refers to the long-standing traits and patterns that propel individuals to consistently think, feel, and behave in specific ways. Our personality is what makes us unique individuals. Each person has an idiosyncratic pattern of enduring, long-term characteristics and a manner in which they interact with other individuals and the world around them. Our personalities are thought to be long term, stable, and not easily changed. The word *personality* comes from the Latin word *persona*. In the ancient world, a *persona* was a mask worn by an actor (Figure 4.2). While we tend to think of a mask as being worn to conceal one's identity, the theatrical mask was originally used to either represent or project a specific personality trait of a character. But are our personalities just masks? Freud certainly considered the unconscious mind to be very important, Cattell considered source traits to be more important than surface traits, and Buddhists consider the natural world (including the self) to be an illusion. Adler believed the best way to examine personality is to look at the person's style of life, and Rogers felt that the only person who could truly understand you is yourself. In order to better understand how some of the different disciplines within the field of psychology contribute to our

definition of personality, let's take a brief look at some of the widely recognized factors that come into play.

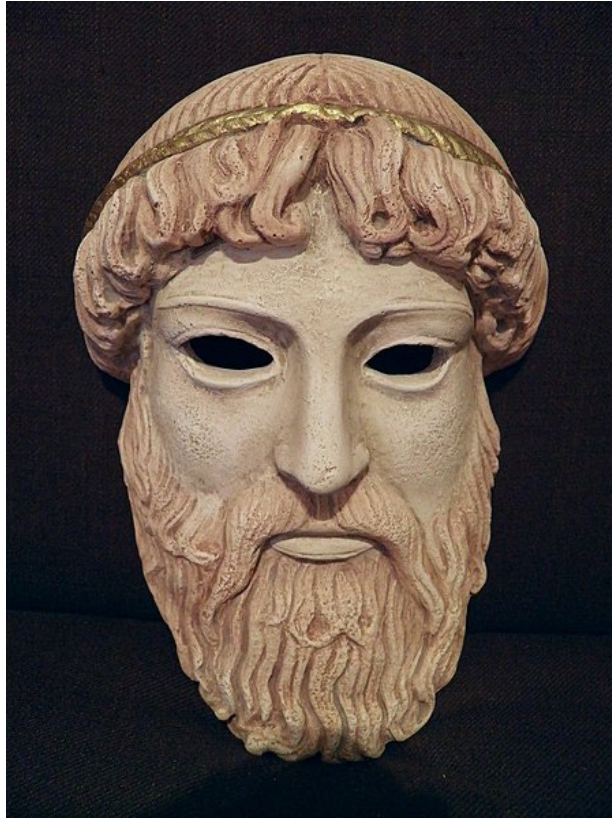


Figure 4.2 Ancient Greek theatrical mask of Zeus, replica. [Ancient Greek theatrical mask of Zeus, replica](#) – [Carole Raddato](#) - [CC-BY-SA 2.0](#)

Psychodynamic Factors

The very word “psychodynamic” suggests that there are ongoing interactions between different elements of the mind. Sigmund Freud not only offered names for these elements (id, ego, and superego), he proposed different levels of consciousness. Since the unconscious mind was very powerful according to Freud, one of the first and most enduring elements of psychodynamic theory is that we are often unaware of why we think and act the way we do. Add to that the belief that our personality is determined in early childhood, and you can quickly see that psychological problems would be very difficult to treat. Perhaps more importantly, since we are not aware of many of our own thoughts and desires, it would be difficult or even impossible for us to choose to change our personality no matter how much we might want to.

Most psychodynamic theorists since Freud have expanded the influences that affect us to include more of the outside world. Those theorists who remained loyal to Freud, typically known as neo-Freudians, emphasized the ego. Since the ego functions primarily in the real world, the individual must take into account the influence of other people involved in their lives. Some theorists who differed significantly from the traditional Freudian

perspective, most notably Alfred Adler and Karen Horney, focused much of their theories on cultural influences. Adler believed that social cooperation was essential to the success of each individual (and humanity as a whole), whereas Horney provided an intriguing alternative to Freud's sexist theories regarding women. Although Horney based her theories regarding women on the cultural standing between men and women in the Victorian era, to a large extent her theory remains relevant today.

Learning and Cognitive Factors

As a species, human beings are distinguished by their highly developed brains. Animals with less-developed nervous systems rely primarily on instinctive behavior, but very little on learning. While the study of animals' instinctive behavior is fascinating, and led to a shared Nobel Prize for the ethologists Nikolaas Tinbergen, Konrad Lorenz, and Karl von Frisch, animal behavior remains distinctly limited compared to the complex learning and cognitive tasks that humans can readily perform (Beck, 1978; Gould, 1982). Indeed, the profound value of our abilities to think and learn may be best reflected in the fact that, according to Tinbergen's strict definition of instinct (see Beck, 1978), humans appear not to have any instinctive behavior anymore. Yet we have more than made up for it through our ability to learn, and learning theory and behaviorism became dominant forces in the early years of American psychology (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3 We rely heavily on our ability to learn, rather than instincts. [Girls in School Afghanistan](#) – [Wikimages](#) – [Pixabay License](#)

John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner are among the most famous and influential of American psychologists. Learning about their groundbreaking research on classical and operant conditioning is standard fare in psychology courses. More recently, Albert Bandura has enjoyed similar popularity and respect in the field of social learning theory. Anyone who has children knows full well how eagerly they observe us and mimic our actions and speech. An important aspect of the learning perspective is that our personalities may

develop as a result of the rewards and/or punishments we receive from others. Consequently, we should be able to shape an individual's personality in any way we want. Early behaviorists, like Watson, suggested that they could indeed take any child and raise them to be successful in any career they chose for them. Although most parents and teachers try to be a good influence on children, and to set good examples for them, children are often influenced more by their peers. What children find rewarding may not be what parents and teachers think is rewarding. This is why a social-cognitive approach to learning becomes very important in understanding personality development. Social-cognitive theorists, like Bandura, recognize that children interact with their environment, partly determining for themselves what is rewarding or punishing, and then react to the environment in their own unique way.

As suggested by the blend of behaviorism and cognition that Bandura and others proposed, there is a close association between behaviorism and the field of cognitive psychology. Although strict behaviorists rejected the study of unobservable cognitive processes, the cognitive field has actually followed the guidelines of behaviorism with regard to a dispassionate and logical observation of the expression of cognitive processes through an individual's behavior and what they say. Thus, the ability of human beings to think, reason, analyze, anticipate, etc., leads them to act in accordance with their ideas, rather than simply on the basis of traditional behavioral controls: reward, punishment, or associations with unconditional stimuli. The success of the cognitive approach when applied to therapy, such as the techniques developed by Aaron Beck, has helped to establish cognitive theory as one of the most respected areas in the study of personality and abnormal psychology.

Biological Factors

Although humans may not exhibit instinctive behavior, we are still ultimately a product of our biological makeup, our specific DNA pattern. Our individual DNA pattern is unique, unless we happen to be an identical twin, and it not only provides the basis for our learning and cognitive abilities, it also sets the conditions for certain aspects of our character. Perhaps the most salient of these characteristics is **temperament**, which can loosely be described as the emotional component of our personality. In addition to temperament, twin studies have shown that all aspects of personality appear to be significantly influenced by our genetic inheritance (Bouchard, 1994; Bouchard & McGue, 1990; Bouchard et al., 1990) (Figure 4.4). Even such complex personality variables as well-being, traditionalism, and religiosity have been found to be highly influenced by our genetic make-up (Tellegen et al., 1988; Waller et al., 1990).

Sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists also emphasize the role of genetics and adaptation over time. Sociobiologists consider how biological factors influence social behavior. For example, they would suggest that men are inclined to prefer multiple sexual partners because men are biologically capable of fathering many children,

whereas women would be inclined to favor one successful and established partner, because a woman must physically invest a year or more in each child (a 9-month pregnancy followed by a period of nursing). Similarly, evolutionary psychologists consider how human behavior has been adaptive for our survival. Humans evolved from plant-eating primates; we are not well suited to defend ourselves against large, meat-eating predators. As a group, however, and using our intellect to fashion weapons from sticks and rocks, we were able to survive and flourish over time. Unfortunately, the same adaptive influences that guide the development of each healthy person can, under adverse conditions, lead to dysfunctional behaviors, and consequently, psychological disorders (Millon, 2004).

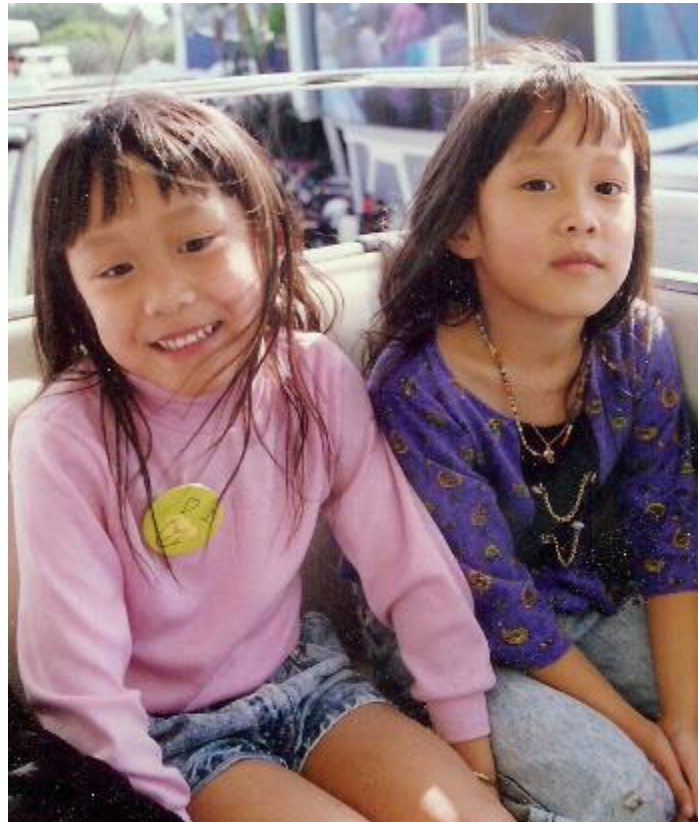


Figure 4.4 Twins studies examine the influence of heredity and environment on personality among other aspects of human development. [Twin Girls](#) – [Michaelee](#) – [Public Domain](#)

Inherent Drives

Freud believed that we are motivated primarily by psychosexual impulses, and secondarily by our tendency toward aggression. Certainly, it is necessary to procreate for the species to survive, and elements of aggression are necessary for us to get what we need and to protect ourselves. But this is a particularly dark and somewhat animalistic view of humanity. The humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow believed in a positive view of people, they proposed that each of us contains an inherent

drive to be the best that we can be, and to accomplish all that we are capable of accomplishing. Rogers and Maslow called this drive **self-actualization**. Interestingly, this concept is actually thousands of years old, and having spent time in China, Rogers was well aware of Buddhist and Yogic perspectives on the self.

Somewhat related to the humanistic concept of self-actualization, is the existential perspective. Existential theorists, like Rollo May, believe that individuals can be truly happy only when they find some meaning in life. In Eastern philosophical perspectives, coming from Yoga and Buddhism, meaning in life is found by realizing that life is an illusion, that within each of us is the essence of one universal spirit. Indeed, Yoga means “union,” referring to union with God. Thus, we have meaning within us, but the illusion of our life is what distracts us from realizing it.

Sociocultural Influences

Culture can broadly be defined as “everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society” (Ferraro, 2006a), and appears to be as old as the *Homo* genus itself (the genus of which we, as *Homo sapiens*, are the current representatives; Haviland et al., 2005). Culture has also been described as the memory of a society (see Triandis & Suh, 2002). Culture is both learned and shared by members of a society, and it is what makes the behavior of an individual understandable to other members of that culture.

Everything we do is influenced by culture, from the food we eat to the nature of our personal relationships, and it varies dramatically from group to group. What makes life understandable and predictable within one group may be incomprehensible to another. Despite differences in detail, however, there are a number of cultural universals, those aspects of culture that have been identified in every cultural group that has been examined historically or ethnographically (Murdock, 1945; see also Ferraro, 2006a). Therefore, if we truly want to understand personality theory, we need to know something about the sociocultural factors that may be the same, or that may differ, between groups.

In 1999, Stanley Sue proposed that psychology has systematically avoided the study of cross-cultural factors in psychological research. This was not because psychologists themselves are biased, but rather, it was due to an inherent bias in the nature of psychological research (for commentaries see also Tebes, 2000; Gyll & Madon, 2000; and Sue, 2000). Although some may disagree with the arguments set forth in Sue’s initial study, it is clear that the vast majority of research has been conducted here in America, primarily by American college professors studying American psychology students. And the history of our country clearly identifies most of those individuals, both the professors and the students, as White, middle- to upper-class men. The same year, Lee et al. (1999) brought together a collection of multicultural perspectives on personality, with the individual chapters written by a very diverse group of authors. In both the preface and their introductory chapter, the editors emphasize that neither human nature nor personality can be separated from culture. And yet, as suggested by Sue (1999), they

acknowledge the general lack of cross-cultural or multicultural research in the field of personality.

Times have begun to change, however. In 2002, the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted a policy entitled "[Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists](#)". The year 2002 also saw a chapter in the prestigious *Annual Review of Psychology* on how culture influences the development of personality (Triandis & Suh, 2002). In a fascinating article on whether psychology actually matters in our lives, former APA president and renowned social psychologist Philip Zimbardo (2004) identified the work of Kenneth and Mamie Clark on prejudice and discrimination, which was presented to the United States Supreme Court during the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* case (which led to the end of school segregation in America) as one of the most significant impacts on American life that psychology has contributed to directly (see also Benjamin & Crouse, 2002; Keppel, 2002; Pickren & Tomes, 2002) (Figure 4.5). Finally, an examination of *American Psychologist* (the principle journal of APA) and *Psychological Science* (the principle journal of the American Psychological Society) since the year 2000 reveals studies demonstrating the importance of cross-cultural research in many areas of psychology. So, although personality theorists, and the field of psychology in general, have been somewhat slow to address cross-cultural and diversity issues, in more recent years psychologists appear to be rapidly gaining a greater appreciation of the importance of studying human diversity in all its forms.



Figure 4.5 Linda Brown Smith, Ethel Louise Belton Brown, Harry Briggs, Jr., and Spottswood Bolling, Jr. during press conference at Hotel Americana. [Plaintiffs in Brown vs. Board of Education 10 years later – Al Ravenna – Public Doman](#)

One of the primary goals of this chapter is to incorporate different cultural perspectives into our study of personality theory, to take more of a global perspective than has traditionally been done. Why is this important? The United States of America has less than 300 million people. India has nearly 1 billion people, and China has over 1 billion people. So, two Asian countries alone have nearly 7 times as many people as the United States. How can we claim to be studying personality if we have not taken into account the vast majority of people in the world? Of course, we have not entirely ignored these two particular countries, because two of the most famous personality theorists spent time in these countries when they were young. Carl Jung spent time in India, and his theories were clearly influenced by ancient Vedic philosophy, and Carl Rogers spent time in China while studying to be a minister. So, it is possible to draw connections between Yoga, Buddhism, psychodynamic theory, and humanistic psychology. Sometimes this will involve looking at differences between cultures, and other times it will focus on similarities. At the end of this chapter, you will have gained a sense of the diversity of personality and personality theory, and the connections that tie all of us together.

Some Basic Questions Common to All Areas of Personality Theory

In addition to the broad perspectives described above, there are a number of philosophical questions that help to bring the nature of personality into perspective. Thinking about how these questions are answered by each theory can help us to compare and contrast the different theories.

Is our personality inherited, or are we products of our environment?

This is the classic debate on nature vs. nurture. Are we born with a given temperament, with a genetically determined style of interacting with others, certain abilities, with various behavioral patterns that we cannot even control? Or are we shaped by our experiences, by learning, thinking, and relating to others? Many psychologists today find this debate amusing, because no matter what area of psychology you study, the answer is typically both. We are born with a certain range of possibilities determined by our DNA. We can be a certain height, have a certain IQ, be shy or outgoing, we might be Black, Asian, White or Hispanic, etc. because of who we are genetically. However, the environment can have a profound effect on how our genetic make-up is realized. For example, a child with both parents over six feet in height, will likely have inherited genes to also be over six feet in height. However, while the child was growing up, their family was very poor and they were malnourished, stunting their growth. The end result might be that this child is several inches shorter than their parents. Our genetic make-up provides a range of possibilities for our life, and the environment in which we grow determines where exactly we fall within that range.

Are we unique, or are there common types of personality?

Many people want to believe that they are special and truly unique, and they tend to reject theories that try to categorize individuals. However, if personality theories were unique to each person, we could never possibly cover all of the theories. In order to understand and compare people, personality theorists need to consider that there are common aspects of personality. It is up to each of us to decide whether we are still willing to find what is unique and special about each separate person.

Which is more important, the past, present, or future?

Many theorists, particularly psychodynamic theorists, consider personality to be largely determined at an early age. Similarly, those who believe strongly in the genetic determination of personality would consider many factors set even before birth. But what prospects for growth does this allow, can people change or choose a new direction in their life? Cognitive and behavioral theorists focus on specific thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors that are influencing our daily lives, whereas existential theorists search for meaning in our lives. Other theorists, such as the humanists and those who favor the spiritually-oriented perspectives we will examine, consider the future to be primary in our goals and aspirations. Self-actualization is something we can work toward. Indeed, it may be an inherent drive.

Do we have free will, or is our behavior determined?

Although this question seems similar to the previous one, it refers more to whether we consciously choose the path we take in life as compared to whether our behavior is specifically determined by factors beyond our control. We already mentioned the possibility of genetic factors above, but there might also be unconscious factors and stimuli in our environment. Certainly, humans rely on learning for much of what we do in life, so why not for developing our personalities? Though some students do not want to think of themselves as simply products of reinforcement and punishment (i.e., operant conditioning) or the associations formed during classical conditioning (anyone have a phobia?), what about the richness of observational learning? Still, exercising our will and making sound choices seems far more dignified to many people. Is it possible to develop our will, to help us make better choices and follow through on them? Yes, according to William James, America's foremost psychologist. James considered our will to be of great importance, and he included chapters on the will in two classic books; *Psychology: Briefer Course*, published in 1892 and *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*, which was published in 1899. James not only thought about the importance of the will, he recommended exercising it.

Summary

- Personality refers to the long-standing traits and patterns that propel individuals to consistently think, feel, and behave in specific ways. Our personality is what makes us unique individuals.
- A wide variety of theoretical perspectives influence how psychologists view personality, including psychodynamic factors, learning/cognitive factors, biological factors, inherent drives, and sociocultural influences.
- The various personality theories also address questions related to nature vs. nurture, whether individuals are unique or whether there are types of personality common to all people, the relative importance of the past, present, and future, and the significance of free will.

Discussion Questions

1. How similar or different, is your personality to your parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.? Do you think that your environment (community, friends, media, etc.) have been more influential to your personality than your genetics?
2. Do you feel that you are driven to accomplish something great, or to find some particular meaning in life? Do you believe that there might be pathways to guide you, such as spiritual or religious pathways?
3. Do you notice cultural differences around you every day, or do you live in a small community where everyone is very much the same? What sort of challenges do you face as a result of cultural differences, either because you deal with them daily or because you have little opportunity to experience them?

Remix/Revisions Featured in this Section

- Small editing revisions to tailor the content to the Psychology of Human Relations course.
- Changed formatting for photos to provide links to locations of images and CC licenses.
- Added doi links to references to comply with APA 7th edition formatting reference manual.

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4.2 Culture and Personality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe how culture and society influence personality.
- Compare and contrast how various cultural factors affect personality.

In this section, we will examine some of the issues that arise when examining personality development in a sociocultural context. The United States, Canada, and Western Europe represent only about one tenth of the world's population. Thus, it is essential that we consider the influence of different cultures around the world if we are going to claim that we have really examined human personality in all its variations.

The Influence of Culture and Society on Personality

Many psychology textbooks mention a few famous anthropologists, such as Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, whose research included work on child development and personality. However, less well-known in the field of psychology is the renowned anthropologist Ralph Linton, who paid particular attention to personality development in relation to culture and society. Linton also collaborated with Abram Kardiner, a founding member of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute (and who was analyzed by Sigmund Freud himself in 1921-1922). Linton and Kardiner freely acknowledged the connections between anthropology and psychology, noting the influence of Benedict and Mead, Franz Boas (recognized as the father of American anthropology and mentor to both Benedict and Mead), and the psychoanalysts Anna Freud, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Wilhelm Reich (Kardiner, 1939; Kardiner, Linton, DuBois, & West, 1945; Kardiner & Preble, 1961).

Linton described personality as existing on three levels. First, personality can be described based on either its content or its organization. The organization, furthermore, can be examined in terms of its superficial organization or its central organization. The central organization of personality gives the whole personality its distinctive character, and includes the most invariant aspects of personality, such as the degree of introversion/extraversion, or other aspects of temperament (Linton, 1936, 1945). Although these temperamental attributes are present at birth, they do not comprise personality per se. The superficial organization of personality, however, is based on the goals and interests of the individual, and incorporates the individual's experiences in life within the context of the central organization. In this regard, the superficial organization should not be confused with something transient or insignificant. It is "superficial" only in the sense that it is on the surface of the personality, and the goals and interests of the person are

based on the content of personality that represents their life experiences as they are organized within the personality. The goals and interests themselves, which incorporate the content of personality, are determined almost entirely by the culture in which the individual is raised. According to Linton (1936), the process of integrating the individual's experience within the context of one's temperament (or "constitutional qualities") forms a "mutually adjusted, functional whole."

A critical question, of course, is whether cultural experiences can affect the central organization. Linton (1936, 1945, 1955) believed that no matter how an individual receives the cultural characteristics of their society, they are likely to internalize them, a process known as **enculturation**. One of the main reasons that enculturation is so influential in every aspect of the person's being, is that it pervades every aspect of the society in which the person lives. Thus, even someone who is considered a rebel, most likely exists within a range of rebellion that is possible within that particular culture. This is directly related to the apparent reality that cultures do give rise to certain types of personalities. Making the matter even more complicated, or simpler depending on one's perspective, is the role of status within a culture. Thus, although a given culture or society, or one's own temperament, may influence personality in one direction, a particular social class might influence personality in a different direction. An individual born into a given class, whose personal constitution does not fit that class, may develop what Linton called a **status personality**, i.e., a persona that fits with society's expectations for the individual in certain settings. For example, someone born into an upper middle-class family involved in business, who is personally rather introverted and withdrawn, may present a confident and outgoing personality when working, and only upon returning home do they revert to their natural inclination to be shy and quiet (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Presenting oneself as confident and outgoing at work, while being quiet and introverted at home is an example of a status personality. [Businessman](#) – [RoyalAnwar](#) – [Pixabay License](#)

One of the most interesting points made by Linton is that individuals with complementary personalities are also mutually adjusted. The most obvious example is that of the gender roles of men and women. Men are expected, in many cultures and societies, to be the dominant member of the family, as well as the “bread-winner.” Conversely, women are expected to be submissive, and to remain home and care for the household and the children. In this way, the men and women together complete the necessary tasks for family life without entering into conflict (at least in theory). In some cultures, these gender roles are quite relaxed with regard to the sex of the individual. Amongst the Comanche (a Native American tribe), men whose personalities were not at all suited to being warriors assumed a special role, that of berdache (Linton, 1936). The berdache wore women’s clothes, and typically fulfilled a woman’s role, but they were treated with somewhat more respect than women (in keeping with the patriarchal nature of the society). Some were homosexuals (though not all), and even married. This was generally accepted, and any disapproval these relationships received was directed toward the warrior husband, not the berdache.

Abram Kardiner, a psychoanalyst who collaborated with Linton, shared the same general perspective on the relationship between personality and culture, and attempted to put the relationship into psychological terms. He distinguished between the basic personality, or ego structure, which he considered to be a cultural phenomenon, and the individual’s character, which is their unique adaptation to the environment within their cultural setting. Thus, each individual develops a unique character, but only within the constraints of the culturally-determined range of potential ego structure (Kardiner, 1939). The process of personality development, within a cultural setting, results in what Kardiner called a security system. The security system of the individual is the series of adaptations that serve to ensure the individual’s acceptance, approval, support, esteem, and status within the group. Thus, for each person within a given cultural group, their basic personality is formed through an ongoing interaction with the very culture in which that person needs to be (and, hopefully, will be) accepted as a member. Both of Kardiner’s major books, *The Individual and His Society* (Kardiner, 1939) and *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (Kardiner, et al., 1945), offer extraordinary examples of detailed anthropological studies of a wide variety of cultures followed by psychoanalytic evaluations of the functions served by various aspects of the cultural practices of those people.

Robert LeVine, like Kardiner, was an anthropologist and psychoanalyst with a strong interest in personality (LeVine, 1973, 1974). He begins by asking the question of whether there are differences in personality between different cultural groups. If there are not, then any analysis of the nature or causes of those alleged differences is meaningless. If there are differences, can we then point to specific evidence that the environment can elicit changes in those differences? The answer is yes to both, and as one example LeVine points to the dramatic acculturation of rural immigrants from underdeveloped areas of

Europe and Asia who emigrated to industrialized countries, such as the United States, and within two or three generations had radically altered not only their basic ways of life, but also their social class (moving from traditional peasantry to the middle-class; LeVine, 1973). LeVine also continued Kardiner's approach of using a psychoanalytic perspective to evaluate and compare the nature of different cultures, and he proposed the term psychoanalytic ethnography. In an effort to justify the use of psychoanalytic ethnography, LeVine argues that there are enough common elements in the nature of all people and cultures to provide for valid comparisons of the differences between those same people and cultures (LeVine, 1973).

One of the most striking discussions of the relationship between culture and the potential for personality development was offered by Pitirim Sorokin, the founder of Harvard University's sociology department and a colleague of the trait theorist Gordon Allport. Sorokin points out that culture can have a dramatic influence on the biological substrates of personality. For example, through the use of contraception, abortion, etc., many potential individuals are never born. Conversely, if such measures are prohibited, many unwanted children are born. In addition, cultural rules and norms against sexual intercourse and/or marriage between certain age groups, races, social classes, families, religions, etc., directly influence the potential for genetic variation within and across different groups of humans (Sorokin, 1947). Indeed, Sorokin took such a broad view of the role of society and culture in the environmental universe of each individual, that he described trying to understand sociocultural phenomena by locating them in terms of sociocultural space and sociocultural distance. The concept of sociocultural distance has taken on new meaning since Sorokin proposed it over 50 years ago. Today, anyone can travel around the world in a matter of hours or days, and many people do so regularly. Technology and globalization have dramatically reduced the distance between people, and consequently brought their cultural differences into contact with one another. Efforts to study cultures and societies alter the location of sociocultural phenomena within our own sphere of personal development. In other words, by studying the relationships between society, culture, and personality, we are altering the meaning and influence of those relationships, hopefully for the better.

Although this section has highlighted the influence of anthropologists and sociologists on cross-cultural research in the study of personality, there has also been an influence from psychology on these investigators. As noted above, both Abram Kardiner and Robert LeVine were psychoanalysts. In addition, Kardiner acknowledges having learned a great deal from a professor named John Dollard. Dollard was a sociologist who had studied psychoanalysis and who collaborated with Neal Miller (a psychologist trained in learning theory) in an effort to apply classical learning theory to psychodynamic theory. Dollard contributed a chapter to one of Linton's books, and was cited by both LeVine and Sorokin (who was, again, also a colleague of Allport). Given such an interesting interaction between the fields of psychology, anthropology, and sociology over half a

century ago, it seems surprising that psychology is only now emphasizing the value of focusing on cultural influences on personality development.

Different Cultural Factors Affecting Personality

Since culture pervades every aspect of our lives, the number of cultural factors that we might examine in the study of personality is quite large. However, there are a few major factors that stand out, and that have been the subject of significant research in the field of psychology. Thus, we will take a brief look at four major factors that influence personality: religion, race, gender, and age.

Religion as a Cultural Influence

...religion in its turn exerts the most decisive influence upon all groups and systems of culture, from science and the fine arts to politics and economics. Without knowing the religion of a given culture or group - their systems of ultimate values - one cannot understand their basic traits and social movements. (pg. 228; Sorokin, 1947)

The essential importance of religion was also recognized by Abram Kardiner and Robert LeVine, both of whom, as noted above, studied anthropology and psychoanalysis (see Kardiner, et al., 1945; LeVine, 1973) (Figure 4.7). The recognized founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, also placed great emphasis on the influence of religion and religious symbolism (though he did not believe in God).



Figure 4.7 Baptism is one aspect of religious symbolism that is found in many religious belief systems. [Church Window - Didgeman - Pixabay License](#)

Despite the importance of religion, as perhaps the most significant cultural factor, there is variation in the extent to which formal religious beliefs and practices are a part of the routine life of people in different cultures (see Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). Since most psychologists were not emphasizing cultural factors as an essential aspect of the early

development of the field (leaving that to anthropologists and sociologists), and given Freud's powerful and convincing arguments against religion, it is not surprising that psychology has not focused on the influence of religion on personality. But that is changing, and despite the role that religion has played in many political battles and outright war, religion and spirituality are also recognized as potentially favorable aspects of psychological development in general, and personality development in particular, in the field of positive psychology (Compton, 2005; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder & Lopez, 2005).

The Question of Race and Ethnicity as Cultural Influences

Although the terms race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably with culture, they are quite different. The United States, for example, has large populations of people from different races, ethnic groups, religions, and nationalities, but they all contribute to the greater cultural identity of "American." Indeed, the very concept of America as a "melting pot" defies the use of racial or ethnic characterizations of the American people. This argument goes both ways, of course. We cannot simply refer to people who live within the boundaries of the United States as American, and expect that they are similar in every other cultural respect. Although this may seem rather confusing, that is exactly the point. This does not mean they are not useful, just that we must be careful in our interpretations of people's behavior and personality if they are from another culture.

Although ethnicity and race may be of questionable value as cultural factors, there are two critically important issues that arise from them. A common problem in cross-cultural research is that of **ethnocentrism**, the belief that one's own culture has the right beliefs and practices, whereas other cultures have wrong beliefs and practices (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Whitley & Kite, 2006). Such value judgments interfere with the objectivity of cross-cultural research, and can have negative effects on intercultural communication. The other, very serious problem is that of racism. Race is very real if people believe in it and act according to their perception of it. We will examine racism later in the textbook. For now, consider the following quote from a recently published book entitled *Racism in the United States: Implications for the Helping Professions*:

Racism has evolved as a persistent part of the human condition. Its obstinacy and intractability are frustrating and at times baffling. We live in a world in which most nations have signed United Nations declarations of human rights and claim to be democracies, yet racial and ethnic conflict abound. (pg. xvii; Miller & Garra, 2008).

Gender and Culture

Gender has been the subject of a wide range of studies, from pop-psychology books like *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) and *Self-Made Man: One Woman's Journey into Manhood and Back Again* (Vincent, 2006) to such ominous

sounding titles in academic psychology as *The Longest War: Gender and Culture* (Wade and Tavris, 1994). In 2005, the president of Harvard University suggested that one of the reasons there were so few women in math and science fields was that they lacked the intrinsic aptitude. The subsequent uproar led to the end of his presidency at Harvard, and a renewed effort to examine the reasons why few women succeed in math and science careers. An extensive study, led by former APA President Diane Halpern came to no specific conclusions, due to the complex interactions of a variety of factors, but in so doing made it clear that no blame can be placed directly on inherent/genetic ability (Halpern, et al., 2007; see also Barnett, 2007).

Gender is a distinctly cultural term, representing the behaviors or patterns of activity that a given culture or society expects from men and women. It is perhaps most commonly used to address differences between males and females, with an underlying assumption that sex differences lead to gender differences. However, apparent sex differences may actually be cultural gender differences, and cultures and societies exert significant influence on gender roles from a very early age (Brislin, 2000; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Still, some cultural factors may also have a basis in biological reality. For example, males are typically larger and stronger than females, so it makes sense for males to do the hunting and fight the wars. Women become pregnant and then nurse the infants, so it makes sense for them to provide early childcare. How this led to men having greater control and prestige in society, however, remains unclear, especially since that is not universally the case (Wade & Tavris, 1994). In addition, older men often become involved in childcare after their hunting/warrior days are behind them, further complicating the issue.

Among the differences between men and women that seem to be fairly common across cultures, and which may stem from sex differences, are aggression and emphasizing relationships. Men are typically more aggressive, and women seem to focus more on relationships with other people. In accordance with these tendencies, women typically defer to men, particularly in situations that may be confrontational. It also leads to conflict between men and women due to their difficulties communicating, hence the popularity of John Gray's book suggesting that men and women are from completely different planets. Given the status of men, the challenges that these gender differences create for women were not typically given a great deal of attention. However, Karen Horney and more recently the women of the Stone Center Group have made great strides in changing that situation. Not only have the members of the Stone Center Group provided a number of collected works on the psychology of women (Jordan, 1997b; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004), there are also textbooks devoted exclusively to the subject (e.g., Matlin, 2004).

Aging Within a Cultural Context

Age is used as routinely as sex to divide people in a society. All societies recognize at least three age groups: child, adult, and elderly. Childhood is typically further divided into young childhood and adolescence. Each group has different rights, responsibilities, roles, and status (Linton, 1936; Sorokin, 1947). Sometimes, these can come into conflict. For example, among the Comanche, as with most Plains tribes in North America, the adult male was expected to be a warrior, whereas the elderly man was respected for his wisdom and gentleness. Transitioning from being a warrior to being an elder was very difficult, and Comanche men often hoped to die in battle in order to avoid the transition. Those who were forced to make the transition became very dangerous adversaries for the young men transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and often the old men would kill the young men when they could (out of sheer envy). Moving even beyond old age, into death, there are many societies in which the dead remain in the minds of the community members, and deceased relatives and heroes are even worshipped. In some cultures, the relationship with those who are dead is a very important part of daily life (Linton, 1936).

Throughout history, as societies have changed, so have the ways in which they treated and cared for (or did not care for) aged individuals. Although modern industrialization is correlated with a significantly longer lifespan, such dramatic cultural changes favor the young people who can more readily adapt to those changes. In addition, industrialized societies typically shift some of the responsibility of caring for the aged from the family to the state. Curiously, this removes the responsibility of caring for aged persons from the very family whom those aged individuals had cared for and raised themselves. The one area in which aged members of the community are likely to retain their leadership status is religion, and the rituals associated with it (Holmes, 1983; Johnson & Thane, 1998; Schweitzer, 1983).

David Gutmann, an early gerontologist with an interest in the effects of aging on personality, has focused his career on studying men in four cultures: a typical American population (to the extent that there is such a thing), the Navajo in the United States, both Lowland and Highland Maya in Mexico, and the Druze in Israel (see Gutmann, 1987, 1997). One of the most interesting realities that he begins with is the recognition that the human species is the only one in which aged individuals remain active long past their reproductive prime. What possible evolutionary advantage does this offer our species? Gutmann believes that our elders fill unique roles in society, thus providing essential benefits to the extended family and the community, particularly for the young. Indeed, Gutmann points out that it is uniquely human to favor the ends of the lifespan, both childhood and old age, over the middle of the lifespan, when reproductive fitness is at its biological peak. As we noted above, however, the transition into old age is not always easy, and this leads to some unique changes in personality associated with aging.

The beginning of old age is marked by the maturity of one's children, such that the adult individual no longer needs to provide care for their children. Thus, both men and women can begin to express those aspects of their personality that were set aside in order to mutually facilitate raising children. Consequently, there is often a relaxing, or even reversal to some extent, of gender roles. A particularly significant change for men who no longer have the physical strength to be warriors (or to engage in the physical labor of their community) is the manner in which they seek mastery over their lives. Young men have the ability to seek active mastery, they strive toward autonomy, competence, and control. Older men must seek passive mastery, through adaptation and accommodation. The oldest men must rely on magical mastery. The world becomes one of potential providers and potential predators. They rely on primitive defense mechanisms, and wish fulfillment becomes synonymous with reality. Their relationship to the world is marked by feelings of vulnerability (Gutmann, 1987, 1997). In such societies, we can more involvement in religious practice that would lead to a degree of respect, or at least acknowledgement, as religious leaders. Of course, the degree to which a society provides for its oldest members, such as through retirement benefits, would have a significant effect on this aging process. Nonetheless, Gutmann found evidence for these changes in mastery style amongst men in mainstream America as well as in the Navajo, Maya, and Druze cultures.

Addressing the Degree of Cultural Integration

Adding to the complexity of culture's role in shaping our personalities are two important factors. First is the degree to which an individual is integrated into their culture, and vice versa. As Sorokin points out, it is exceedingly rare that an individual is either totally integrated into their culture or not integrated into it at all (Sorokin, 1947; see also Kardiner, et al., 1945; Linton, 1936). Thus, culture provides a framework within which individual variation is possible, but at the same time there will always be some consistent basis for understanding the people within a given culture. This becomes particularly important when considering cross-cultural research, since it may be reasonable to make some general assumptions about an individual from another culture, but we must also be prepared for their own unique variation as a person in that cultural group.

A second important factor is that cultural phenomena do not exist in isolation. Both gender and race/ethnicity, for example, influence how one adapts to the aging process (see, e.g., Arber, Davidson, & Ginn, 2003; Barrow, 1986; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Cool & McCabe, 1983; Holmes, 1983). Gender also interacts with race/ethnicity in determining one's reactions to group psychotherapy (Pack-Brown, Whittington-Clark, & Parker, 1998) and/or adapting to life as a minority student on a majority campus (Levey, Blanco, & Jones, 1998). Religion is considered to be such an important factor in the African American community that its role has been the subject of special interest (see, e.g., Belgrave & Allison, 2006; Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004). Obviously, many more examples can be found, the point being that as an individual develops, with multiple cultural

factors influencing them, and each factor being integrated to a greater or lesser degree, the potential for individual personality differences is extraordinary, even when the overall effect of the specific culture, or society, is to guide its members toward certain underlying tendencies that become characteristic of that culture's members.

Culture and Diversity

The importance of studying culture can be found in the diversity of people both around the world and within our own communities. For example, although many communities may be quite limited in terms of religion and race/ethnicity, nearly all communities have a mixture of gender and age. Although religion, race/ethnicity, gender, and age may be the major factors that have traditionally been studied in the field of psychology, in the instances where culture was studied, it is important to remember two additional points. First, there are other cultural factors that may be very important for certain individuals and/or select groups of people, and second, people can be excitingly (or frustratingly, depending on your point of view) unique in their individuality.

One area of diversity that has been receiving more attention as a cultural factor affecting the lives of many people is that of physical disability. In the past, although it was recognized that individuals with physical disabilities experience basically the same personality development processes as other people, disabilities were considered to be specific conditions that isolated the disabled person from their surroundings (Barker et al., 1953; Pintner et al., 1941). Over time, as more research became available on the psychology of people with disabilities (e.g., Goodley & Lawthorn, 2006; Henderson & Bryan, 1984; Marks, 1999; McDaniel, 1976; Roessler & Bolton, 1978; Stubbins, 1977; Vash, 1981; Wright, 1983), perspectives on how to study these individuals changed as well. In 2004, the [Society for Disability Studies](#) adopted preliminary guidelines for developing programs in disability studies. They emphasize challenging the previously held view that disabilities are individual deficits or defects that can or should be fixed by "experts." Rather, they recommend exploring models that examine cultural, social, political, and economic factors which integrate personal and collective responses to difference.

A few academic authors have made passing mention of the value of exercise, self-defense training, and spirituality in coping with physical disabilities (Nardo, 1994; Robinson, West, & Woodworth, 1995; Sobsey, 1994), one particularly interesting area in which culture, physical disability, the mind-body connection, positive psychology, and spirituality all come together is martial arts training (see Kelland, 2009, 2010). A number of notable martial arts experts actively encourage people with disabilities to practice the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of these ancient exercises (such as Grandmaster Mark Shuey Sr. of the Cane Masters International Association, Master Jurgen Schmidt of the International Disabled Self-Defense Association, and Grandmaster John Pellegrini of the International Combat Hapkido Federation), and several books are available on this subject (McNab, 2003; Robertson, 1991; Withers & Sims, 2007). Consider the diversity of

cultures and personal interests that come together when, for example, a disabled American living in the modern world pursues the spiritual and physical development associated with an ancient, Asian practice of self-development.

A Final Challenge

As important as it is to keep cultural factors in mind when studying personality, the unfortunate reality is that the major personality theories in psychology, as we recognize psychology today, have arisen within Western intellectual settings. Thus, we do not have corresponding systems of personality theory that arose in other cultures that we might compare to the theories we do have. This somewhat limits our perspective on cross-cultural personality theory to attempts to apply our Western theories to people of other cultures. This limitation should not, however, keep us from considering these issues. Culture is an all-encompassing factor in the development and psychology of both individuals and the groups in which they live. Indeed, in *Personality and Person Perception Across Cultures*, Lee, McCauley, & Draguns (1999) boldly state that “human nature cannot be independent of culture” (pg. vii). Thus, it is essential that we learn as much as possible about culture.

Summary

- The process of enculturation involves internalizing cultural norms, and may be able to influence the central organization of individuals, as well as the superficial organization.
- Religion appears to be the single most significant cultural factor.
- Race and ethnicity are complex, and are hard to consider as cultural factors because they cannot easily be defined.
- Although sex is a biological distinction, gender roles are an influential cultural factor that are applied from very early in life.
- All societies recognize distinct age groups, and treat those age groups differently. However, there is great variation in the status of each age group, which often leads to conflict.
- In addition to sometimes dramatic differences between cultures, individuals within a culture also differ in the extent to which they integrate different aspects of their culture into their own lives.

Discussion Questions

- When you begin to learn something about another culture, how much does it interest you? How influential do you think your culture has been in your own personal development?
- To what extent have religion, race, gender, and age been important factors in your personal development (either currently, or in the past)? Which do you expect will be the most important in your future development?
- Are you, or is anyone you know, distant or unintegrated with your family's culture or that your community? If so, what sort of problems does that create for your identities? If none, does your cultural integration provide a sense of integrity?

Remix/Revisions featured in this section

- Small editing revisions to tailor the content to the Psychology of Human Relations course.
- Changed formatting for photos to provide links to locations of images and CC licenses.
- Added doi links to references to comply with APA 7th edition formatting reference manual.

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4.3 Personality, Values, and Attitudes in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Compare and contrast personality tests based on trait theories.
- Discuss personality traits, values, and attitudes to workplace experiences.

Brad works for a marketing firm in Kansas City, Missouri. He has worked for the company for over 15 years and is very talented at his job. He has recently been promoted and now runs the marketing team for a number of the company's largest clients. Brad is a very direct individual, and is extremely comfortable giving feedback, even unsolicited. During every team meeting, Brad is quick to shut down ideas and is known for giving harsh, personal feedback during his teams' presentations. Although he is one of the most tenured, no one goes to him for help or advice because they fear he will use it as an opportunity to point out every professional and personal flaw (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8 Not all personality traits create positive working environments.

[Business Call](#) – [drobotdean](#) – [Freepik License](#)

Since Brad was promoted to leading the marketing team, employee morale and productivity have dropped significantly. Is this a matter of clashing personalities? Or is Brad too abrasive and brutal in his communication style and feedback techniques?

Personality traits play a role in every relationship. Individual personalities help to form an organization's culture and image. Therefore, every successful organization relies heavily on the personality traits of its employees. While everyone has a different personality, there are certain traits and characteristics that are common amongst individuals.

Understanding these similarities and differences can help you to better understand your coworkers, your team, and even your supervisors and bosses.

It is also important to make a connection between personalities and behavior. Certain personality traits can be used to predict behavior. This is why smart hiring practices are so important. It is equally, if not more, important to hire based on behavioral based interview questions and personality questionnaires as opposed to hiring solely on previous experience. Being aware of how personality traits influence behavior can be extremely beneficial to your success in the workplace. This section will deep dive into the idiosyncrasies of personality traits and how certain ones can negatively or positively impact an organization.

Recognizing your personality traits is the first step in successfully achieving your goals. Being able to capitalize on your strengths and also understanding how to strengthen your weaknesses is the cornerstone of success. When we use our personality to make decisions best suited for ourselves, we are more likely to find long-lasting happiness and satisfaction. Similarly, understanding the personalities of others will help us to form stronger relationships.

Personality Traits

In some ways, finding someone with differing personality traits can be beneficial. Relationships involving individuals with opposite personalities can challenge each person to view situations from a different perspective. In the workplace, differing personality traits are important to creating a diverse workplace where creativity and varying ideas can thrive. At the same time, it is also important to surround yourself with people who have similar core beliefs, values, and goals. Hiring employees while taking their personality into consideration can help foster an inclusive and positive work environment.

Thousands of personality traits have been identified over the years. It would be nearly impossible to find an effective way to identify each and every one of an individual's personality traits. To help streamline the process, multiple types of personality tests are available to help individuals recognize their strengths, preferences, communication style, among many other important characteristics. Let's look into some of the most popular personality tests used today.

16PF Questionnaire

Trait theorists believe personality can be understood via the approach that all people have certain traits, or characteristic ways of behaving. Do you tend to be sociable or shy? Passive or aggressive? Optimistic or pessimistic? Moody or even-tempered? Early trait theorists tried to describe all human personality traits. For example, one trait theorist, Gordon Allport (Allport & Odbert, 1936), found 4,500 words in the English language that could describe people. He organized these personality traits into three categories: cardinal traits, central traits, and secondary traits. A **cardinal trait** is one that dominates your entire personality, and hence your life—such as Ebenezer Scrooge’s greed and Mother Theresa’s altruism. Cardinal traits are not very common: Few people have personalities dominated by a single trait. Instead, our personalities typically are composed of multiple traits. **Central traits** are those that make up our personalities (such as loyal, kind, agreeable, friendly, sneaky, wild, and grouchy). **Secondary traits** are those that are not quite as obvious or as consistent as central traits. They are present under specific circumstances and include preferences and attitudes. For example, one person gets angry when people try to tickle him; another can only sleep on the left side of the bed; and yet another always orders her salad dressing on the side. And you—although not normally an anxious person—feel nervous before making a speech in front of your English class.

In an effort to make the list of traits more manageable, Raymond Cattell (1946, 1957) narrowed down the list to about 171 traits. However, saying that a trait is either present or absent does not accurately reflect a person’s uniqueness, because all of our personalities are actually made up of the same traits; we differ only in the degree to which each trait is expressed. Cattell (1957) identified 16 factors or dimensions of personality: warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule-consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness, privateness, apprehension, openness to change, self-reliance, perfectionism, and tension (Table 4.1). He developed a personality assessment based on these 16 factors, called the 16PF. Instead of a trait being present or absent, each dimension is scored over a continuum, from high to low. For example, your level of warmth describes how warm, caring, and nice to others you are. If you score low on this index, you tend to be more distant and cold. A high score on this index signifies you are supportive and comforting.

Table 4.1 Personality Factors Measured by the 16PF Questionnaire

Factor	Low Score	High Score
Warmth	reserved, detached	outgoing, supportive
Intellect	concrete thinking	analytical
Emotional Stability	moody, irritable	stable, calm
Aggressiveness	docile, submissive	controlling, dominant
Liveliness	somber, prudent	adventurous, spontaneous
Dutifulness	unreliable	conscientious
Social Assertiveness	shy, restrained	uninhibited, bold
Sensitivity	tough-minded	sensitive, caring
Paranoia	trusting	suspicious
Abstractness	conventional	imaginative
Introversion	open, straightforward	private, shrewd
Anxiety	confident	apprehensive
Openmindedness	closeminded, traditional	curious, experimental
Independence	outgoing, social	self-sufficient
Perfectionism	disorganized, casual	organized, precise
Tension	relaxed	stressed

The Five Factor Model

The Five Factor Model, with its five factors referred to as the Big Five personality factors, is the most popular theory in personality psychology today and the most accurate approximation of the basic personality dimensions (Funder, 2001). The five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. A helpful way to remember the factors is by using the mnemonic OCEAN.

In the Five Factor Model, each person possesses each factor, but they occur along a spectrum (Figure 4.9). Openness to experience is characterized by imagination, feelings, actions, and ideas. People who score high on this factor tend to be curious and have a wide range of interests. Conscientiousness is characterized by competence, self-discipline, thoughtfulness, and achievement-striving (goal-directed behavior). People who score high on this factor are hardworking and dependable. Numerous studies have found a positive correlation between conscientiousness and academic success (Akomolafe, 2013; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2008; Conrad & Patry, 2012; Nofle & Robins, 2007; Wagerman & Funder, 2007). Extroversion is characterized by sociability,

assertiveness, excitement-seeking, and emotional expression. People who score high on this factor are usually described as outgoing and warm. Not surprisingly, people who score high on both extroversion and openness are more likely to participate in adventure and risky sports due to their curious and excitement-seeking nature (Tok, 2011). The fourth factor is agreeableness, which is the tendency to be pleasant, cooperative, trustworthy, and good-natured. People who score low on agreeableness tend to be described as rude and uncooperative, yet one recent study reported that men who scored low on this factor actually earned more money than men who were considered more agreeable (Judge, Livingston, & Hurst, 2012). The last of the Big Five factors is neuroticism, which is the tendency to experience negative emotions. People high on neuroticism tend to experience emotional instability and are characterized as angry, impulsive, and hostile. Watson and Clark (1984) found that people reporting high levels of neuroticism also tend to report feeling anxious and unhappy. In contrast, people who score low in neuroticism tend to be calm and even-tempered.

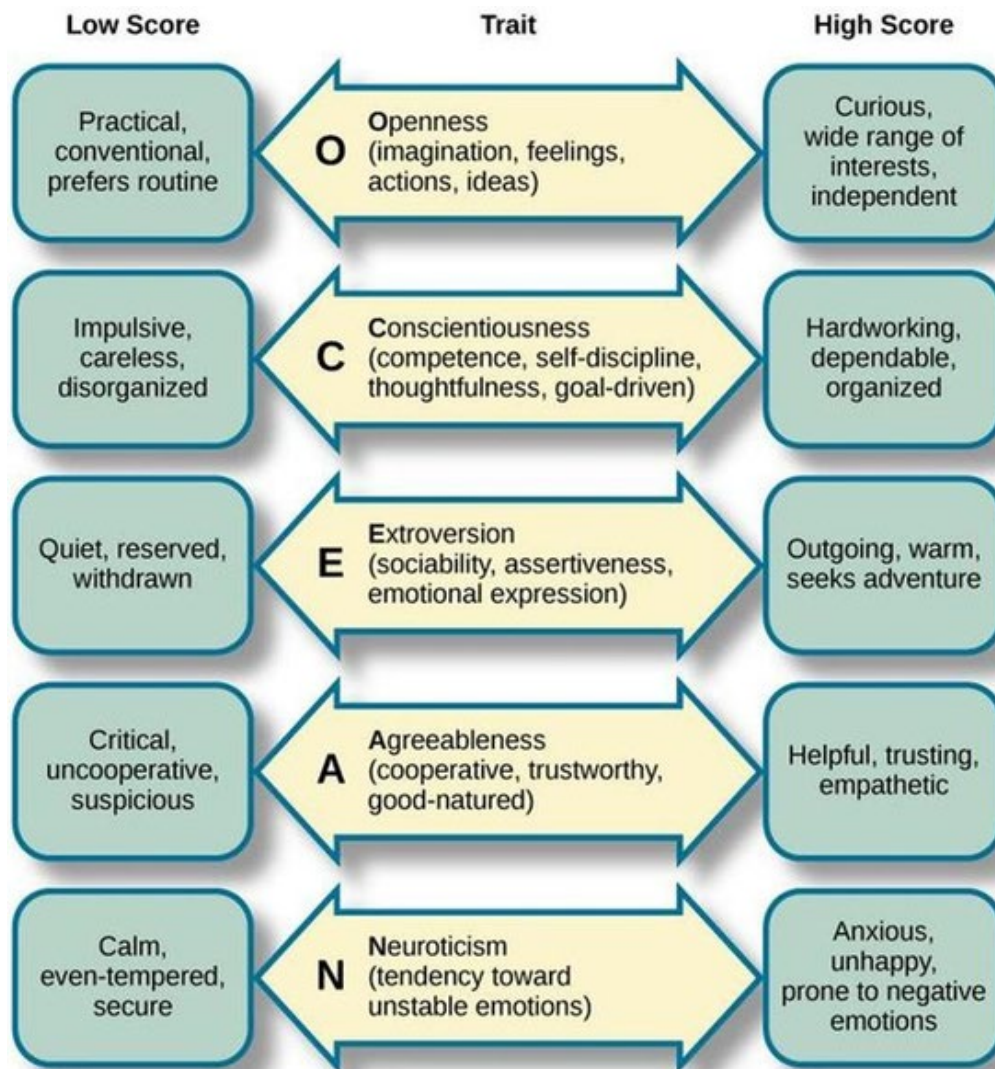


Figure 4.9 The Five-Factor Model of Personality. [Big 5 Personality Traits - U3100193 - CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

The Big Five personality factors each represent a range between two extremes. In reality, most of us tend to lie somewhere midway along the continuum of each factor, rather than at polar ends. It's important to note that the Big Five factors are relatively stable over our lifespan, with some tendency for the factors to increase or decrease slightly.

Researchers have found that conscientiousness increases through young adulthood into middle age, as we become better able to manage our personal relationships and careers (Donnellan & Lucas, 2008). Agreeableness also increases with age, peaking between 50 to 70 years (Terracciano, McCrae, Brant, & Costa, 2005). Neuroticism and extroversion tend to decline slightly with age (Donnellan & Lucas; Terracciano et al.). Additionally, The Big Five factors have been shown to exist across ethnicities, cultures, and ages, and may have substantial biological and genetic components (Jang, Livesley, & Vernon, 1996; Jang et al., 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Schmitt et al., 2007).

The HEXACO Model

Another model of personality traits is the HEXACO model. HEXACO is an acronym for six broad traits: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (Anglim & O'Connor, 2018)(Figure 4.10).

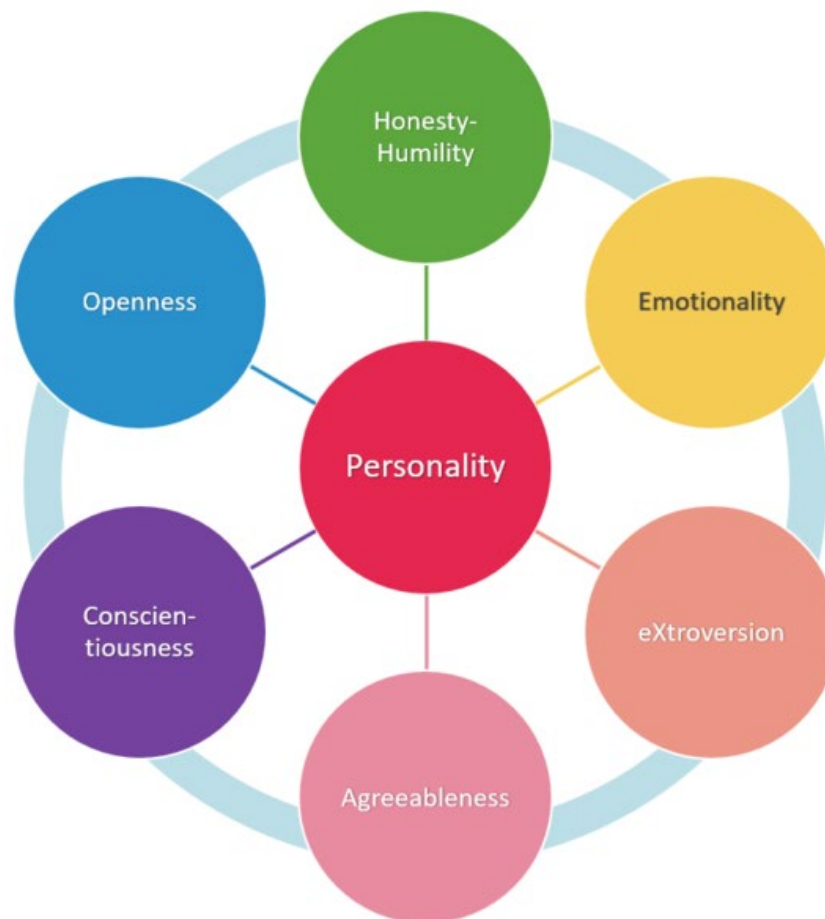


Figure 4.10 The six factors of the HEXACO model. [HEXACO](#) - [MissLunaRose12](#) - [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Table 4.2 below, provides a brief overview of each trait. This model is similar to the Big Five, but it posits slightly different versions of some of the traits, and its proponents argue that one important class of individual differences was omitted from the Five-Factor Model. The HEXACO adds Honesty-Humility as a sixth dimension of personality. People high in this trait are sincere, fair, and modest, whereas those low in the trait are manipulative, narcissistic, and self-centered. Thus, trait theorists are agreed that personality traits are important in understanding behavior, but there are still debates on the exact number and composition of the traits that are most important.

Table 4.2 HEXACO Traits

Trait	Example Aspects of Trait
H onesty-humility	sincerity, modesty, faithfulness
E motionality	sentimentality, anxiety, sensitivity
E xtraversion	sociability, talkativeness, boldness
A greeableness	patience, tolerance, gentleness
C onscientiousness	organization, thoroughness, precision
O penness	creativity, inquisitiveness, innovativeness

Personality tests are used to help companies better understand their employees or employee candidates. It is important to remember that there are thousands of different personality traits. Each individual has their own unique set and combination of personality traits. While each of the personality tests we discussed in this section are effective in their own right, there is no exact science to identifying each and every personality trait present in an individual. In addition, many personality tests are based upon an individual's self-assessment and results may differ from day to day. Personality tests may help to confirm things you already believed to be true or they may open your eyes to a side of yourself you didn't realize existed. Let's move onto the next section to examine how an individual's personality can help to predict their choices and behavior.

Personality and Behavior

As we discussed in the last section, personality traits do not fall under a one-size-fits-all category. Every individual has their own unique personality that helps to form their outlook on life and shapes their interactions with others. Imagine being able to take an individual's personality fingerprint and predict how they would act in any given scenario. While seeing into the future is impossible, using personality traits to predict an individual's behavior is on the spectrum of possibilities.

Personalities have been studied and discussed dating back to Ancient Greece and Roman times. Research has been conducted for years and years to try to determine how

to properly predict behavior using an individual's personality traits. However, in the 1970s, after years of research and testing, psychologists Daryl Bem and Walter Mischel had limited success in making consistently successful predictions (McAndrew, 2018). Their frustrations led them to believe that situational factors and stressors were more responsible for decisions than an individual's personality.

So, which is it? Is it personality or the situation that plays a leading role in influencing a person's behavior? The short answer is both. Many people expect a clear-cut answer to the question. However, that is an impossible task when it comes to predicting behavior. It is important to take into account the individual's personality in addition to the situation they find themselves in. The next section will discuss how situations can influence behavior, but for the purpose of this section, let's explore the benefits and limitations of using personality to predict behavior.

Personality traits are all on a spectrum. The more extreme an individual is on the spectrum, the easier it is to predict their behavior. Since many personality tests focus on broad traits (OCEAN for example), there is a wide range for interpretation. Let's look at introverts versus extraverts as an example. Everyone falls somewhere on the introvert vs. extravert scale. Even if you are more of an extravert than an introvert you may still not be considered a very outgoing person. Depending on the group of individuals you find yourself with may also change others' perception of you. For example, if you are surrounded by extremely extraverted people, you may appear to be introverted, even though you consider yourself an extravert. Similar to weight or height, everyone has a measurement unique to them but it may appear to be higher or lower when compared to that of others. According to McAndrew (2018), "Research has shown that the more to one of the extremes a person falls on a trait, the more consistently the trait will be a factor in his or her behavior."

It is also important to take into consideration that observing personality traits in multiple scenarios can be more accurate in predicting behavior. Trying to make a prediction based on a single interaction does not paint a completely accurate picture of an individual. Being able to observe the varying degrees of an individual's personality can help to better understand a person and determine the best way to maximize their strengths and support their weaknesses.

So how is predicting behavior helpful in the workplace? Using personality traits to form workgroups and teams can be extremely beneficial in the long run. Diversity is important to success. At the same time, pairing together like-minded individuals can help to promote efficiency and collaboration. Using personality traits and tests to form teams can help to bring together a beautifully balanced group. It is important to keep in mind; however, that observing an individual's personality multiple times may provide additional insight into how they operate. It is extremely important to utilize new found information and observations to rearrange team dynamics. Personality traits alone cannot

successfully predict behavior. Situations also play an important role in determining how an individual will act.

Situational Influences on Personality

Certain situations and circumstances can influence a person's day in a positive or negative way. Depending on the circumstance, a normally positive person may become more negative. On the other hand, a traditionally pessimistic person may appear to be more positive. So how is this possible? You have experienced both triumphs and tribulations in your lifetime and whether or not you realized it, they most likely impacted the way you acted and altered your personality for that period of time. It is human nature for emotions and personalities to differ depending on what is happening in our lives.

Even if we are not aware of what others may be going through, it is reasonable to assume that certain situations in the lives of all individuals impacts their personality. For example, you are out with friends, and you see your friend Lorenzo, who is the most extroverted person in the group, crying in the corner. Does this mean Lorenzo is no longer an extravert but rather an introvert? Or could he be crying because he just heard some upsetting news? Chances are, the latter option is a more realistic one. While the news may have changed his personality during that social setting on that day, it most likely did not alter it permanently.

Let's look at another example. The coworker you disagree with most, Kayla, who constantly argues against your ideas, comes into work Monday morning with a pep in her step. At your team meeting, she completely supports your proposed project idea and offers to help execute it. Has Kayla turned a corner and has decided to end the feud between you two? Possibly. But odds are there is something in her life that has temporarily altered her personality. What you may not know, is that over the weekend her all-time favorite team won the Super Bowl. Her excitement from the day before spilled over into Monday, presenting a much version of Kayla that seems to like you a great deal more. People can also change their personality based on who they're around. If the person you're with makes you uncomfortable, you're not likely to be very talkative and offer up good conversation. However, if you're on the phone with a friend you haven't talked to for a while, you're likely to have an animated conversation.

If situations can influence personality and personality can predict behavior, then situational influences also contribute to predicting behavior. It also brings into question whether or not personality traits are consistent since they are easily influenced by situations. In 1968, Walter Mischel published a book entitled *Personality & Assessment*. In his book, Mischel argued that an interactionist approach was best suited when exploring personality, situations, and behavior. This interactionist approach believes that both personality and situational circumstances create behavior. In addition, Mischel explained that personalities tend to differ across a range of situations (personality at work versus

home); however, they keep consistencies within similar situations (work meetings). This revelation created an upset in the traditional view of personality by arguing that personality stability and instability can each exist at the same time.

Values

Values refer to stable life goals that people have, reflecting what is most important to them. Values are established throughout one's life as a result of the accumulating life experiences and tend to be relatively stable (Lusk & Oliver, 1974; Rokeach, 1973). The values that are important to people tend to affect the types of decisions they make, how they perceive their environment, and their actual behaviors. Moreover, people are more likely to accept job offers when the company possesses the values people care about (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Value attainment is one reason why people stay in a company, and when an organization does not help them attain their values, they are more likely to decide to leave if they are dissatisfied with the job itself (George & Jones, 1996).

What are the values people care about? There are many typologies of values. One of the most established surveys to assess individual values is the Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973). This survey lists 18 terminal and 18 instrumental values in alphabetical order. Terminal values refer to end states people desire in life, such as leading a prosperous life and a world at peace. Instrumental values deal with views on acceptable modes of conduct, such as being honest and ethical, and being ambitious.

According to Rokeach, values are arranged in hierarchical fashion. In other words, an accurate way of assessing someone's values is to ask them to rank the 36 values in order of importance. By comparing these values, people develop a sense of which value can be sacrificed to achieve the other, and the individual priority of each value emerges.

Where do values come from? Research indicates that they are shaped early in life and show stability over the course of a lifetime. Early family experiences are important influences over the dominant values. People who were raised in families with low socioeconomic status and those who experienced restrictive parenting often display conformity values when they are adults, while those who were raised by parents who were cold toward their children would likely value and desire security (Kasser, Koestner, & Lekes, 2002).

Values of a generation also change and evolve in response to the historical context that the generation grows up in. Research comparing the values of different generations resulted in interesting findings. For example, Generation Xers (those born between the mid-1960s and early 1980s) are more individualistic and are interested in working toward organizational goals so long as they coincide with their personal goals. This group, compared to the baby boomers (born between the 1940s and 1960s), is also less likely to

see work as central to their life and more likely to desire a quick promotion (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Values a person holds will affect their employment. For example, someone who values stimulation highly may seek jobs that involve fast action and high risk, such as firefighter, police officer, or emergency medicine. Someone who values achievement highly may be likely to become an entrepreneur or intrapreneur. And an individual who values benevolence and universalism may seek work in the nonprofit sector with a charitable organization or in a “helping profession,” such as nursing or social work. Like personality, values have implications for Organizing activities, such as assigning duties to specific jobs or developing the chain of command; employee values are likely to affect how employees respond to changes in the characteristics of their jobs.

In terms of work behaviors, a person is more likely to accept a job offer when the company possesses the values he or she cares about. A firm’s values are often described in the company’s mission and vision statements, an element of the Planning function (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Value attainment is one reason people stay in a company. When a job does not help them attain their values, they are likely to decide to leave if they are also dissatisfied with the job (George & Jones, 1996). Therefore, understanding employees at work requires understanding the value orientations of employees.

We often find ourselves in situations where our values do not coincide with someone we are working with. For example, if Alison’s main value is connection, this may come out in a warm communication style with coworkers and an interest in their personal lives. Imagine Alison works with Tyler, whose core value is efficiency. Because of Tyler’s focus, he may find it a waste of time to make small talk with colleagues. When Alison approaches Tyler and asks about his weekend, she may feel offended or upset when he brushes her off to ask about the project they are working on together. She feels like a connection wasn’t made, and he feels like she isn’t efficient. Understanding our own values as well as the values of others can greatly help us become better communicators.

Attitudes

Our attitudes are favorable or unfavorable opinions toward people, things, or situations. Many things affect our attitudes, including the environment we were brought up in and our individual experiences. Our personalities and values play a large role in our attitudes as well. For example, many people may have attitudes toward politics that are similar to their parents, but their attitudes may change as they gain more experiences. If someone has a bad experience around the ocean, they may develop a negative attitude around beach activities. However, assume that person has a memorable experience seeing sea lions at the beach, for example, then he or she may change their opinion about the ocean.

Likewise, someone may have loved the ocean, but if they have a scary experience, such as nearly drowning, they may change their attitude.

The important thing to remember about attitudes is that they can change over time, but usually some sort of positive experience needs to occur for our attitudes to change dramatically for the better. We also have control of our attitude in our thoughts. If we constantly stream negative thoughts, it is likely we may become a negative person.

In a workplace environment, you can see where attitude is important. Someone's personality may be cheerful and upbeat. These are the prized employees because they help bring positive perspective to the workplace. Likewise, someone with a negative attitude is usually someone that most people prefer not to work with. The problem with a negative attitude is that it has a devastating effect on everyone else. Have you ever felt really happy after a great day and when you got home, your roommate was in a terrible mood because of her bad day? In this situation, you can almost feel yourself deflating! This is why having a positive attitude is a key component to having good human relations at work and in our personal lives.

Our attitude is ultimately about how we set our expectations; how we handle the situation when our expectations are not met; and finally, how we sum up an experience, person, or situation. When we focus on improving our attitude on a daily basis, we get used to thinking positively and our entire personality can change. It goes without saying that employers prefer to hire and promote someone with a positive attitude as opposed to a negative one. Davis (2019) suggests four ways to develop a more positive attitude:

- Spending more time thinking about positive things will help strengthen the positive neural pathways in your brain. This can help you generate your own positive thoughts and feelings more easily.
- Find a silver lining even with things you perceive to be negative. Is there something you can learn or take away from it? Look for an alternative perspective that can help you view the situation more positively.
- Engaging in random acts of kindness can improve your attitude. When you help others unprompted and without reward, you can develop a positive sense of self and the gratitude expressed by those you aid will help create positive feelings.
- Smile, laugh, and enjoy life more. This one might seem like a struggle at times, but the more you can appreciate the small things in your life, the more positive your attitude can become.

When considering our personality, values, and attitudes, we can begin to get the bigger picture of who we are and how our experiences affect how we behave at work and in our personal lives. It is a good idea to reflect often on what aspects of our personality are

working well and which we might like to change. With self-awareness we can make changes that eventually result in better human relations.

Summary

- Cattell developed a personality assessment called the 16PF.
- The Five Factor Model is the most widely accepted trait theory today. The five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These factors occur along a continuum.
- The HEXACO Model posits slightly different versions of some of the Big Five traits, and its proponents argue that one important class of individual differences was omitted from the Five-Factor Model
- Values express a person's life goals; they are similar to personality traits in that they are relatively stable over time.
- Our personality can help define our *attitudes* toward specific things, situations, or people. Most people prefer to work with people who have a positive attitude.

Discussion Questions

1. Choose one of the personality assessments discussed in this section. Can you think of jobs or occupations that seem particularly suited to each trait? Which traits would be universally desirable across all jobs?
2. Why might a prospective employer screen applicants using personality assessments?
3. Have you ever held a job where your personality did not match the demands of the job? How did you react to this situation? How were your attitudes and behaviors affected?

Remix/Revisions featured in this section

- Small editing revisions to tailor the content to the Psychology of Human Relations course.
- Changed formatting for photos to provide links to locations of images and CC licenses.
- Added doi links to references to comply with APA 7th edition formatting reference manual.
- Remix of introduction, behavior, and situational influences from [Why It Matters: Individual Personalities and Behaviors](#) (Organizational Behavior – Lumen Learning) , trait theories from [11.7 Trait Theories](#) (Psychology 2e – Openstax), values from [2.3 Personality and Values](#) (Principles of Management – University of Minnesota) attitudes from [1.2 Human Relations: Personality and Attitude Effects](#) (Saylor Academy).

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