Personality refers to the consistency we see in personal behavior patterns. Measures of personality reveal individual differences and help predict future behavior.
Rural Colorado. The car banged over one last, brain-jarring rut and lurched toward the dilapidated farmhouse. Annette awaited one of your authors on the porch, hooting and whooping and obviously happy to see an old friend arrive.

If anyone was suited for a move to the “wilds” of Colorado, it was Annette, a strong and resourceful woman. Still, it was hard to imagine a more radical change. After separating from her husband, she had traded a comfortable life in the city for rough times in the high country. Annette was working as a ranch hand and a lumberjack (lumberjill?), trying to make it through some hard winters. She had even recently decked a guy twice her size who was harassing her in a tavern. The changes in Annette’s life were radical, and we worried that she might be entirely different. She was, on the contrary, more her “old self” than ever.

Perhaps you have had a similar experience. After several years of separation, it is always intriguing to see an old friend. At first, you may be struck by how the person has changed. (“Where did you get that haircut!?”) Soon, however, you will probably be delighted to discover that the semi-stranger before you is still the person you once knew. It is exactly this core of consistency that psychologists have in mind when they use the term personality.

Without doubt, personality touches our daily lives. Falling in love, choosing friends, getting along with coworkers, voting for a president, or coping with your zaniest relatives all raise questions about personality.

What is personality? How does it differ from character, temperament, or attitudes? Is it possible to measure personality? Can we change our personality? We’ll address these questions and more in this chapter.

Gateway QUESTIONS

12.1 How do psychologists use the term personality?
12.2 Are some personality traits more basic or important than others?
12.3 How do psychodynamic theories explain personality?
12.4 What are humanistic theories of personality?
12.5 What do behaviorists and social learning theorists emphasize in their approach to personality?
12.6 How do heredity and environment affect personality?
12.7 Which personality theory is right?
12.8 How do psychologists measure personality?
12.9 What causes shyness and what can be done about it?
The Psychology of Personality—
Do You Have Personality?

Gateway Question 12.1: How do psychologists use the term personality?

“Annette has a very optimistic personality.” “Ramiro’s not handsome, but he has a great personality.” “My father’s business friends think he’s a nice guy. They should see him at home where his real personality comes out.” “It’s hard to believe Tanya and Nikki are sisters. They have such opposite personalities.”

It’s obvious that we all frequently use the term personality. But if you think that personality means “charm,” “charisma,” or “style,” you have misused the term. Many people also confuse personality with the term character, which implies that a person has been evaluated as possessing positive qualities, not just described (Bryan & Babelay, 2009). If, by saying someone has “personality,” you mean the person is friendly, outgoing, and upstanding, you might be describing what we regard as good character in our culture. But in some cultures, it is deemed good for people to be fierce, warlike, and cruel.

Psychologists regard personality as a person’s unique long-term pattern of thinking, emotions, and behavior (Burger, 2011; Ewen, 2009). In other words, personality refers to the consistency in who you are, have been, and will become. It also refers to the special blend of talents, values, hopes, loves, hates, and habits that makes each of us a unique person. So, everyone in a particular culture has personality, whereas not everyone has character—or at least not good character. (Do you know any good characters?)

Psychologists use a large number of concepts and theories to explain personality. It might be wise, therefore, to start with a few key ideas to help you keep your bearings as you read more about personality.

Traits

We use the idea of traits every day to talk about personality. For instance, Daryl is sociable, orderly, and intelligent. His sister Hollie is shy, sensitive, and creative. As we observed in our reunion with Annette, personality traits like these can be quite stable (Rantanen et al., 2007; Engler, 2009). Think about how little your best friends have changed in the last 5 years. It would be strange indeed to feel like you were talking with a different person every time you met a friend or an acquaintance. In general, then, personality traits like these are stable qualities that a person shows in most situations (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2009). As you will see when you read further into this chapter, there is considerable debate about just why traits are stable qualities. But more about that later.

Typically, traits are inferred from behavior. If you see Daryl talking to strangers—first at a supermarket and later at a party—you might deduce that he is “sociable.” Once personality traits are identified, they can be used to predict future behavior. For example, noting that Daryl is outgoing might lead you to predict that he will be sociable at school or at work. In fact, such consistencies can span many years (Casp, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; Harker & Keltner, 2001). Traits even influence our health as well as our marital and occupational success (Roberts et al., 2007). For example, who do you think will be more successful in her chosen career: Jane, who is conscientious, or Sally, who is not (Brown et al., 2011; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003)?

Types

Have you ever asked the question, “What type of person is she (or he)?” A personality type refers to people who have several traits in common (Larsen & Buss, 2010). Informally, your own thinking might include categories such as the executive type, the athletic type, the motherly type, the hip-hop type, the techno geek, and so
How valid is it to speak of personality "types"? Over the years, psychologists have proposed many ways to categorize personalities into types. For example, Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (young) proposed that people are either introverts or extroverts. An introvert is a shy, reserved person whose attention is usually focused inward. An extrovert is a bold, outgoing person whose attention is usually directed outward. These terms are so widely used that you may think of yourself and your friends as being one type or the other. However, knowing if someone is extroverted or introverted tells you little about how conscientious she is, or how kind or open to new ideas he is. In short, two categories (or even several) are often inadequate to fully capture differences in personality. That’s why rating people on a list of traits tends to be more informative than classifying them into two or three types (Engler, 2009).

Even though types tend to oversimplify personality, they do have value. Most often, types are a shorthand way of labeling people who have several key traits in common. For example, in the next chapter we will discuss Type A and Type B personalities. Type A’s are people who have personality traits that increase their chance of suffering a heart attack; Type B’s take a more laid-back approach to life (see Figure 12.1). Similarly, you will read in Chapter 14 about unhealthy personality types such as the paranoid personality, the dependent personality, and the antisocial personality. Each problem type is defined by a specific collection of traits that are not adaptive.

**Self-Concept**

Self-concepts provide another way of understanding personality. The rough outlines of your self-concept could be revealed by this request: “Please tell us about yourself.” In other words, your self-concept consists of all your ideas, perceptions, stories, and feelings about who you are. It is the mental “picture” you have of your own personality (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & Larsen McClarty, 2007).

Self-concepts can be remarkably consistent. In an interesting study, old people were asked how they had changed over the years. Almost all thought they were essentially the same person they were when they were young (Troll & Skaff, 1997). Ninety-three-year-old Nelson Mandela, for example, has been a highly dignified and influential human rights activist for his entire adult life.

We creatively build our self-concepts out of daily experiences. Then, we slowly revise them as we have new experiences. Once a stable self-concept exists, it tends to guide what we pay attention to, remember, and think about. Because of this, self-concepts can greatly affect our behavior and personal adjustment—especially when they are inaccurate (Ryckman, 2008). For instance, Alesha is a student who thinks she is stupid, worthless, and a failure, despite being a student who thinks she is stupid, worthless, and a failure, despite getting good grades. With such an inaccurate self-concept, she tends to be depressed regardless of how well she does.
Self-Esteem and Culture—Hotshot or Team Player?

You and some friends are playing soccer. Your team wins, in part because you make some good plays. After the game, you bask in the glow of having performed well. You don’t want to brag about being a hotshot, but your self-esteem gets a boost from your personal success.

In Japan, Shinobu and some of his friends are playing soccer. His team wins, in part because he makes some good plays. After the game, Shinobu is happy because his team did well. However, Shinobu also dwells on the ways in which he let his team down. He thinks about how he could improve, and he resolves to be a better team player.

These sketches illustrate a basic difference in Eastern and Western psychology. In individualistic cultures such as the United States, self-esteem is based on personal success and outstanding performance (Lay & Verkuyten, 1999). For us, the path to higher self-esteem lies in self-enhancement. We are pumped up by our successes and tend to downplay our faults and failures (Ross et al., 2005). Japanese and other Asian cultures place a greater emphasis on collectivism, or interdependence among people. For them, self-esteem is based on a secure sense of belonging to social groups. As a result, people in Asian cultures are more apt to engage in self-criticism (Ross et al., 2005). By correcting personal faults, they add to the well-being of the group (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000). And, when the group succeeds, individual members feel better about themselves, which raises their self-esteem.

Perhaps self-esteem is still based on success in both Eastern and Western cultures (Brown et al., 2009). However, it is fascinating that cultures define success in such different ways (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). The North American emphasis on winning is not the only way to feel good about yourself.

**Self-Esteem**

Note that in addition to having a faulty self-concept, Alesha has low self-esteem (a negative self-evaluation). A person with high self-esteem is confident, proud, and self-respecting. One who has low self-esteem is insecure, lacking in confidence, and self-critical. Like Alesha, people with low self-esteem are usually anxious and unhappy. People who have low self-esteem typically also suffer from poor self-knowledge. Their self-concepts are inconsistent, inaccurate, and confused. Problems of this type are explored later in this chapter.

Self-esteem tends to rise when we experience success or praise. It also buffers us against negative experiences (Brown, 2010). A person who is competent and effective and who is loved, admired, and respected by others will almost always have high self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2003). The reasons for having high self-esteem, however, can vary in different cultures. See “Self-Esteem and Culture” for more information.

**What if you “think you’re hot,” but you’re not?** Genuine self-esteem is based on an accurate appraisal of your strengths and weaknesses. A positive self-evaluation that is bestowed too easily may not be healthy (Kernis & Lakey, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2001). People who think very highly of themselves (and let others know it) may at first seem confident, but their arrogance quickly turns off other people (Paulhus, 1998).

**The Whole Human: Personality Theories**

As you can already see, it would be easy to get lost without a framework for understanding personality. How do our thoughts, actions, and feelings relate to one another? How does personality develop? Why do some people suffer from psychological problems? How can they be helped? To answer such questions, psychologists have created a dazzling array of theories. A personality theory is a system of concepts, assumptions, ideas, and principles proposed to explain personality (Figure 12.2). In this chapter, we can explore...
only a few of the many personality theories. These are the four major perspectives we will consider:

1. **Trait theories** attempt to learn what traits make up personality and how they relate to actual behavior.
2. **Psychodynamic theories** focus on the inner workings of personality, especially internal conflicts and struggles.
3. **Humanistic theories** stress private, subjective experience, and personal growth.
4. **Behaviorist and social learning theories** place importance on the external environment and on the effects of conditioning and learning. Social learning theories attribute differences in personality to socialization, expectations, and mental processes.

With these broad perspectives in mind, let’s take a deeper look at personality.

### The Trait Approach—Describe Yourself in 18,000 Words or Less

**Gateway Question 12.2:** Are some personality traits more basic or important than others?

The trait approach is currently the dominant method for studying personality. Trait theorists seek to describe personality with a small number of key traits or factors. Take a moment to check the traits in Table 12.1 that describe your personality. Don’t worry if some of your key traits weren’t in the table. More than 18,000 English words refer to personal characteristics. Are the traits you checked of equal importance? Are some stronger or more basic than others? Do any overlap? For example, if you checked “dominant,” did you also check “confident” and “bold”?

Answers to these questions would interest a trait theorist. To better understand personality, trait theorists attempt to analyze, classify, and interrelate traits. In addition, trait theorists often think of traits as biological predispositions, a hereditary readiness of humans to behave in particular ways (Ashton, 2007). (We have encountered this idea before, in Chapter 3, in which we humans were described as having a biological predisposition to learn language.) As we have noted, traits are stable dispositions that a person shows in most situations (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2009). For example, if you are usually friendly, optimistic, and cautious, these qualities are traits of your personality.

**What if I am also sometimes shy, pessimistic, or uninhibited?** The original three qualities are still traits as long as they are most typical of your behavior. Let’s say our friend Annette approaches most situations with optimism, but tends to expect the worst each time she applies for a job and worries that she won’t get it. If her pessimism is limited to this situation or just a few others, it is still accurate and useful to describe her as an optimistic person.

### Predicting Behavior

As we have noted, separating people into broad types, such as “introvert” or “extrovert,” may oversimplify personality. However, introversion/extroversion can also be thought of as a trait. Knowing how you rate on this single dimension would allow us to predict how you will behave in a variety of settings. How, for example, do you prefer to meet people—face-to-face or through the Internet? Researchers have found that students high in the trait of introversion are more likely to prefer the Internet because they find it easier to talk with people online (Koch & Pratrelli, 2004; Rice & Markey, 2009). Other interesting links exist between traits and behavior. See “What’s Your Musical Personality?”

### Classifying Traits

**Are there different types of traits?** Yes, psychologist Gordon Allport (1961) identified several kinds. Common traits are characteristics shared by most members of a culture. Common traits tell us how people from a particular nation or culture are similar, or which traits a culture emphasizes. In America, for example, competitiveness is a fairly common trait. Among the Hopi of northern Arizona, however, it is relatively rare.

Of course, common traits don’t tell us much about individuals. Although many people are competitive in American culture, various people you know may rate high, medium, or low in this trait. Usually we are also interested in individual traits, which describe a person’s unique qualities.

---

**TABLE 12.1 Adjective Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aggressive</td>
<td>organized</td>
<td>ambitious</td>
<td>clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confident</td>
<td>loyal</td>
<td>generous</td>
<td>calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warm</td>
<td>bold</td>
<td>cautious</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensitive</td>
<td>mature</td>
<td>talented</td>
<td>jealous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sociable</td>
<td>honest</td>
<td>funny</td>
<td>religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>dull</td>
<td>accurate</td>
<td>nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humble</td>
<td>uninhibited</td>
<td>visionary</td>
<td>cheerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>serious</td>
<td>helpful</td>
<td>emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orderly</td>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>conforming</td>
<td>good-natured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal</td>
<td>curious</td>
<td>optimistic</td>
<td>kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meek</td>
<td>neighborly</td>
<td>passionate</td>
<td>compulsive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Discovering Psychology

What's Your Musical Personality?

Even if you like all kinds of music, you probably prefer some styles to others. Of the styles listed here, which three do you enjoy the most? (Circle your choices.)

- blues
- jazz
- classical
- folk
- rock
- alternative
- heavy metal
- country
- soundtrack
- religious
- pop
- rap/hip-hop
- soul/funk
- electronic/dance

In one study, Peter Rentfrow and Samuel Gosling found that the types of music people prefer tend to be associated with their personality characteristics (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). See if your musical tastes match their findings (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2007):

- People who value aesthetic experiences, have good verbal abilities, and are liberal and tolerant of others tend to like music that is reflective and complex (blues, jazz, classical, and folk music).
- People who are curious about new experiences, enjoy taking risks, and are physically active prefer intense, rebellious music (rock, alternative, and heavy metal music).
- People who are cheerful, conventional, extroverted, reliable, helpful, and conserverative tend to enjoy upbeat conventional music (country, soundtrack, religious, and pop music).
- People who are talkative, full of energy, forgiving, and physically attractive, and who reject conservative ideals tend to prefer energetic, rhythmic music (rap/hip-hop, soul/funk, and electronic/dance music).

Unmistakably, personality traits affect our everyday behavior (Rentfrow, Goldberg, & Levitin, 2011).

Here's an analogy to help you separate common traits from individual traits: If you decide to buy a pet dog, you will want to know the general characteristics of the dog's breed (its common traits). In addition, you will want to know about the "personality" of a specific dog (its individual traits) before you decide to take it home.

Allport also made distinctions between cardinal traits, central traits, and secondary traits. Cardinal traits are so basic that all of a person's activities can be traced to the trait. For instance, compassion was an overriding trait of Mother Teresa's personality. Likewise, Abraham Lincoln's personality was dominated by the cardinal trait of honesty. According to Allport, few people have cardinal traits.

Central Traits

How do central and secondary traits differ from cardinal traits? Central traits are the basic building blocks of personality. A surprisingly small number of central traits can capture the essence of a person. For instance, just six traits would provide a good description of Annette's personality: dominant, sociable, honest, cheerful, intelligent, and optimistic. When college students were asked to describe someone they knew well, they mentioned an average of seven central traits (Allport, 1961).

Secondary traits are more superficial personal qualities, such as food preferences, attitudes, political opinions, musical tastes, and so forth. In Allport's terms, a personality description might therefore include the following items:

- Name: Jane Doe
- Age: 22
- Cardinal traits: None
- Central traits: Possessive, autonomous, artistic, dramatic, self-centered, trusting
- Secondary traits: Prefers colorful clothes, likes to work alone, politically liberal, always late

Source Traits

How can you tell whether a personality trait is central or secondary? Raymond B. Cattell (1906–1998) tried to answer this question by directly studying the traits of a large number of people. Cattell began by measuring visible features of personality, which he called surface traits. Soon, Cattell noticed that these surface traits often appeared together in groups. In fact, some traits clustered together so often that they seemed to represent a single, more basic trait. Cattell called these deeper characteristics, or dimensions, source traits (or factors) (Cattell, 1965). They are the core of each individual's personality.

How do source traits differ from Allport's central traits? Allport classified traits subjectively, and it's possible that he was wrong at times. To look for connections among traits, Cattell used factor analysis, a statistical technique used to correlate multiple measurements and identify general underlying factors. For example, he found that imaginative people are almost always inventive, original, curious, creative, innovative, and ingenious. If you are an imaginative person, we automatically know that you have several other traits, too. Thus, imaginative is a source trait. (Source traits are also called factors.)

Cattell (1973) identified 16 source traits. According to him, all 16 are needed to fully describe a personality. Source traits are measured by a test called the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (often referred to as the 16 PF). Like many personality tests, the 16 PF can be used to produce a trait profile, or graph, of a person's score on each trait. Trait profiles draw a "picture" of individual personalities, which makes it easier to compare them (Figure 12.3).

The Big Five

Noel is outgoing and friendly, conscientious, even-tempered, and curious. His brother Joel is reserved, hostile, irresponsible, temperamental, and disinterested in ideas. You will be spending a week in a space capsule with either Noel or Joel. Who would you
choose? If the answer seems obvious, it’s because Noel and Joel were described with the five-factor model, a system that identifies the five most basic dimensions of personality.

**Five Key Dimensions**

The “Big Five” factors listed in Figure 12.4 attempt to further reduce Cattell’s 16 factors to just five universal dimensions, or source traits (Costa & McCrae, 2006; Noftle & Fleeson, 2010). The Big Five may be the best answer of all to the question, What is the essence of human personality?

If you would like to compare the personalities of two people, try rating them informally on the five dimensions shown in Figure 12.4. For Factor 1, extroversion, rate how introverted or extroverted each person is. Factor 2, agreeableness, refers to how friendly, nurturant, and caring a person is, as opposed to cold, indifferent, self-centered, or spiteful. A person who is conscientious (Factor 3) is self-disciplined, responsible, and achieving. People low on this factor are irresponsible, careless, and undependable. Factor 4, neuroticism, refers to negative, upsetting emotions. People who are high in neuroticism tend to be anxious, emotionally “sour,” irritable,
According to the five-factor model, your rating on each of five basic personality dimensions, or factors, gives a good overall description of your personality. Try it (see Figure 12.4). How well do you think your ratings describe you?

When you were rating yourself, did you notice that some of the traits in Figure 12.4 don’t seem very attractive? After all, who would want to score low in extraversion? What could be good about being a quiet, passive, and reserved loner? In other words, aren’t some personality patterns better than others?

OK, so what is the best personality pattern? You might be surprised to learn that there is no one “best” personality pattern. For example, extroverts tend to earn more during their careers than introverts and they have more sexual partners. But they are also more likely to take risks than introverts (and to land in the hospital with an injury). Extroverts are also more likely to divorce. Because of this, extroverted men are less likely to live with their children. In other words, extraversion tends to open the doors to some life experiences and close doors to others (Nettle, 2005).

The same is true for agreeableness. Agreeable people attract more friends and enjoy strong social support from others. But agreeable people often put the interests of friends and family ahead of their own. This leaves agreeable people at a disadvantage. To do creative, artistic work or to succeed in the business world often involves putting your own interests first (Nettle, 2008).

How about conscientiousness? Up to a point, conscientiousness is associated with high achievement. However, having impossibly high standards, a trait called perfectionism, can be a problem. As you might expect, college students who are perfectionists tend to get good grades. Yet, some students cross the line into maladaptive perfectionism, which typically lowers performance at school and elsewhere (Accordino, Accordino, & Slaney, 2000). Authentic Navajo rugs always have a flaw in their intricate designs. Navajo weavers intentionally make a “mistake” in each rug as a reminder that humans are not perfect. There is a lesson in this: It is not always necessary, or even desirable, to be “perfect.” To learn from your experiences you must feel free to make mistakes (Castro & Rice, 2003). Success, in the long run, is more often based on seeking “excellence” rather than “perfection” (Enns, Cox, & Clara, 2005).

Except for very extreme personality patterns, which are often maladaptive, most “personalities” involve a mix of costs and benefits. We all face the task of pursuing life experiences that best suit our own unique personality patterns (Nettle, 2008).

The Big Five traits have been related to different brain systems and chemicals (Ashton, 2007; Nettle, 2008). They also predict how people will act in various circumstances (Sutin & Costa, 2010). For example, people who score high in conscientiousness tend to perform well at work, do well in school, and rarely have automobile accidents (Arthur & Doverspike, 2001; Brown et al., 2011; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003). They even live longer (Martin, Friedman, & Schwartz, 2007).

and unhappy. Finally, people who rate high on Factor 5, openness to experience, are intelligent and open to new ideas (Ashcraft, 2012).

The beauty of the Big-Five model is that almost any trait you can name will be related to one of the five factors. If you were selecting a college roommate, hiring an employee, or answering a singles ad, you would probably like to know all the personal dimensions covered by the Big Five. Now, try rating yourself as you read “Which Personality Are You (and Which Is Best)?”

Knowing where a person stands on the “Big Five” personality factors helps predict his or her behavior. For example, people who score high on conscientiousness tend to be safe drivers who are unlikely to have automobile accidents.
Psychoanalytic Theory—Id Came to Me in a Dream

Gateway Question 12.3: How do psychodynamic theories explain personality?

Psychodynamic theorists are not content with studying traits. Instead, they try to probe under the surface of personality—to learn what drives, conflicts, and energies animate us. Psychodynamic theorists believe that many of our actions are based on hidden, or unconscious, thoughts, needs, and emotions. What psychodynamic theorists tend to share in common with trait theorists is the view that human personality is based on a set of biological dispositions.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, psychoanalytic theory, the best-known psychodynamic approach, grew out of the work of Sigmund Freud, a Viennese physician. As a doctor, Freud was fascinated by patients whose problems seemed to be more emotional than physical. From about 1890 until he died in 1939, Freud evolved a theory of personality that deeply influenced modern thought (Jacobs, 2003; Schultz & Schultz, 2009). Let’s consider some of its main features.

The Structure of Personality

How did Freud view personality? Freud’s model portrays personality as a dynamic system directed by three mental structures: the id, the ego, and the superego. According to Freud, most behavior involves activity of all three systems. (Freud’s theory includes a large number of concepts. For your convenience, they are defined in Table 12.2 rather than in glossary boxes.)

The Id

The id is made up of innate biological instincts and urges. The id operates on the pleasure principle. It is self-serving, irrational, impulsive, and totally unconscious. That is, it seeks to freely express pleasure-seeking urges of all kinds. If we were solely under control of the id, the world would be chaotic beyond belief.

The id acts as a power source for the entire psyche (sigh-KEY), or personality. This energy, called libido (lih-BEE-doe), flows from the life instincts (or Eros). According to Freud, libido underlies our efforts to survive, as well as our sexual desires and pleasure seeking. Freud also described a death instinct, Thanatos, as he called it, produces aggressive and destructive urges. Freud offered humanity’s long history of wars and violence as evidence of such urges. Most id energies, then, are aimed at discharging tensions related to sex and aggression.

The Ego

The ego is sometimes described as the “executive,” because it directs energies supplied by the id. The id is like a blind king or queen whose power is awesome but who must rely on others to carry out orders. The id can only form mental images of things it desires. The ego wins power to direct behavior by relating the desires of the id to external reality.

Are there other differences between the ego and the id? Yes. Recall that the id operates on the pleasure principle. The ego, in contrast, is guided by the reality principle. The ego is the system of thinking, planning, problem solving, and deciding. It is in conscious control of the personality and often delays action until it is practical or appropriate.

REFLECT

Think Critically

7. In what way would memory contribute to the formation of an accurate or inaccurate self-image?

8. Can you think of a Big Five trait besides conscientiousness that might be related to academic achievement?

Self-Reflect

See if you can define or describe the following terms in your own words: personality, character, trait, type, self-concept, self-esteem.

List six or seven traits that best describe your personality. Which system of traits seems to best match your list, Allport’s, Cattell’s, or the Big Five?
The Superego

What is the role of the superego? The superego acts as a judge or censor for the thoughts and actions of the ego. One part of the superego, called the conscience, reflects actions for which a person has been punished. When standards of the conscience are not met, you are punished internally by guilt feelings.

A second part of the superego is the ego ideal. The ego ideal reflects all behavior one’s parents approved of or rewarded. The ego ideal is a source of goals and aspirations. When its standards are met, we feel pride.

The superego acts as an “internalized parent” to bring behavior under control. In Freudian terms, a person with a weak superego will be a delinquent, criminal, or antisocial personality. In contrast, an overly strict or harsh superego may cause inhibition, rigidity, or unbearable guilt.

### TABLE 12.2 Key Freudian Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anal stage</td>
<td>The psychosexual stage corresponding roughly to the period of toilet training (ages 1 to 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal-expulsive personality</td>
<td>A disorderly, destructive, cruel, or messy person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal-retentive personality</td>
<td>A person who is obstinate, stingy, or compulsive, and who generally has difficulty “letting go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscience</td>
<td>The part of the superego that causes guilt when its standards are not met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious</td>
<td>The region of the mind that includes all mental contents a person is aware of at any given moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>The executive part of personality that directs rational behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego ideal</td>
<td>The part of the superego representing ideal behavior; a source of pride when its standards are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electra conflict</td>
<td>A girl’s sexual attraction to her father and feelings of rivalry with her mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erogenous zone</td>
<td>Any body area that produces pleasurable sensations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eros</td>
<td>Freud’s name for the “life instincts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixation</td>
<td>A lasting conflict developed as a result of frustration or over-indulgence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genital stage</td>
<td>Period of full psychosexual development, marked by the attainment of mature adult sexuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Id</td>
<td>The primitive part of personality that remains unconscious, supplies energy, and demands pleasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latency</td>
<td>According to Freud, a period in childhood when psychosexual development is more or less interrupted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libido</td>
<td>In Freudian theory, the force, primarily pleasure oriented, that energizes the personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral anxiety</td>
<td>Apprehension felt when thoughts, impulses, or actions conflict with the superego’s standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurotic anxiety</td>
<td>Apprehension felt when the ego struggles to control id impulses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oedipus conflict</td>
<td>A boy’s sexual attraction to his mother, and feelings of rivalry with his father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral stage</td>
<td>The period when infants are preoccupied with the mouth as a source of pleasure and means of expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral-aggressive personality</td>
<td>A person who uses the mouth to express hostility by shouting, cursing, biting, and so forth. Also, one who actively exploits others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral-dependent personality</td>
<td>A person who wants to passively receive attention, gifts, love, and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phallic personality</td>
<td>A person who is vain, exhibitionistic, sensitive, and narcissistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phallic stage</td>
<td>The psychosexual stage (roughly ages 3 to 6) when a child is preoccupied with the genitals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure principle</td>
<td>A desire for immediate satisfaction of wishes, desires, or needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preconscious</td>
<td>An area of the mind containing information that can be voluntarily brought to awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psyche</td>
<td>The mind, mental life, and personality as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosexual stages</td>
<td>The oral, anal, phallic, and genital stages, during which various personality traits are formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality principle</td>
<td>Delaying action (or pleasure) until it is appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superego</td>
<td>A judge or censor for thoughts and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanatos</td>
<td>The death instinct postulated by Freud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious</td>
<td>The region of the mind that is beyond awareness, especially impulses and desires not directly known to a person.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Dynamics of Personality

How do the id, ego, and superego interact? Freud didn’t picture the id, ego, and superego as parts of the brain or as “little people” running the human psyche. Instead, they are conflicting mental processes. Freud theorized a delicate balance of power among the three. For example, the id’s demands for immediate pleasure often clash with the superego’s moral restrictions. Perhaps an example will help clarify the role of each part of the personality:

**Freud in a Nutshell**

Let’s say you are sexually attracted to an acquaintance. The id clamors for immediate satisfaction of its sexual desires, but is opposed by the superego (which finds the very thought of sex shocking). The id says, “Go for it!” The superego icily replies, “Never even think that again!” And what does the ego say? The ego says, “I have a plan!”

This is, of course a drastic simplification, but it does capture the core of Freudian thinking. To reduce tension, the ego could begin actions leading to friendship, romance, courtship, and marriage. If the id is unusually powerful, the ego may give in and attempt a seduction. If the superego prevails, the ego may be forced to displace or sublimate sexual energies to other activities (sports, music, dancing, push-ups, cold showers). According to Freud, internal struggles and rechanneled energies typify most personality functioning.

Is the ego always caught in the middle? Basically yes, and the pressures on it can be intense. In addition to meeting the conflicting demands of the id and superego, the overworked ego must deal with external reality.

According to Freud, you feel anxiety when your ego is threatened or overwhelmed. Impulses from the id cause neurotic anxiety when the ego can barely keep them under control. Threats of punishment from the superego cause moral anxiety. Each person develops habitual ways of calming these anxieties, and many resort to using ego-defense mechanisms to lessen internal conflicts. Defense mechanisms are mental processes that deny, distort, or otherwise block out sources of threat and anxiety.
Levels of Awareness

Like other psychodynamic theorists, Freud believed that our behavior often expresses unconscious (or hidden) forces. The unconscious holds repressed memories and emotions, plus the instinctual drives of the id. Interestingly, modern scientists have found that the brain’s limbic system does, in fact, seem to trigger unconscious emotions and memories (LeDoux, 2000). Even though they are beyond awareness, unconscious thoughts, feelings, or urges may slip into behavior in disguised or symbolic form (Reason, 2000; yes, these are Freudian slips). For example, if you meet someone you would like to know better, you may unconsciously leave a book or a jacket at that person’s house to ensure another meeting.

Are the actions of the ego and superego also unconscious, like the id?

At times, yes, but they also operate on two other levels of awareness (Figure 12.5). The conscious level includes everything you are aware of at a given moment, including thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and memories. The preconscious contains material that can be easily brought to awareness. If you stop to think about a time when you felt angry or rejected, you will be moving this memory from the preconscious to the conscious level of awareness.

The superego’s activities also reveal differing levels of awareness. At times, we consciously try to live up to moral codes or standards. Yet, at other times a person may feel guilty without knowing why. Psychoanalytic theory credits such guilt to unconscious workings of the superego. Indeed, Freud believed that the unconscious origins of many feelings cannot be easily brought to awareness.

Personality Development

How does psychoanalytic theory explain personality development? Freud theorized that the core of personality is formed before age 6 in a series of psychosexual stages. Freud believed that erotic urges in childhood have lasting effects on development (Ashcraft, 2012). As you might expect, this is a controversial idea. However, Freud used the terms sex and erotic very broadly to refer to many physical sources of pleasure.

A Freudian Fable?

Freud identified four psychosexual stages, the oral, anal, phallic, and genital. (He also described a period of “latency” between the phallic and genital stages. Latency is explained in a moment.) At each stage, a different part of the body becomes a child’s primary erogenous zone (an area capable of producing pleasure). Each area then serves as the main source of pleasure, frustration, and self-expression. Freud believed that many adult personality traits can be traced to fixations in one or more of the stages.

What is a fixation? A fixation is an unresolved conflict or emotional hang-up caused by overindulgence or by frustration. As we describe the psychosexual stages, you’ll see why Freud considered fixations important.

The Oral Stage

During the first year of life, most of an infant’s pleasure comes from stimulation of the mouth. If a child is overfed or frustrated, oral traits may be created. Adult expressions of oral needs include gum chewing, nail biting, smoking, kissing, overeating, and alcoholism.
What if there is an oral fixation? Fixation early in the oral stage produces an oral-dependent personality. Oral-dependent persons are gullible (they swallow things easily!) and passive and need lots of attention (they want to be mothered and showered with gifts). Frustrations later in the oral stage may cause aggression, often in the form of biting. Fixations here create cynical, oral-aggressive adults who exploit others. They also like to argue (“biting sarcasm” is their forte!).

The Anal Stage
Between the ages of 1 and 3, the child’s attention shifts to the process of elimination. When parents attempt toilet training, the child can gain approval or express rebellion or aggression by “holding on” or by “letting go.” Therefore, harsh or lenient toilet training can cause an anal fixation that may lock such responses into personality. Freud described the anal-retentive (holding-on) personality as obstinate, stingy, orderly, and compulsively clean. The anal-expulsive (letting-go) personality is disorderly, destructive, cruel, or messy.

The Phallic Stage
Adult traits of the phallic personality are vanity, exhibitionism, sensitive pride, and narcissism (self-love). Freud theorized that phallic fixations develop between the ages of 3 and 6. At this time, increased sexual interest causes the child to be physically attracted to the parent of the opposite sex. In males, this attraction leads to an Oedipal conflict. In it, the boy feels a rivalry with his father for the affection of his mother. Freud believed that the male child feels threatened by the father (specifically, the boy fears castration). To ease his anxieties, the boy must identify with the father. Their rivalry ends when the boy seeks to become more like his father. As he does, he begins to accept the father’s values and forms a conscience.

What about the female child? Girls experience an Electra conflict. In this case, the girl loves her father and competes with her mother. However, according to Freud, the girl identifies with the mother more gradually. Freud believed that females already feel castrated. Because of this, they are less driven to identify with their mothers than boys are with their fathers. This, he said, is less effective in creating a conscience. This particular part of Freudian thought has been thoroughly (and rightfully) rejected by modern experts in the psychology of women. It is better understood as a reflection of the male-dominated times in which Freud lived.

Latency
According to Freud, there is a period of latency from age 6 to puberty. Latency is not so much a stage as it is a quiet time during which psychosexual development is dormant. Freud’s belief that psychosexual development is “on hold” at this time is hard to accept. Nevertheless, Freud saw latency as a relatively quiet time compared with the stormy first 6 years of life.

The Genital Stage
At puberty, an upswing in sexual energies activates all the unresolved conflicts of earlier years. This upsurge, according to Freud, is the reason why adolescence can be filled with emotion and turmoil. The genital stage begins at puberty. It is marked, during adolescence, by a growing capacity for responsible social—sexual relationships. The genital stage ends with a mature capacity for love and the realization of full adult sexuality.

Critical Comments
As bizarre as Freud’s theory might seem, it has been influential for several reasons. First, it pioneered the idea that the first years of life help shape adult personality. Second, it identified feeding, toilet training, and early sexual experiences as critical events in personality formation. Third, Freud was among the first to propose that development proceeds through a series of stages (Shaffer, 2009).

Is the Freudian view of development widely accepted? Few psychologists wholeheartedly embrace Freud’s theory today. In some cases, Freud was clearly wrong. His portrayal of the elementary school years (latency) as free from sexuality and unimportant for personality development is hard to believe. His idea of the role of a stern or threatening father in the development of a strong conscience in males has also been challenged. Studies show that a son is more likely to develop a strong conscience if his father is affectionate and accepting rather than stern and punishing. Freud also overemphasized sexuality in personality development. Other motives and cognitive factors are of equal importance. Freud has been criticized for his views of patients who believed they were sexually molested as children (Marcel, 2005). Freud assumed that such events were merely childhood fantasies. This view led to a longstanding tendency to disbelieve children who have been molested and women who have been raped (Brannon, 2011). Another important criticism is that Freud’s concepts are almost impossible to verify scientifically. The theory provides numerous ways to explain almost any thought, action, or feeling after it has occurred. However, it leads to few predictions, which makes its claims difficult to test. Although more criticisms of Freud could be listed, the fact remains that there is an element of truth to much of what he said (Jacob, 2003; Moran, 2010). Because of this, some clinical psychologists continue to regard Freudian theory as a useful way to think about human problems.

The Neo-Freudians
Freud’s ideas quickly attracted a brilliant following. Just as rapidly, the importance Freud placed on instinctual drives and sexuality caused many to disagree with him. Those who stayed close to the
core of Freud's thinking are called neo-Freudians (neo means “new”). Neo-Freudians accepted the broad features of Freud's theory but revised parts of it. Some of the better known neo-Freudians are Karen Horney, Anna Freud (Freud's daughter), Otto Rank, and Erich Fromm. Other early followers broke away more completely from Freud and created their own opposing theories. This group includes people such as Alfred Adler, Harry Sullivan, and Carl Jung.

The full story of other psychodynamic theories must await your first course in personality. For now, let's sample three views. The first represents an early rejection of Freud's thinking (Adler). The second embraces most but not all of Freud's theory (Horney). The third involves a carryover of Freudian ideas into a related but unique theory (Jung).

**Alfred Adler (1870–1937)**

Adler broke away from Freud because he disagreed with Freud's emphasis on the unconscious, on instinctual drives, and on the importance of sexuality. Adler believed that we are social creatures governed by social urges, not by biological instincts (Shulman, 2004). In Adler's view, the main driving force in personality is a striving for superiority. This striving, he said, is a struggle to overcome imperfections, an upward drive for competence, completion, and mastery of shortcomings.

What motivates “striving for superiority”? Adler believed that everyone experiences feelings of inferiority. This occurs mainly because we begin life as small, weak, and relatively powerless children surrounded by larger and more powerful adults. Feelings of inferiority may also come from our personal limitations. The struggle for superiority arises from such feelings.

Although everyone strives for superiority, each person tries to compensate for different limitations, and each chooses a different pathway to superiority (Overholser, 2010). Adler believed that this situation creates a unique style of life (or personality pattern) for each individual. According to Adler, the core of each person's style of life is formed by age 5. (Adler also believed that valuable clues to a person's style of life are revealed by the earliest memory that can be recalled. You might find it interesting to search back to your earliest memory and contemplate what it tells you.) However, later in his life, Adler began to emphasize the existence of a creative self. By this, he meant that humans create their personalities through choices and experiences.

**Karen Horney (1885–1952)**

Karen Horney (HORN-eye) remained faithful to most of Freud's theory, but she resisted his more mechanistic, biological, and instinctive ideas. For example, as a woman, Horney rejected Freud's claim that “anatomy is destiny.” This view, woven into Freudian psychology, held that males are dominant or superior to females. Horney was among the first to challenge the obvious male bias in Freud's thinking (Eckardt, 2005).

Horney also disagreed with Freud about the causes of neurosis. Freud held that neurotic (anxiety-ridden) individuals are struggling with forbidden id drives that they fear they cannot control. Horney's view was that a core of basic anxiety occurs when people feel isolated and helpless in a hostile world. These feelings, she believed, are rooted in childhood. Trouble occurs when an individual tries to control basic anxiety by exaggerating a single mode of interacting with others.

**What do you mean by “mode of interacting”?** According to Horney, each of us can move toward others (by depending on them for love, support, or friendship), we can move away from others (by withdrawing, acting like a “loner,” or being “strong” and independent), or we can move against others (by attacking, competing with, or seeking power over them). Horney believed that emotional health reflects a balance in moving toward, away from, and against others. In her view, emotional problems tend to lock people into overuse of one of the three modes—an insight that remains valuable today (Smith, 2007).

**Carl Jung (1875–1961)**

Carl Jung was a student of Freud's, but the two parted ways as Jung began to develop his own ideas. Like Freud, Jung called the conscious part of the personality the ego. However, he further noted that a persona, or “mask,” exists between the ego and the outside world. The persona is the “public self” presented to others. It is most apparent when we adopt particular roles or hide our deeper feelings. As mentioned earlier, Jung believed that actions of the ego may reflect attitudes of introversion (in which energy is mainly directed inward) or of extroversion (in which energy is mainly directed outward).

Was Jung's view of the unconscious the same as Freud's? Jung used the term personal unconscious to refer to what Freud simply called the unconscious (Mayer, 2002). The personal unconscious is a mental storehouse for a single individual's experiences, feelings, and memories. But Jung also described a deeper collective unconscious, or mental storehouse for unconscious ideas and images.

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**Neo-Freudian** A theorist who has revised Freud's theory, while still accepting some of its basic concepts.

**Striving for superiority** According to Adler, this basic drive propels us toward perfection.

**Compensation** Any attempt to overcome feelings of inadequacy or inferiority.

**Style of life** The pattern of personality and behavior that defines the pathway each person takes through life.

**Creative self** The “artist” in each of us that creates a unique identity and style of life.

**Basic anxiety** A primary form of anxiety that arises from living in a hostile world.

**Persona** The “mask” or public self presented to others.

**Introversion** Ego attitude in which energy is mainly directed inward.

**Extroversion** Ego attitude in which energy is mainly directed outward.

**Personal unconscious** A mental storehouse for a single individual's unconscious thoughts.

**Collective unconscious** A mental storehouse for unconscious ideas and images shared by all humans.
shared by all humans. Jung believed that, from the beginning of time, all humans had experiences with birth, death, power, god figures, mother and father figures, animals, the earth, energy, evil, rebirth, and so on. According to Jung, such universals create archetypes (ARE-keh-types: original ideas, images, or patterns).

Archetypes, found in the collective unconscious, are unconscious images that cause us to respond emotionally to symbols of birth, death, energy, animals, evil, and the like (Maloney, 1999). Jung believed that he detected symbols of such archetypes in the art, religion, myths, and dreams of every culture and age. Let’s say, for instance, that a man dreams of dancing with his sister. To Freud, this would probably be a sign of hidden incestuous feelings. To Jung, the image of the sister might represent an unexpressed feminine side of the man’s personality and the dream might represent the cosmic dance that intertwines “maleness” and “femaleness” in all lives.

Are some archetypes more important than others? Two particularly important archetypes are the anima (female principle) and the animus (male principle). In men, the anima is an unconscious, idealized image of women. This image is based, in part, on real experiences with women (the man’s mother, sister, friends). However, the experiences men have had with women throughout history form the true core of the anima. The reverse is true of women, who possess an animus, or idealized image of men. The anima in males and the animus in females enable us to relate to members of the opposite sex. The anima and animus also make it possible for people to learn to express both “masculine” and “feminine” sides of their personalities.

Jung regarded the self archetype as the most important of all. The self archetype represents the unity of the center of the self. Its existence causes a gradual movement toward balance, wholeness, and harmony within the personality. Jung felt that we become richer and more completely human when a balance is achieved between the conscious and unconscious, the anima and animus, thinking and feeling, sensing and intuiting, the persona and the ego, introversion and extroversion.

Was Jung talking about self-actualization? Essentially he was. Jung was the first to use the term self-actualization to describe a striving for completion and unity. He believed that the self archetype is symbolized in every culture by mandalas (magic circles representing the center of the self) of one kind or another.

Jung’s theory may not be scientific, but clearly he was a man of genius and vision (Lawson, 2008). If you would like to know more about Jung and his ideas, a good starting place is his autobiography, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (Jung, 1961).

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**Knowledge Builder**

**Psychodynamic Theories**

**RECITE**

1. List the three divisions of personality postulated by Freud.
   
   __________________, __________________, __________________

2. Which division is totally unconscious?
   
   __________________

3. Which division is responsible for moral anxiety?
   
   __________________

4. Freud proposed the existence of a life instinct known as Thanatos. T or F?
   
   __________________

5. Freud’s view of personality development is based on the concept of __________________ stages.

6. Arrange these stages in the proper order: phallic, anal, genital, oral.
   
   __________________, __________________, __________________, __________________

7. Freud considered the anal-retentive personality to be obstinate and stingy. T or F?

8. Karen Horney theorized that people control basic anxiety by moving toward, away from, and __________________________ others.

9. Carl Jung’s theory states that archetypes, which are found in the personal unconscious, exert an influence on behavior. T or F?

**REFLECT**

**Think Critically**

10. Many adults would find it embarrassing or humiliating to drink from a baby bottle. Can you explain why?

**Self-Reflect**

Try to think of at least one time when your thoughts, feelings, or actions seemed to reflect the workings of each of the following: the id, the ego, and the superego.

Do you know anyone who seems to have oral, anal, or phallic personality traits? Do you think Freud’s concept of fixation explains their characteristics?

Do any of your personal experiences support the existence of an Oedipus conflict or an Electra conflict? If not, is it possible that you have repressed feelings related to these conflicts?

If you had to summarize your style of life in one sentence, what would it be?

Which of Horney’s three modes of interacting do you think you rely on the most? Do you overuse one of the modes?

Think of the images you have seen in art, mythology, movies, and popular culture. Do any seem to represent Jungian archetypes—especially the self archetype?

**Answers:**

1. id, ego, superego

2. id, ego, superego

3. id, ego, superego

4. id, ego, superego

5. id, ego, superego

6. id, ego, superego

7. id, ego, superego

8. id, ego, superego

9. id, ego, superego

10. id, ego, superego
Humanistic Theory—Peak Experiences and Personal Growth

Gateway Question 12.4: What are humanistic theories of personality?

At the beginning of this chapter, you met Annette. A few years ago, Annette and her husband spent a year riding mules across the country as a unique way to see America and get to know themselves better. From where do such desires for personal growth come? Humanistic theories pay special attention to the fuller use of human potentials, and they help bring balance to our overall views of personality.

Humanism focuses on human experience, problems, potentials, and ideals. As we saw in Chapter 1, the core of humanism is a positive image of humans as creative beings capable of free will—an ability to choose that is not determined by genetics, learning, or unconscious forces. In short, humanists seek ways to encourage our potentials to blossom.

Humanism is sometimes called a “third force” in that it is opposed to both psychoanalytic and behaviorist theories of personality. Humanism is a reaction to the pessimism of psychoanalytic theory. It rejects the Freudian view of personality as a battleground for instincts and unconscious forces. Instead, humanists view human nature—the traits, qualities, potentials, and behavior patterns most characteristic of the human species—as inherently good. Humanists also oppose the machine-like overtones of the behaviorist view of human nature, which we will encounter shortly. We are not, they say, merely a bundle of moldable responses.

To a humanist, the person you are today is largely the product of all the choices you have made. Humanists also emphasize immediate subjective experience (private perceptions of reality) rather than prior learning. They believe that there are as many “real worlds” as there are people. To understand behavior, we must learn how a person subjectively views the world—what is “real” for her or him.

Who are the major humanistic theorists? Many psychologists have added to the humanistic tradition. Of these, the best known are Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) and Carl Rogers (1902–1987). Because Maslow’s idea of self-actualization was introduced in Chapter 1, let’s begin with a more detailed look at this facet of his thinking.

Maslow and Self-Actualization

Abraham Maslow became interested in people who were living unusually effective lives (Hoffman, 2008). How were they different? To find an answer, Maslow began by studying the lives of great men and women from history, such as Albert Einstein, William James, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, John Muir, and Walt Whitman. From there, he moved on to directly study living artists, writers, poets, and other creative individuals.

Along the way, Maslow’s thinking changed radically. At first, he studied only people of obvious creativity or high achievement. However, it eventually became clear that a housewife, clerk, student, or someone like our friend Annette could live a rich, creative, and satisfying life (Davidson, & Bromfield, Beck, 2007). Maslow referred to the process of fully developing personal potentials as self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). The heart of self-actualization is a continuous search for personal fulfillment (Ewen, 2009; Reiss & Havercamp, 2005).

Characteristics of Self-Actualizers

A self-actualizer is a person who is living creatively and fully using his or her potentials. In his studies, Maslow found that self-actualizers share many similarities. Whether famous or unknown, well-schooled or uneducated, rich or poor, self-actualizers tend to fit the following profile:

1. Efficient perceptions of reality. Self-actualizers are able to judge situations correctly and honestly. They are very sensitive to the fake and dishonest.
2. Comfortable acceptance of self, others, and nature. Self-actualizers accept their own human nature with all its flaws. The shortcomings of others and the contradictions of the human condition are accepted with humor and tolerance.
3. Spontaneity. Maslow’s subjects extended their creativity into everyday activities. Actualizers tend to be unusually alive, engaged, and spontaneous.
4. Task centering. Most of Maslow’s subjects had a mission to fulfill in life or some task or problem outside of themselves to pursue. Humanitarians such as Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa represent this quality.
5. Autonomy. Self-actualizers are free from reliance on external authorities or other people. They tend to be resourceful and independent.
6. Continued freshness of appreciation. The self-actualizer seems to constantly renew appreciation of life’s basic goodness. A sunset or a flower will be experienced as intensely time after time as it was at first. There is an “innocence of vision,” like that of an artist or child.

Archetype A universal idea, image, or pattern, found in the collective unconscious.
Anima An archetype representing the female principle.
Animus An archetype representing the male principle.
Self archetype An unconscious image of the center of the self, representing unity, wholeness, completion, and balance.
Mandala A circular design representing the balance, unity, and completion of the unconscious self.
Humanism An approach that focuses on human experience, problems, potentials, and ideals.
Human nature Those traits, qualities, potentials, and behavior patterns most characteristic of the human species.
Subjective experience Reality as it is perceived and interpreted, not as it exists objectively.
Self-actualization The process of fully developing personal potentials.
7. **Fellowship with humanity.** Maslow’s subjects felt a deep identification with others and the human situation in general.

8. **Profound interpersonal relationships.** The interpersonal relationships of self-actualizers are marked by deep, loving bonds (Hanley & Abell, 2002).

9. **Comfort with solitude.** Despite their satisfying relationships with others, self-actualizing persons value solitude and are comfortable being alone (Sumerlin & Bundrick, 1996).

10. **Nonhostile sense of humor.** This refers to the wonderful capacity to laugh at oneself. It also describes the kind of humor a man like Abraham Lincoln had. Lincoln probably never made a joke that hurt anybody. His wry comments were a gentle prodding of human shortcomings.

11. **Peak experiences.** All of Maslow’s subjects reported the frequent occurrence of peak experiences (temporary moments of self-actualization). These occasions were marked by feelings of ecstasy, harmony, and deep meaning. Self-actualizers reported feeling at one with the universe, stronger and calmer than ever before, filled with light, beautiful and good, and so forth.

In summary, self-actualizers feel safe, nonanxious, accepted, loved, loving, and alive.

**Maslow’s choice of people for study seems pretty subjective. Do they really provide a fair representation of self-actualization?** Although Maslow tried to investigate self-actualization empirically, his choice of people for study was subjective. Undoubtedly, there are many ways to make full use of personal potential. Maslow’s primary contribution was to draw our attention to the possibility of lifelong personal growth (Peterson & Park, 2010).

**What steps can be taken to promote self-actualization?** Maslow made few specific recommendations about how to proceed. There is no magic formula for leading a more creative life. Self-actualization is primarily a **process**, not a goal or an end point. As such, it requires hard work, patience, and commitment. Nevertheless, some helpful suggestions can be gleaned from his writings (Maslow, 1954, 1967, 1971). Here are some ways to begin:

1. **Be willing to change.** Begin by asking yourself, “Am I living in a way that is deeply satisfying to me and that truly expresses me?” If not, be prepared to make changes in your life. Ineed, ask yourself this question often and accept the need for continual change.

2. **Take responsibility.** You can become an architect of self by acting as if you are personally responsible for every aspect of your life. Shouloring responsibility in this way helps end the habit of blaming others for your own shortcomings.

3. **Examine your motives.** Self-discovery involves an element of risk. If your behavior is restricted by a desire for safety or security, it may be time to test some limits. Try to make each life decision a choice for growth, not a response to fear or anxiety.

4. **Experience honestly and directly.** Wishful thinking is another barrier to personal growth. Self-actualizers trust themselves enough to accept all kinds of information without distorting it to fit their fears and desires. Try to see yourself as others do. Be willing to admit, “I was wrong,” or, “I failed because I was irresponsible.”

5. **Make use of positive experiences.** Maslow considered peak experiences temporary moments of self-actualization. Therefore, you might actively repeat activities that have caused feelings of awe, amazement, exaltation, renewal, reverence, humility, fulfillment, or joy.

6. **Be prepared to be different.** Maslow felt that everyone has a potential for “greatness,” but most fear becoming what they might. As part of personal growth, be prepared to trust your own impulses and feelings; don’t automatically judge yourself by the standards of others. Accept your uniqueness.

7. **Get involved.** With few exceptions, self-actualizers tend to have a mission or “calling” in life. For these people, “work” is not done just to fill deficiency needs, but to satisfy higher yearnings for truth, beauty, community, and meaning. Get personally involved and committed. Turn your attention to problems outside yourself.

8. **Assess your progress.** There is no final point at which one becomes self-actualized. It’s important to gauge your progress frequently and to renew your efforts. If you feel bored at school, at a job, or in a relationship, consider it a challenge. Have you been taking responsibility for your own personal growth? Almost any activity can be used as a chance for self-enhancement if it is approached creatively.

**The Whole Person: Positive Personality Traits**

It could be said that self-actualizing people are thriving, not just surviving. In recent years, proponents of positive psychology have tried to scientifically study positive personality traits that contrib-ute to happiness and well-being (Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Seligman, 2003). Although their work does not fall within the humanistic tradition, their findings are relevant here.

Martin Seligman, Christopher Peterson, and others have identified six human strengths that contribute to well-being and life satisfaction. Each strength is expressed by the positive personality traits listed here (Peterson & Seligman, 2004):

- **Wisdom and knowledge:** Creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective
- **Courage:** Bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality
- **Humanity:** Love, kindness, social intelligence
- **Justice:** Citizenship, fairness, leadership
- **Temperance:** Forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-control
- **Transcendence:** Appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality

**Which of the positive personality traits are most closely related to happiness?** One study found that traits of hope, vitality, gratitude, love, and curiosity are strongly associated with life satisfaction (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). These characteristics, in combination with Maslow’s descriptions of self-actualizers, provide a
good guide to the characteristics that help people live happy, meaningful lives.

**Carl Rogers’ Self Theory**

Carl Rogers, another well-known humanist, also emphasized the human capacity for inner peace and happiness. The fully functioning person, he said, lives in harmony with his or her deepest feelings and impulses. Such people are open to their experiences, and they trust their inner urges and intuitions (Rogers, 1961). Rogers believed that this attitude is most likely to occur when a person receives ample amounts of love and acceptance from others.

**Personality Structure and Dynamics**

Rogers’ theory emphasizes the self, a flexible and changing perception of personal identity. Much behavior can be understood as an attempt to maintain consistency between our self-image and our actions. (Your self-image is a total subjective perception of your body and personality.) For example, people who think of themselves as kind tend to be considerate in most situations. For example, people who think of themselves as kind tend to be considerate in most situations. Information or feelings inconsistent with the self-image are said to be incongruent. Thus, a person who thinks she is kind but really isn't is in a state of incongruence. In other words, there is a discrepancy between her experiences and her self-image. As another example, it would be incongruent to believe that you are a person who “never gets angry” if you spend much of each day seething inside.

Experiences seriously incongruent with the self-image can be threatening and are often distorted or denied conscious recognition. Blocking, denying, or distorting experiences prevents the self from changing. This creates a gulf between the self-image and reality. As the self-image grows more unrealistic, the incongruent person becomes confused, vulnerable, dissatisfied, or seriously maladjusted (Figure 12.6). In line with Rogers’ observations, a study of college students confirmed that being authentic is vital for healthy functioning. That is, we need to feel that our behavior accurately expresses who we are (Sheldon et al., 1997). Please note, however, that being authentic doesn’t mean you can do whatever you want. Being true to yourself is no excuse for acting irresponsibly or ignoring the feelings of others (Kernis & Goldman, 2005).

When your self-image is consistent with what you really think, feel, do, and experience, you are best able to actualize your potentials. Rogers also considered it essential to have congruence between the self-image and the ideal self. The ideal self is similar to Freud’s ego ideal. It is an image of the person you would most like to be (Zentner & Renaud, 2007).

**BRIDGES**

Rogers and other humanistic theorists believe that some psychological disorders are caused by a faulty or incongruent self-image. See Chapter 16, pages 552–553.

Is it really incongruent not to live up to your ideal self? Rogers was aware that we never fully attain our ideals. Nevertheless, the greater the gap between the way you see yourself and the way you would like to be, the more tension and anxiety you will experience.

**Peak experiences** Temporary moments of self-actualization.

**Fully functioning person** A person living in harmony with her or his deepest feelings, impulses, and intuitions.

**Self** A continuously evolving conception of one’s personal identity.

**Self-image** Total subjective perception of one’s body and personality (another term for self-concept).

**Incongruence** State that exists when there is a discrepancy between one’s experiences and self-image or between one’s self-image and ideal self.

**Ideal self** An idealized image of oneself (the person one would like to be).
Rogers emphasized that to maximize our potentials, we must accept information about ourselves as honestly as possible. In accord with his thinking, researchers have found that people with a close match between their self-image and ideal self tend to be socially poised, confident, and resourceful. Those with a poor match tend to be depressed, anxious, and insecure (Boldero et al., 2005).

According to psychologists Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius (1986), our ideal self is only one of a number of possible selves (persons we could become or are afraid of becoming). Annette, who was described earlier, is an interesting personality, to say the least. Annette is one of those people who seem to have lived many lives in the time that most of us manage only one. Like Annette, you may have pondered many possible personal identities. (See “Telling Stories about Ourselves.”)

Possible selves translate our hopes, fears, fantasies, and goals into specific images of who we could be. Thus, a beginning law student might picture herself as a successful attorney, an enterprising college student might imagine himself as an Internet entrepreneur, and a person on a diet might imagine both slim and grossly obese possible selves. Such images tend to direct our future behavior (Oyserman et al., 2004).

Of course, almost everyone over age 30 has probably felt the anguish of realizing that some cherished possible selves will never be realized. Nevertheless, there is value in asking yourself not just “Who am I?” but also “Who would I like to become?” As you do, remember Maslow’s advice that everyone has a potential for “greatness,” but most fear becoming what they might.

Humanistic View of Development

Why do mirrors, photographs, video cameras, and the reactions of others hold such fascination and threat for many people? Carl Rogers’ theory suggests it is because they provide information about one’s self. The development of a self-image depends greatly on information from the environment. It begins with a sorting of perceptions and feelings: my body, my toes, my nose, I want, I like, I am, and so on. Soon, it expands to include self-evaluation: I am a good person, I did something bad just now, and so forth.

How does development of the self contribute to later personality functioning? Rogers believed that positive and negative evaluations by others cause children to develop internal standards of evaluation called conditions of worth. In other words, we learn that some actions win our parents’ love and approval, whereas others are rejected. More important, parents may label some feelings as bad or wrong. For example, a child might be told that it is wrong to feel angry toward a brother or sister—even when anger is justified. Likewise, a little boy might be told that he must not cry or show fear, two very normal emotions.

Learning to evaluate some experiences or feelings as “good” and others as “bad” is directly related to a later capacity for self-esteem, positive self-evaluation, or positive self-regard, to use Rogers’
term. To think of yourself as a good, lovable, worthwhile person, your behavior and experiences must match your internal conditions of worth. The problem is that this can cause incongruence by leading to the denial of many true feelings and experiences.

To put it simply, Rogers blamed many adult emotional problems on attempts to live by the standards of others (Ashcraft, 2012). He believed that congruence and self-actualization are encouraged by replacing conditions of worth with organismic valuing (a natural, undistorted, full-body reaction to an experience). Organismic valuing is a direct, gut-level response to life that avoids the filtering and distortion of incongruence. It involves trusting one's own feelings and perceptions. Organismic valuing is most likely to develop, Rogers felt, when children (or adults) receive unconditional positive regard (unshakable love and approval) from others. That is, when they are “prized” as worthwhile human beings, just for being themselves, without any conditions or strings attached. Although this may be a luxury few people enjoy, we are more likely to move toward our ideal selves if we receive affirmation and support from a close partner (Drigotas et al., 1999).

Humanistic Theory

**RECITE**

1. Humanists view human nature as basically good and they emphasize the effects of subjective learning and unconscious choice. T or F?
2. Maslow used the term _______________________ to describe the tendency of certain individuals to fully use their talents and potentials.
3. According to Maslow, a preoccupation with one’s own thoughts, feelings, and needs is characteristic of self-actualizing individuals. T or F?
4. Maslow thought of peak experiences as temporary moments of a. congruence b. positive self-regard c. self-actualization d. self-reinforcement
5. Which of the following is not one of the six human strengths identified by positive psychologists? a. congruence b. courage c. justice d. transcendence
6. According to Rogers, a close match between the self-image and the ideal self creates a condition called incongruence. T or F?
7. Markus and Nurius describe alternative self-concepts that a person may have as “possible selves.” T or F?
8. Carl Rogers believed that personal growth is encouraged when conditions of worth are replaced by a. self-efficacy b. instrumental worth c. latency d. organismic valuing

**REFLECT**

**Think Critically**

9. What role would your self-image and “possible selves” have in the choice of a college major?

**Self-Reflect**

How do your views of human nature and free will compare with those of the humanists?

Do you know anyone who seems to be making especially good use of his or her personal potentials? Does that person fit Maslow’s profile of a self-actualizer?

Learning Theories of Personality—Habit I Seen You Before?

**Gateway Question 12.5: What do behaviorists and social learning theorists emphasize in their approach to personality?**

After exploring psychodynamic theories, you might be relieved to know that behavioral theorists explain personality through straightforward concepts, such as learning, reinforcement, and imitation. Behavioral and social learning theories are based on scientific research, which makes them powerful ways of looking at personality.

**How do behaviorists approach personality?** According to some critics, as if people are robots. Actually, the behaviorist position is not nearly that mechanistic, and its value is well established. Behaviorists have shown repeatedly that children can learn things like kindness, hostility, generosity, or destructiveness. What does this have to do with personality? Everything, according to the behavioral viewpoint.

**Behavioral personality theories** emphasize that personality is no more (or less) than a collection of relatively stable learned behavior patterns. Personality, like other learned behavior, is acquired through classical and operant conditioning, observational learning, reinforcement, extinction, generalization, and discrimination. When Mother says, “It’s not nice to make mud pies with Mommy’s blender. If we want to grow up to be a big girl, we won’t do it again, will we?” she serves as a model and in other ways shapes her daughter’s personality.

**Possible self** A collection of thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and images concerning the person one could become.

**Conditions of worth** Internal standards used to judge the value of one’s thoughts, actions, feelings, or experiences.

**Positive self-regard** Thinking of oneself as a good, lovable, worthwhile person.

**Organismic valuing** A natural, undistorted, full-body reaction to an experience.

**Unconditional positive regard** Unshakable love and approval given without qualification.

**Behavioral personality theory** Any model of personality that emphasizes learning and observable behavior.
Strict learning theorists reject the idea that personality is made up of traits. They would assert, for instance, that there is no such thing as a trait of “honesty” (Mischel, 2004). Certainly some people are honest and others are not. How can honesty not be a trait? Remember, for many trait theorists, traits are biological dispositions. According to learning theorists, they are, instead, learned responses. If his parents consistently reward little Alexander for honesty, he is more likely to become an honest adult. If his parents are less scrupulous, Alexander might well grow up differently.

Learning theorists also stress the situational determinants (external causes) of actions. Knowing that someone is honest does not automatically allow us to predict whether that person will be honest in a specific situation. It would not be unusual, for example, to find that a person honored for returning a lost wallet had cheated on a test, bought a term paper, or broken the speed limit. If you were to ask a learning theorist, “Are you an honest person?” the reply might be, “In what situation?”

A good example of how situations can influence behavior is a study in which people were intentionally overpaid for doing an assigned task. Under normal circumstances, 80 percent kept the extra money without mentioning it. But as few as 17 percent were dishonest if the situation was altered. For instance, if people thought the money was coming out of the pocket of the person doing the study, far fewer were dishonest (Bersoff, 1999). Thus, situations always interact with our prior learning to activate behavior.

How Situations Affect Behavior

Situations vary greatly in their impact. Some are powerful. Others are trivial and have little effect on behavior. The more powerful the situation, the easier it is to see what is meant by situational determinants. For example, each of the following situations would undoubtedly have a strong influence on your behavior: An armed person walks into your classroom; you accidentally sit on a lighted cigarette; you find your lover in bed with your best friend. Yet even these situations could provoke very different reactions from different personalities. That’s why behavior is always a product of both prior learning and the situations in which we find ourselves (Mischel, Shoda, & Smith, 2008).

Ultimately, what is predictable about personality is that we respond in fairly consistent ways to certain types of situations. Consider, for example, two people who are easily angered: One person might get angry when she is delayed (for example, in traffic or a checkout line) but not when she misplaces something at home; the other person might get angry whenever she misplaces things, but not when she is delayed. Overall, the two women are equally prone to anger, but their anger tends to occur in different patterns and different types of situations (Mischel, 2004).

Personality = Behavior

How do learning theorists view the structure of personality? The behavioral view of personality can be illustrated with an early theory proposed by John Dollard and Neal Miller (1950). In their view, habits (learned behavior patterns) make up the structure of personality. As for the dynamics of personality, habits are governed by four elements of learning: drive, cue, response, and reward. A drive is any stimulus strong enough to goad a person to action (such as hunger, pain, lust, frustration, or fear). Cues are signals from the environment. These signals guide responses (actions) so that they are most likely to bring about reward (positive reinforcement).
How does that relate to personality? Let’s say a child named Amina is frustrated by her older brother Kelvin, who takes a toy from her. Amina could respond in several ways: She could throw a temper tantrum, hit Kelvin, tell her mother, and so forth. The response she chooses is guided by available cues and the previous effects of each response. If telling her mother has paid off in the past, and her mother is present, telling again may be Amina’s immediate response. If a different set of cues exists (if her mother is absent or if Kelvin looks particularly menacing), Amina may select some other response. To an outside observer, Amina’s actions seem to reflect her personality. To a learning theorist, they simply express the combined effects of drive, cue, response, and reward.

Social Learning Theory

The “cognitive behaviorism” of social learning theory can be illustrated by three concepts proposed by Julian Rotter: the psychological situation, expectancy, and reinforcement value (Rotter & Hochreich, 1975). Let’s examine each.

Someone trips you. How do you respond? Your reaction probably depends on whether you think it was planned or an accident. It is not enough to know the setting in which a person responds. We also need to know the person’s psychological situation (how the person interprets or defines the situation). As another example, let’s say you score low on an exam. Do you consider it a challenge to work harder, a sign that you should drop the class, or an excuse to get drunk? Again, your interpretation is important.

Our actions are affected by an expectancy, or anticipation, that making a response will lead to reinforcement. To continue the example, if working harder has paid off in the past, it is a likely reaction to a low test score. But to predict your response, we would also have to know if you expect your efforts to pay off in the present situation. In fact, expected reinforcement may be more important than actual past reinforcement. And what about the value you attach to grades, school success, or personal ability? The third concept, reinforcement value, states that we attach different subjective values to various activities or rewards. You will likely choose to study harder if passing your courses and obtaining a degree is highly valued. This, too, must be taken into account to understand personality.

Self-Efficacy

An ability to control your own life is the essence of what it means to be human (Corey & Corey, 2010). Because of this, Albert Bandura believes that one of the most important expectancies we develop concerns self-efficacy (EF-uh-keh-see: a capacity for producing a desired result). You’re attracted to someone in your anthropology class. Will you ask him or her out? You’re beginning to consider a career in psychology. Will you take the courses you need to get into graduate school? You’d like to exercise more on the weekends. Will you join a hiking club? In these and countless other situations, efficacy beliefs play a key role in shaping our lives (Judge et al., 2007). Believing that our actions will produce desired results influences the activities and environments we choose (Bandura, 2001; Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Self-Reinforcement

One more idea deserves mention. At times, we all evaluate our actions and may reward ourselves with special privileges or treats for “good behavior.” With this in mind, social learning theory adds the concept of self-reinforcement to the behavioral view. Self-reinforcement refers to praising or rewarding yourself for having made a particular response (such as completing a school assignment). Thus, habits of self-praise and self-blame become an important part of personality (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). In fact, self-reinforcement can be thought of as the social learning theorist’s counterpart to the superego.

Self-reinforcement is closely related to high self-esteem. The reverse is also true: Mildly depressed college students tend to have low rates of self-reinforcement. It is not known if low self-reinforcement leads to depression, or the reverse. In either case,
higher rates of self-reinforcement are associated with less depression and greater life satisfaction (Seybolt & Wagner, 1997). From a behavioral viewpoint, there is value in learning to be “good to yourself.”

**Behaviorist View of Development**

*How do learning theorists account for personality development? Many of Freud’s ideas can be restated in terms of learning theory. John Dollard and Neal Miller (1950) agree with Freud that the first 6 years are crucial for personality development, but for different reasons. Rather than thinking in terms of psychosexual urges and fixations, they ask, “What makes early learning experiences so lasting in their effects?” Their answer is that childhood is a time of urgent drives, powerful rewards and punishments, and crushing frustrations. Also important is social reinforcement, which is based on praise, attention, or approval from others. These forces combine to shape the core of personality (Shaffer, 2009).*

**Critical Situations**

Dollard and Miller believe that during childhood, four critical situations are capable of leaving a lasting imprint on personality. These are (1) feeding; (2) toilet or cleanliness training; (3) sex training; and (4) learning to express anger or aggression.

*Why are these of special importance? Feeding serves as an illustration. If children are fed when they cry, it encourages them to actively manipulate their parents. The child allowed to cry without being fed learns to be passive. Thus, a basic active or passive orientation toward the world may be created by early feeding experiences. Feeding can also affect later social relationships because the child learns to associate people with pleasure or with frustration and discomfort.*

*Toilet and cleanliness training can be a particularly strong source of emotion for both parents and children. Rashad’s parents were aghast the day they found him smearing feces about with joyful abandon. They reacted with sharp punishment, which frustrated and confused Rashad. Many attitudes toward cleanliness, conformity, and bodily functions are formed at such times. Studies have also long shown that severe, punishing, or frustrating toilet training can have undesirable effects on personality development (Christophersen & Mortweet, 2003). Because of this, toilet and cleanliness training demand patience and a sense of humor.*

*What about sex and anger? When, where, and how a child learns to express anger and sexual feelings can leave an imprint on personality. Specifically, permissiveness for sexual and aggressive behavior in childhood is linked to adult needs for power (McClelland & Pilon, 1983). This link probably occurs because permitting such behaviors allows children to get pleasure from asserting themselves. As we saw in the last chapter, sex training also involves learning socially defined “male” and “female” gender roles—which, in turn, affects personality (Cervone & Pervin, 2010).*

**Personality and Gender**

*From birth onward, children are labeled as boys or girls and encouraged to learn sex-appropriate behavior (Denmark, Rabinowitz, & Sechzer, 2005; Oppliger, 2007). What does it mean to have a “masculine” or “feminine” personality? According to social learning theory, identification and imitation contribute greatly to personality development and to sex training. Identification refers to the child’s emotional attachment to admired adults, especially those who provide love and care. Identification typically encourages imitation, a desire to act like the admired person. Many “male” or “female” traits come from children’s attempts to imitate a same-sex parent with whom they identify (Helgeson, 2009).*
impaired self-esteem (Triandis & Suh, 2002). When parents reject affection, the children become sociable, positive, and emotionally stable, and they have high self-esteem. When parents accept their children and give them social learning and personality. Nevertheless, the connection is unmistakable. When parents accept their children and give them affection, the children become sociable, positive, and emotionally stable, and they have high self-esteem. When parents reject, punishing, sarcastic, humiliating, or neglectful, their children become hostile, unresponsive, unstable, and dependent and have impaired self-esteem (Triandis & Suh, 2002).

If children are around parents of both sexes, why don’t they imitate behavior typical of the opposite sex as well as of the same sex? You may recall from Chapter 6 that learning takes place vicariously as well as directly. This means that we can learn without direct reward by observing and remembering the actions of others. But the actions we choose to imitate depend on their outcomes. For example, boys and girls have equal chances to observe adults and other children acting aggressively. However, girls are less likely than boys to imitate directly aggressive behavior (shouting at or hitting another person). Instead, girls are more likely to rely on indirectly aggressive behavior (excluding others from friendship, spreading rumors). This may well be because the expression of direct aggression is thought to be inappropriate for girls.

As a consequence, girls do not as often see direct female aggression rewarded or approved (Field et al., 2009). In others words, “girlfighting” is likely a culturally reinforced pattern (Brown, 2005). Intriguingly, over the last few years, girls have become more willing to engage in direct aggression as popular culture presents more and more images of directly aggressive women (Arzt, 2005).

We have considered only a few examples of the links between social learning and personality. Nevertheless, the connection is unmistakable. When parents accept their children and give them affection, the children become sociable, positive, and emotionally stable, and they have high self-esteem. When parents are rejecting, punishing, sarcastic, humiliating, or neglectful, their children become hostile, unresponsive, unstable, and dependent and have impaired self-esteem (Triandis & Suh, 2002).

Nature and Nurture—The Great Personality Debate

Gateway Question 12.6: How do heredity and environment affect personality?

Personality theorists have long grappled with the relative roles of nature and nurture in shaping personalities. Some theories, such as trait theory and psychoanalytic theory, stress the role of inherited biological predispositions, whereas others, including behavioral and humanist theories, stress the role of learning and life experiences. Let’s look at the roles that heredity and biological predispositions (nature) and environmental situations (nurture) play in forming personality.

Do We Inherit Personality?

Even newborn babies differ in temperament, which implies that it is hereditary. Temperament, the “raw material” from which personalities are formed, refers to the hereditary aspects of your personality, such as biological predispositions to be sensitive, irritable, and distractible and to display a typical mood (Rothbart, 2007). Temperament has a large impact on how infants interact with their parents. Judging from Annette’s adult personality, you might guess that she was an active, happy baby.

At what age are personality traits firmly established? Personality starts to stabilize at around age 3 and continues to “harden” through age 50 (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). However, as mentioned earlier, personality slowly matures during old age as most people continue to become more conscientious, agreeable, and emotionally stable (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008). It appears that stereotypes of the “grumpy old man” and “cranky old woman” are largely unfounded.

Does the stability of personality traits mean that they are affected by heredity? Some breeds of dogs have reputations for being friendly, aggressive, intelligent, calm, or emotional. Such differences fall in the realm of behavioral genetics, the study of inherited behavioral traits. We know that facial features, eye color, body type, and many other physical characteristics are inherited. So are many of our behavioral dispositions (Bouchard, 2004; Kalat, 2009). Genetic studies have shown that intelligence, language, some mental disorders, temperament, and other complex qualities are influenced by heredity. In view of such findings, it wouldn’t be a surprise to find that genes affect personality as well (Nettle, 2006).

Social reinforcement Praise, attention, approval, and/or affection from others.

Critical situations Situations during childhood that are capable of leaving a lasting imprint on personality.

Identification Feeling emotionally connected to a person and seeing oneself as like him or her.

Imitation An attempt to match one’s own behavior to another person’s behavior.

Temperament The hereditary aspects of personality, including sensitivity, activity levels, prevailing mood, irritability, and adaptability.

Behavioral genetics The study of inherited behavioral traits and tendencies.
Many reunited twins in the Minnesota study (the Minnesota Twins?) have displayed similarities far beyond what would be expected on the basis of heredity. The “Jim twins,” James Lewis and James Springer, are one famous example. Both Jims had married and divorced women named Linda. Both had undergone police training. One named his firstborn son James Allan, the other named his firstborn son James Alan. Both drove Chevrolets and vacationed at the same beach each summer. Both listed carpentry and mechanical drawing among their hobbies. Both had built benches around trees in their yards. And so forth (Holden, 1980).

Are all identical twins so, well, identical? No, they aren’t. Consider identical twins Carolyn Spiro and Pamela Spiro Wagner who, unlike the “Jim Twins,” lived together throughout their childhood. While in sixth grade, they found out that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Carolyn wasn’t sure why everyone was so upset. Pamela heard voices announcing that she was responsible for his death. After years of hiding her voices from everyone, Pamela tried to commit suicide while the twins were attending Brown University. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Never to be cured, she has gone on to write award-winning poetry. Carolyn eventually became a Harvard psychiatrist (Spiro Wagner & Spiro, 2005). Some twins reared apart appear very similar; some reared together appear rather different.

So why are some identical twins, like the Jim Twins, so much alike even if they were reared apart? Although genetics is important, it is preposterous to suggest that there are child-naming genes and bench-building genes. How, then, do we explain the eerie similarities in some separated twins’ lives? Imagine that you were separated at birth from a twin brother or sister. If you were reunited with your twin today, what would you do? Quite likely, you would spend the next several days comparing every imaginable detail of your lives. Under such circumstances, it is virtually certain that you and your twin would notice and compile a long list of similarities. (“Wow! I use the same brand of toothpaste you do!”) Yet, two unrelated persons of the same age, sex, and race could probably rival your list—if they were as motivated to find similarities.

In fact, one study compared twins with unrelated pairs of students. The unrelated pairs, who were the same age and sex, were almost as alike as the twins. They had highly similar political beliefs, musical interests, religious preferences, job histories, hobbies, favorite foods, and so on (Wyatt et al., 1984). Why were the unrelated students so similar? Basically, it’s because people of the same age and sex live in the same historical times and select from similar societal options. As just one example, in nearly every elementary school classroom, you will find several children with the same first name.

It appears then that many of the seemingly “astounding” coincidences shared by reunited twins may be yet another example of confirmation bias. Reunited twins tend to notice the similarities and ignore the differences.

Wouldn’t comparing the personalities of identical twins help answer the question? It would indeed—especially if the twins were separated at birth or soon after.

Studying Twins

For several decades, psychologists at the University of Minnesota have been studying identical twins who grew up in different homes. Medical and psychological tests reveal that reunited twins are very much alike, even when they are reared apart (Bouchard, 2004; Bouchard et al., 1990). They may even be similar in voice quality, facial gestures, hand movements, and nervous tics, such as nail biting. Separated twins also tend to have similar talents. If one twin excels at art, music, dance, drama, or athletics, the other is likely to as well—despite wide differences in childhood environment. However, as “The Amazing Twins” explains, it’s wise to be cautious about some reports of extraordinary similarities in reunited twins.

Summary

Studies of twins make it clear that heredity has a sizable effect on each of us. All told, it seems reasonable to conclude that heredity is responsible for about 25 to 50 percent of the variation in many
personality traits (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; Loehlin et al., 1998). Notice, however, that the same figures imply that personality is shaped as much, or more, by environment as it is by biological predispositions.

Each personality, then, is a unique blend of heredity and environment, nature and nurture, biology and culture. We are not—thank goodness—genetically programmed robots whose behavior and personality traits are “wired in” for life. Where you go in life is the result of the choices you make. Although these choices are influenced by inherited tendencies, they are not merely a product of your genes (Funder, 2006).

Is Personality Affected by Environment?

Remember Annette? When we heard she actually decked a man who was harassing her, we were surprised. The Annette we had known was always quite calm and peaceful. Had she changed so much? Before we try to provide an answer, take a moment to answer the questions that follow. Doing so will add to your understanding of a long-running controversy in the psychology of personality.

Rate Yourself: How Do You View Personality?

1. My friends’ actions are fairly consistent from day to day and in different situations. T or F?
2. Whether a person is honest or dishonest, kind or cruel, a hero or a coward depends mainly on circumstances. T or F?
3. Most people I have known for several years have pretty much the same personal traits now as they did when I first met them. T or F?
4. The reason people in some professions (such as teachers, lawyers, or doctors) seem so much alike is because their work requires that they act in particular ways. T or F?
5. One of the first things I would want to know about a potential roommate is what the person’s personality is like. T or F?
6. I believe that immediate circumstances usually determine how people act at any given time. T or F?
7. To be comfortable in a particular job, a person’s personality must match the nature of the work. T or F?
8. Almost anyone would be polite at a wedding reception; it doesn’t matter what kind of personality the person has. T or F?

Now count the number of times you marked true for the odd-numbered items. Do the same for the even-numbered items.

If you agreed with most of the odd-numbered items, you tend to view behavior as strongly influenced by personality traits or lasting personal dispositions, whether biological or learned.

If you agreed with most of the even-numbered items, you view behavior as strongly influenced by external situations and circumstances.

What if I answered true equally for odd and even items? Then you place equal weight on traits and situations as ways to explain behavior. This is the view now held by many personality psychologists (Funder, 2006; Mischel, Shoda, & Smith, 2008).

Traits, Consistency, and Situations

Does that mean that to predict how a person will act, it is better to focus on both personality traits and external circumstances? Yes, it’s best to take both into account. Because personality traits are consistent, they can predict such things as job performance, dangerous driving, or a successful marriage (Burger, 2011). Yet, as we mentioned earlier in the chapter, situations also greatly influence our behavior. Annette’s normally calm demeanor became aggressive only because the situation was unusual and extreme: The man in the bar seriously harassed her, making her uncharacteristically angry and upset.

Can all unusual behaviors be “blamed” on unusual situations? Great question. Consider Fred Cowan, a model student in school and described by those who knew him as quiet, gentle, and a man who loved children. Despite his size (6 feet tall, 250 pounds), Fred was described by a coworker as “someone you could easily push around.” Two weeks after he was suspended from his job, Fred returned to work determined to get even with his supervisor. Unable to find the man, he killed four coworkers and a policeman before taking his own life (Lee, Zimbardo, & Bertholf, 1977).

Sudden murderers like Fred Cowan tend to be quiet, overcontrolled individuals. They are likely to be especially violent if they ever lose control. Although their attacks may be triggered by a minor irritation or frustration, the attack reflects years of unexpressed feelings of anger and belittlement. When sudden murderers finally release the strict controls they have maintained on their overcontrolled behavior, a furious and frenzied attack ensues (Cartwright, 2002). Usually it is totally out of proportion to the offense against them, and many have amnesia for their violent actions. So, unlike Annette, who reacted in an unexpected way to an unusual situation, Fred Cowan’s overreaction was typical of people who share his personality pattern.

Trait-Situation Interactions

It would be unusual for you to dance at a movie or read a book at a football game. Likewise, few people sleep in roller coasters or tell off-color jokes at funerals. However, your personality traits may predict whether you choose to read a book, go to a movie, or attend a football game in the first place. Typically, traits interact with situations to determine how we will act (Mischel, 2004).

In a **trait–situation interaction**, external circumstances influence the expression of a personality trait. For instance, imagine what would happen if you moved from a church to a classroom to a party to a football game. As the setting changed, you would probably become louder and more boisterous. This change would show situational effects on behavior. At the same time, your personality traits would also be apparent: If you were quiet in church and class, you would probably be quieter than average in the other settings, too.
Behavioral and Social Learning Theories

**Recite**

1. Learning theorists believe that personality “traits” really are ______ acquired through prior learning. They also emphasize ______ determinants of behavior.

2. Dollard and Miller consider cues the basic structure of personality. T or F?

3. To explain behavior, social learning theorists include mental elements, such as ______ (the anticipation that a response will lead to reinforcement).

4. Self-reinforcement is to behavioral theory as superego is to psychoanalytic theory. T or F?

5. Which of the following is not a “critical situation” in the behaviorist theory of personality development?
   a. feeding  b. sex training  c. language training  d. anger training

6. In addition to basic rewards and punishments, a child’s personality is also shaped by ______ reinforcement.

7. Social learning theories of development emphasize the impact of identification and ___________.

**Reflect**

Think Critically

8. Rotter’s concept of reinforcement value is closely related to a motivational principle discussed in Chapter 10. Can you name it?

**Self-Reflect**

What is your favorite style of food? Can you relate Dollard and Miller’s concepts of habit, drive, cue, response, and reward to explain your preference?

One way to describe personality is in terms of a set of “If-Then” rules that relate situations to traits (Kammrath, Mendoza-Denton, & Mischel, 2005). For example, our friend Annette has a trait of independence. But she is not independent in every situation. Here are some If-Then rules for Annette: If Annette is working at home, then she is independent. If Annette is in a bar being hassled by a man, then she is very independent. If Annette has to go for a medical checkup, then she is not very independent. Can you write some If-Then rules which describe your personality?

**Answers:**

1. 1. learning 2. acquired 3. through 4. prior 5. learning 6. mental 7. elements 8. environmental value

**Gateway Question 12.7: Which personality theory is right?**

To date, each major personality theory has added to our understanding by providing a sort of lens through which human behavior can be viewed. Nevertheless, theories often can’t be fully proved or disproved. We can only ask, “Does the evidence tend to support this theory or disconfirm it?” Yet, although theories are neither true nor false, their implications or predictions may be. The best way to judge a theory, then, is in terms of its usefulness. Does the theory adequately explain behavior? Does it stimulate new research? Does it suggest how to treat psychological disorders? Each theory has fared differently in these areas (Cervone & Pervin, 2010).

**Trait Theories**

Traits are very useful for describing and comparing personalities. Many of the personality tests used by clinical psychologists are based on trait theories. However, trait theories tend to have a circular quality. For example, how do we know that a young woman named Carrie has the trait of shyness? Because we frequently observe Carrie avoiding conversations with others. And why doesn’t Carrie socialize with others? Because shyness is a trait of her personality. And how do we know she has the trait of shyness? Because we observe that she avoids socializing with others. And so on.

**Psychoanalytic Theory**

By present standards, psychoanalytic theory seems to exaggerate the impact of sexuality and biological instincts. These distortions were corrected somewhat by the neo-Freudians, but problems remain. One of the most telling criticisms of Freudian theory is that it can explain any psychological event after it has occurred. But beforehand, it offers little help in predicting future behavior. For this reason, many psychoanalytic concepts are difficult or impossible to test scientifically (Schick & Vaughn, 1995).

**Humanistic Theory**

A great strength of the humanists is the attention they have given to positive dimensions of personality. As Maslow (1968) put it, “Human nature is not nearly as bad as it has been thought to be. It is as if Freud supplied us with the sick half of psychology, and we must now fill it out with the healthy half.” Despite their contributions, humanists can be criticized for using “fuzzy” concepts that are difficult to measure and study objectively. Even so, humanistic thought has encouraged many people to seek greater self-awareness and personal growth. Also, humanistic concepts have been very useful in counseling and psychotherapy.

**Behaviorist and Social Learning Theories**

Learning theories have provided a good framework for personality research. Of the major perspectives, the behaviorists have made the best effort to rigorously test and verify their ideas. They have, however, been criticized for understating the impact that temperament, emotion, thinking, and subjective experience have on personality. Social learning theory answers some of these criticisms, but it may still underestimate the importance of private experience.

We currently need all four major perspectives to explain personality. Each provides a sort of lens through which human behavior can be viewed. In many instances, a balanced picture emerges only when each theory is considered. In the final analysis, the challenge now facing personality theorists is how to integrate the four major perspectives into a unified, systematic explanation of personality (Mayer, 2005; McAdams, & Pals, 2006). Table 12.3 provides a closing overview of the principal approaches to personality.
Personality Assessment—Psychological Yardsticks

Gateway Question 12.8: How do psychologists measure personality?

Measuring personality can help predict how people will behave at work, at school, and in therapy. However, painting a detailed picture can be a challenge. In many instances, it requires several of the techniques described in this section. To capture a personality as unique as Annette’s, it might take all of them!

How is personality “measured”? Psychologists use interviews, observation, questionnaires, and projective tests to assess personality (Burger, 2011). Each method has strengths and limitations. For this reason, they are often used in combination.

Formal personality measures are refinements of more casual ways of judging a person. At one time or another, you have probably “sized up” a potential date, friend, or roommate by engaging in conversation (interview). Perhaps you have asked a friend, “When I am delayed I get angry. Do you?” (questionnaire). Maybe you watch your professors when they are angry or embarrassed to learn what they are “really” like when they’re caught off-guard (observation). Or possibly you have noticed that when you say, “I think people feel . . . ,” you may be expressing your own feelings (projection). Let’s see how psychologists apply each of these methods to probe personality.

Interviews

In an interview, direct questioning is used to learn about a person’s life history, personality traits, or current mental state (Murphy & Dillon, 2011; Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2008). In an unstructured interview, conversation is informal and topics are taken up freely as they arise. In a structured interview, information is gathered by asking a planned series of questions.

How are interviews used? Interviews are used to identify personality disturbances; to select people for jobs, college, or special programs; and to study the dynamics of personality. Interviews also provide information for counseling or therapy. For instance, a counselor might ask a depressed person, “Have you ever contemplated suicide? What were the circumstances?” The counselor might then follow by asking, “How did you feel about it?” or, “How is what you are now feeling different from what you felt then?”

In addition to providing information, interviews make it possible to observe a person’s tone of voice, hand gestures, posture, and facial expressions. Such “body language” cues are important because they may radically alter the message sent, as when a person claims to be “completely calm” but trembles uncontrollably.

Computerized Interviews

If you were distressed and went to a psychologist or psychiatrist, what is the first thing she or he might do? Typically, a diagnostic interview is used to find out how a person is feeling and what complaints or symptoms he or she has. In many cases, such interviews are based on a specific series of questions. Because the questions are always the same, it has become commonplace to use computers to do the interviewing.

**Interview (personality)** A face-to-face meeting held for the purpose of gaining information about an individual’s personal history, personality traits, current psychological state, and so forth.

**Unstructured interview** An interview in which conversation is informal and topics are taken up freely as they arise.

**Structured interview** An interview that follows a prearranged plan, usually a series of planned questions.
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But do computers do as good a job as humans? Yes. For example, in one study, people were interviewed for symptoms of mania by both a computer and a human (Reilly-Harrington et al., 2010). People thought the computer conducted an acceptable interview. It was also highly accurate.

Limitations

Interviews give rapid insight into personality, but they have limitations. For one thing, interviewers can be swayed by preconceptions. A person identified as a "housewife," "college student," "high school athlete," "punk," "geek," or "ski bum" may be misjudged because of an interviewer’s personal biases. Second, an interviewer’s own personality, or even gender, may influence a client’s behavior. When this occurs, it can accentuate or distort the person’s apparent traits (Pollner, 1998). A third problem is that people sometimes try to deceive interviewers. For example, a person accused of a crime might try to avoid punishment by pretending to be mentally disabled.

A fourth problem is the **halo effect**, which is the tendency to generalize a favorable (or unfavorable) impression to an entire personality (Hartung et al., 2010). Because of the halo effect, a person who is likable or physically attractive may be rated more mature, intelligent, or mentally healthy than she or he actually is. The halo effect is something to keep in mind at job interviews. First impressions do make a difference (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009).

Even with their limitations, interviews are a respected method of assessment. In many cases, interviews are the first step in evaluating personality and an essential prelude to therapy. Nevertheless, interviews are usually not enough and must be supplemented by other measures and tests (Murphy & Dillon, 2011; Meyer et al., 2001).

Direct Observation and Rating Scales

Are you fascinated by airports, bus depots, parks, taverns, subway stations, or other public places? Many people relish a chance to observe the actions of others. When used for assessment, **direct observation** (looking at behavior) is a simple extension of this natural interest in "people watching." For instance, a psychologist might arrange to observe a disturbed child as she plays with other children. Is the child withdrawn? Does she become hostile or aggressive without warning? By careful observation, the psychologist can identify the girl’s personality traits and clarify the nature of her problems.

Wouldn’t observation be subject to the same problems of misperception as an interview? Yes. Misperceptions can be a difficulty, which is why rating scales are sometimes used (Figure 12.7). A

![Sample rating scale items. To understand how the scale works, imagine someone you know well. Where would you place check marks on each of the scales to rate that person’s characteristics?](image)
rating scale is a list of personality traits or aspects of behavior that can be used to evaluate a person (Siefert, 2010). Rating scales limit the chance that some traits will be overlooked while others are exaggerated (Synhorst et al., 2005). Perhaps there should be a standard procedure for choosing a roommate, spouse, or lover!

An alternative approach is to do a behavioral assessment by counting the frequency of specific behaviors. In this case, observers record actions, not what traits they think a person has (Ramsey, Reynolds, & Kamphaus, 2002). For example, a psychologist working with hospitalized mental patients might note the frequency of a patient’s aggression, self-care, speech, and unusual behaviors. Behavioral assessments can also be used to probe thought processes. In one study, for example, couples were assessed while talking with each other about their sexuality. Couples with sexual difficulties were less likely to be receptive to discussing their sexuality and more likely to blame each other than were couples with no sexual difficulties (Kelly, Strassberg, & Turner, 2006).

Situational Testing

In situational testing, a type of direct observation, real-life conditions are simulated so that a person’s spontaneous reactions can be observed. Such tests assume that the best way to learn how people react is to put them in realistic situations and watch what happens. Situational tests expose people to frustration, temptation, pressure, boredom, or other conditions capable of revealing personality characteristics (Olson-Buchanan & Drasgow, 2006; Weekley & Jones, 1997). Some popular “reality TV” programs, such as American Idol, Survivor, and The Amazing Race, bear some similarity to situational tests—which may account for their ability to attract millions of viewers.

How are situational tests done? An interesting example of situational testing is the judgmental firearms training provided by many police departments. At times, police officers must make split-second decisions about using their weapons. A mistake could be fatal. In a typical shoot/don’t-shoot test, actors play the part of armed criminals. As various high-risk scenes are acted out live, or on videotape, or by computer, officers must decide to shoot or hold fire. A newspaper reporter who once took the test (and failed it) gives this account (Gersh, 1982):

I judged wrong. I was killed by a man in a closet, a man with a hostage, a woman interrupted when kissing her lover, and a man I thought was cleaning a shotgun. . . . I shot a drunk who reached for a comb, and a teenager who pulled out a black water pistol. Looked real to me.

Personality Questionnaires

Personality questionnaires are paper-and-pencil tests that reveal personality characteristics. Questionnaires are more objective than interviews or observation. (An objective test gives the same score when different people correct it.) Questions, administration, and scoring are all standardized so that scores are unaffected by any biases an examiner may have. However, this is not enough to ensure accuracy. A good test must also be reliable and valid. A test is reliable if it yields close to the same score each time it is given to the same person. A test has validity if it measures what it claims to measure. Unfortunately, many personality tests you will encounter, such as those in magazines or on the Internet, have little or no validity.

BRIDGES

Reliability and validity are important characteristics of all psychological tests, especially intelligence and aptitude tests. See Chapter 9, pages 365–366.

Dozens of personality tests are available, including the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey, the California Psychological Inventory, the Allport-Vernon Study of Values, the 16 PF, and many more. One of the best-known and most widely used objective tests is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2) (Butcher, 2011). The MMPI-2 is composed of 567 items to which a

A police special tactics team undergoes judgmental firearms training. Variations on this situational test are used by many police departments. All officers must score a passing grade.

Halo effect The tendency to generalize a favorable or unfavorable first impression to unrelated details of personality.

Direct observation Assessing behavior through direct surveillance.

Rating scale A list of personality traits or aspects of behavior on which a person is rated.

Behavioral assessment Recording the frequency of various behaviors.

Situational test Simulating real-life conditions so that a person’s reactions may be directly observed.

Personality questionnaire A paper-and-pencil test consisting of questions that reveal aspects of personality.

Objective test A test that gives the same score when different people correct it.

Reliability The ability of a test to yield nearly the same score each time it is given to the same person.

Validity The ability of a test to measure what it purports to measure.

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2) One of the best-known and most widely used objective personality questionnaires.
function in a job, and other problems (Butcher, 2011).

Type A (heart-attack prone) behavior, repression, anger, cynicism, low self-esteem, family problems, inability to function in a job, and other problems.

How can these items show anything about personality? For instance, what if a person has a cold so that “everything tastes the same”? For an answer (and a little bit of fun), read the following items. Answer “Yes,” “No,” or “Don’t bother me, I can’t cope!”

I have a collection of 1,243 old pizza cartons.
I enjoy the thought of eating liver-flavored ice cream.
I love the smell of napalm in the morning.
I hate the movie Apocalypse Now.
I can’t add numbers correctly.
Bathing sucks.
I like rats and dry hand towels.
I absolutely adore this textbook.

These items were written by your authors to satirize personality questionnaires. (Why not try writing some of your own?) Such questions may seem ridiculous, but they are not very different from the real thing. How, then, do the items on tests as the MMPI-2 reveal anything about personality? The answer is that a single item tells little about personality. For example, a person who agrees that “Everything tastes the same” might simply have a cold. It is only through patterns of response that personality dimensions are revealed.

Items on the MMPI-2 were selected for their ability to correctly identify persons with particular psychological problems (Butcher, 2011). For instance, if depressed persons consistently answer a series of items in a particular way, it is assumed that others who answer the same way are also prone to depression. As silly as the gag items in the preceding list may seem, it is possible that some could actually work in a legitimate test. But before an item could be part of a test, it would have to be shown to correlate highly with some trait or dimension of personality.

The MMPI-2 measures 10 major aspects of personality (listed in Table 12.4). After the MMPI-2 is scored, results are charted graphically as an MMPI-2 profile (Figure 12.8). By comparing a person’s profile with scores produced by typical, normal adults, a psychologist can identify various personality disorders. Additional scales can identify substance abuse, eating disorders, aggressiveness or “feminine” sensitivity.

How accurate is the MMPI-2? Personality questionnaires are accurate only if people tell the truth about themselves. Because of this, the MMPI-2 has additional validity scales that reveal whether a person’s scores should be discarded. The validity scales detect attempts by test takers to “fake good” (make themselves look good) or “fake bad” (make it look like they have problems). Other scales uncover defensiveness or tendencies to exaggerate shortcomings and troubles. When taking the MMPI-2, it is best to answer honestly, without trying to second-guess the test.

A clinical psychologist trying to decide whether a person has emotional problems would be wise to take more than the MMPI-2 into account. Test scores are informative, but they can incorrectly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 12.4 MMPI-2 Basic Clinical Subscales</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Depression. Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and pessimism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hysteria. The presence of physical complaints for which no physical basis can be established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Psychopathic deviate. Emotional shallowness in relationships and a disregard for social and moral standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Masculinity/femininity. One's degree of traditional &quot;masculine&quot; aggressiveness or &quot;feminine&quot; sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Psychasthenia (sike-as-THEE-nee-ah). The presence of obsessive worries, irrational fears (phobias), and compulsive (ritualistic) actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Schizophrenia. Emotional withdrawal and unusual or bizarre thinking and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Social introversion. One's tendency to be socially withdrawn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*MMPI-2 statements themselves cannot be reproduced to protect the validity of the test.*
label some people (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009). Fortunately, clinical judgments usually rely on information from interviews, tests, and other sources. Also, despite their limitations, it is reassuring to note that psychological assessments are at least as accurate as commonly used medical tests (Neukrug & Fawcett, 2010).

Projective Tests of Personality

Projective tests take a different approach to personality. Interviews, observation, rating scales, and inventories try to directly identify overt, observable traits (Leichtman, 2004). By contrast, projective tests seek to uncover deeply hidden or unconscious wishes, thoughts, and needs (Burger, 2011).

As a child you may have delighted in finding faces and objects in cloud formations. Or perhaps you have learned something about your friends’ personalities from their reactions to movies or paintings. If so, you will have some insight into the rationale for projective tests. In a projective test, a person is asked to describe ambiguous stimuli or make up stories about them. Describing an unambiguous stimulus (a picture of an automobile, for example) tells little about your personality. But when you are faced with an unstructured stimulus, you must organize what you see in terms of your own life experiences. Everyone sees something different in a projective test, and what is perceived can reveal the inner workings of personality.

Projective tests have no right or wrong answers, which makes them difficult to fake (Leichtman, 2004). Moreover, projective tests can be a rich source of information, because responses are not restricted to simple true/false or yes/no answers.

The Rorschach Inkblot Test

Is the inkblot test a projective technique? The Rorschach (ROAR-shock) Inkblot Test is one of the oldest and most widely used projective tests. Developed by Swiss psychologist Hermann Rorschach in the 1920s, it consists of 10 standardized inkblots. These vary in color, shading, form, and complexity.

How does the test work? First, a person is shown each blot and asked to describe what she or he sees in it (Figure 12.9). Later, the psychologist may return to a blot, asking the person to identify specific sections of it, to expand previous descriptions, or to give new impressions about what it contains. Obvious differences in content—such as “blood dripping from a dagger” versus “flowers blooming in a basket”—are important for identifying personal conflicts and fantasies. But surprisingly, content is less important than what parts of the inkblot are used to organize images. These factors allow psychologists to detect emotional disturbances by observing how a person perceives the world (Hilsenroth, 2000).
or threatened. Here is a story written by a student to describe • Figure 12.10:

The girl has been seeing this guy her mother doesn’t like. The mother is telling her that she better not see him again. The mother says, “He’s just like your father.” The mother and father are divorced. The mother is smiling because she thinks she is right. But she doesn’t really know what the girl wants. The girl is going to see the guy again, anyway.

As this example implies, the TAT is especially good at revealing feelings about a person’s social relationships (Aronow et al., 2001; Teglas, 2010).

Limitations of Projective Testing

Although projective tests have been popular, their validity is considered lowest among tests of personality (Wood et al., 2003). Objectivity and reliability (consistency) are also low for different users of the TAT and Rorschach. Note that after a person interprets an ambiguous stimulus, the scorer must interpret the person’s (sometimes) ambiguous responses. In a sense, the interpretation of a projective test may be a projective test for the scorer!

Despite their drawbacks, projective tests still have value (Hilsenroth, 2000). This is especially true when they are used as part of a test battery (collection of assessment devices and interviews). In the hands of a skilled clinician, projective tests can be a good way to detect major conflicts, to get clients to talk about upsetting topics, and to set goals for therapy (O’Roark, 2001; Teglas, 2010).

A Look Ahead

The Psychology in Action section that follows should add balance to your view of personality. Don’t be shy. Read on!

---

8. Which of the following items does not belong with the others?
   a. Rorschach Inkblot Test  b. TAT  c. MMPI-2  d. projective testing
9. A test is considered valid if it consistently yields the same score when the same person takes it on different occasions. T or F?

**REFLECT**

**Think Critically**
10. Can you think of one more reason why personality traits may not be accurately revealed by interviews?
11. Projective testing would be of greatest interest to which type of personality theorist?

**Self-Reflect**

How do you assess personality? Do you informally make use of any of the methods described in this chapter? You are a candidate for a desirable job. Your personality is going to be assessed by a psychologist. What method (or methods) would you prefer that she or he use? Why?

---

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Barriers and Bridges—Understanding Shyness

Gateway Question 12.9: What causes shyness and what can be done about it?

Do you:

- Find it hard to talk to strangers?
- Lack confidence with people?
- Feel uncomfortable in social situations?
- Feel nervous with people who are not close friends?

As a personality trait, shyness refers to a tendency to avoid others, as well as feelings of anxiety, preoccupation, and social inhibition (uneasiness and strain when socializing) (Bruch, 2001). Shy persons fail to make eye contact, retreat when spoken to, speak too quietly, and display little interest or animation in conversations (Brunet, Mondloch, & Schmidt, 2010). Mild shyness may be no more than a nuisance. However, extreme shyness (which may be diagnosed as social anxiety disorder) is often associated with depression, loneliness, fearfulness, social anxiety, inhibition, and low self-esteem (Ashcraft, 2012; Stein & Stein, 2008).

Elements of Shyness

What causes shyness? To begin with, shy persons often lack social skills (proficiency at interacting with others). Many simply have not learned how to meet people or how to start a conversation and keep it going. Social anxiety (a feeling of apprehension in the presence of others) is also a factor in shyness. Almost everyone feels nervous in some social situations (such as meeting an attractive stranger). Typically, this is a reaction to evaluation fears (fears of being inadequate, embarrassed, ridiculed, or rejected). Although fears of rejection are common, they are much more frequent or intense for shy persons (Bradshaw, 2006; Jackson, Towson, & Narduzzi, 1997). A third problem for shy persons is a self-defeating bias (distortion) in their thinking. Specifically, shy persons almost always blame themselves when a social encounter doesn’t go well. They are unnecessarily self-critical in social situations (Lundh et al., 2002).

Situational Causes of Shyness

Shyness is most often triggered by novel or unfamiliar social situations. A person who does fine with family or close friends may become shy and awkward when meeting a stranger. Shyness is also magnified by formality, meeting someone of higher status, being the focus of attention (as in giving a speech) (Larsen & Buss, 2010).

Don’t most people become cautious and inhibited in such circumstances? That’s why we need to see how the personalities of shy and not-shy persons differ.

Dynamics of the Shy Personality

There is a tendency to think that shy persons are wrapped up in their own feelings and thoughts. But surprisingly, researchers Jonathan Cheek and Arnold Buss (1979) found no connection between shyness and private self-consciousness (attention to inner feelings, thoughts, and fantasies). Instead, they discovered that shyness is linked to public self-consciousness (acute awareness of oneself as a social object). Persons who rate high in public self-consciousness are intensely concerned about what others think of them (Cowden, 2005). They worry about saying the wrong thing or appearing foolish. In public, they may feel “naked” or as if others can “see through them.” Such feelings trigger anxiety or outright fear during social encounters, leading to awkwardness and inhibition (Cowden, 2005). The shy person’s anxiety, in turn, often causes her or him to misperceive others in social situations (Schroeder, 1995).

As mentioned, almost everyone feels anxious in at least some social situations. But there is a key difference in the way shy and not-shy persons label this anxiety. Shy persons tend to consider their social anxiety a lasting personality trait. Shyness, in other words, becomes part of their self-concept. In contrast, not-shy persons believe that external situations cause their occasional feelings of shyness. When not-shy persons feel anxiety or “stage fright,” they assume that almost anyone would feel as they do under the same circumstances (Zimbardo, Pilkonis, & Norwood, 1978).

Labeling is important because it affects self-esteem. In general, not-shy persons tend to have higher self-esteem than shy persons. This is because not-shy persons give themselves credit for their social successes and recognize that failures are often due to circumstances.

Shyness A tendency to avoid others, plus uneasiness and strain when socializing.

Social skills Proficiency at interacting with others.

Social anxiety A feeling of apprehension in the presence of others.

Evaluation fears Fears of being inadequate, embarrassed, ridiculed, or rejected.

Self-defeating bias A distortion of thinking that impairs behavior.

Private self-consciousness Preoccupation with inner feelings, thoughts, and fantasies.

Public self-consciousness Intense awareness of oneself as a social object.
Chapter 12

Understanding Shyness

contrast, shy people blame themselves for social failures, never give themselves credit for successes, and expect to be rejected (Jackson et al., 2002).

Shy Beliefs

What can be done to reduce shyness? Shyness is often maintained by unrealistic or self-defeating beliefs (Antony & Swinson, 2008; Butler, 2001). Here’s a sample of such beliefs:

1. If you wait around long enough at a social gathering, something will happen.
   Comment: This is really a cover-up for fear of starting a conversation. For two people to meet, at least one has to make an effort, and it might as well be you.

2. Other people who are popular are just lucky when it comes to being invited to social events or asked out.
   Comment: Except for times when a person is formally introduced to someone new, this is false. People who are more active socially typically make an effort to meet and spend time with others. They join clubs, invite others to do things, strike up conversations, and generally leave little to luck.

3. The odds of meeting someone interested in socializing are always the same, no matter where I am.
   Comment: This is another excuse for inaction. It pays to seek out situations that have a higher probability of leading to social contact, such as clubs, teams, and school events.

4. If someone doesn’t seem to like you right away, they really don’t like you and never will.
   Comment: This belief leads to much needless shyness. Even when a person doesn’t show immediate interest, it doesn’t mean the person dislikes you.

Liking takes time and opportunity to develop.

Unproductive beliefs like the preceding can be replaced with statements such as the following:

1. I’ve got to be active in social situations.
2. I can’t wait until I’m completely relaxed or comfortable before taking a social risk.
3. I don’t need to pretend to be someone I’m not; it just makes me more anxious.
4. I may think other people are harshly evaluating me, but actually I’m being too hard on myself.
5. I can set reasonable goals for expanding my social experience and skills.
6. Even people who are very socially skillful are never successful 100 percent of the time. I shouldn’t get so upset when an encounter goes badly. (Adapted from Antony & Swinson, 2008; Butler, 2001.)

Social Skills

Learning social skills takes practice (Carducci & Fields, 2007). There is nothing “innate” about knowing how to meet people or start a conversation. Social skills can be directly practiced in a variety of ways. It can be helpful, for instance, to get a tape recorder and listen to several of your conversations. You may be surprised by the way you pause, interrupt, miss cues, or seem disinterested. Similarly, it can be useful to look at yourself in a mirror and exaggerate facial expressions of surprise, interest, dislike, pleasure, and so forth. By such methods, most people can learn to put more animation and skill into their self-presentation.

Conversation

One of the simplest ways to make better conversation is by learning to ask questions. A good series of questions shifts attention to the other person and shows you are interested. Nothing fancy is needed. You can do fine with questions such as, “Where do you (work, study, live)? Do you like (dancing, travel, music)? How long have you (been at this school, worked here, lived here)?” After you’ve broken the ice, the best questions are often those that are open ended (they can’t be answered yes or no):

“What parts of the country have you seen?” (as opposed to, “Have you ever been to Florida?”)

“What’s it like living on the West Side?” (as opposed to, “Do you like living on the West Side?”)

“What kinds of food do you like?” (as opposed to, “Do you like Chinese cooking?”)

It’s easy to see why open-ended questions are helpful. In replying to open-ended questions, people often give “free information” about themselves. This extra information can be used to ask other questions or to lead into other topics of conversation.

This brief sampling of ideas is no substitute for actual practice. Overcoming shyness requires a real effort to learn new skills and test old beliefs and attitudes. It may even require the help of a counselor or therapist. At the very least, a shy person must be willing to take social risks. Breaking down the barriers of shyness will always include some awkward or unsuccessful encounters. Nevertheless, the rewards are powerful: human companionship and personal freedom.

RECIPE

1. Social anxiety and evaluation fears are seen almost exclusively in shy individuals; the not shy rarely have such experiences. T or F?
2. Unfamiliar people and situations most often trigger shyness. T or F?
3. Contrary to what many people think, shyness is not related to
   a. private self-consciousness b. social anxiety
c. self-esteem d. blaming oneself for social failures
4. Shy persons tend to consider their social anxiety to be a
   a. situational reaction b. personality trait
   c. public efficacy d. habit
5. Changing personal beliefs and practicing social skills can be helpful in overcoming shyness. T or F?
Personality

6. Shyness is a trait of Vonda's personality. Like most shy people, Vonda is most likely to feel shy in unfamiliar social settings. Vonda's shy behavior demonstrates that the expression of traits is governed by what concept?

Chapter in Review

Gateways to Personality

12.1 How do psychologists use the term personality?
12.1.1 Personality refers to a person's consistent and unique patterns of thinking, emotion, and behavior.
12.1.2 Character is personality evaluated, or the possession of desirable qualities.
12.1.3 Personality traits are lasting personal qualities that are inferred from behavior.
12.1.4 Personality types group people into categories on the basis of shared traits.
12.1.5 A positive self-evaluation leads to high self-esteem. Low self-esteem is associated with stress, unhappiness, and depression.
12.1.6 Each of the four major theories of personality, trait, psychodynamic, behaviorist and social learning, and humanistic, combines interrelated assumptions, ideas, and principles to explain personality.

12.2 Are some personality traits more basic or important than others?
12.2.1 Trait theories identify qualities that are most lasting or characteristic of a person.
12.2.2 Allport made useful distinctions between common traits and individual traits and among cardinal, central, and secondary traits.
12.2.3 Cattell's theory attributes visible surface traits to the existence of 16 underlying source traits.
12.2.4 Source traits are measured by the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF).
12.2.5 The five-factor model identifies five universal dimensions of personality: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience.

12.3 How do psychodynamic theories explain personality?
12.3.1 Like other psychodynamic approaches, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory emphasizes unconscious forces and conflicts within the personality.
12.3.2 In Freud's theory, personality is made up of the id, ego, and superego.
12.3.3 Libido, derived from the life instincts, is the primary energy running the personality. Conflicts within the personality may cause neurotic anxiety or moral anxiety and motivate us to use ego-defense mechanisms.
12.3.4 The personality operates on three levels: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious.
12.3.5 The Freudian view of personality development is based on a series of psychosexual stages: the oral, anal, phallic, and genital stages. Fixation at any stage can leave a lasting imprint on personality.
12.3.6 Neo-Freudian theorists accepted the broad features of Freudian psychology, but developed their own views. Three representative neo-Freudians are Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, and Carl Jung.

12.4 What are humanistic theories of personality?
12.4.1 Humanistic theories stress subjective experience, free choice, self-actualization, and positive models of human nature.
12.4.2 Abraham Maslow's study of self-actualizers showed that they share traits that range from efficient perceptions of reality to frequent peak experiences.
12.4.3 Positive psychologists have identified six human strengths that contribute to well-being and life satisfaction: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.
12.4.4 Carl Rogers viewed the self as an entity that emerges from personal experience. We tend to become aware of experiences that match our self-image, and exclude those that are incongruent with it.
12.4.5 The incongruent person has a highly unrealistic self-image and/or a mismatch between the self-image and the ideal self. The congruent or fully functioning person is flexible and open to experiences and feelings.
12.4.6 In the development of personality, humanists are primarily interested in the emergence of a self-image and in self-evaluations.

12.4.7 As parents apply conditions of worth to children’s behavior, thoughts, and feelings, children begin to do the same. Internalized conditions of worth then contribute to incongruence and disrupt the organismic valuing process.

12.5 What do behaviorists and social learning theorists emphasize in their approach to personality?

12.5.1 Behavioral theories of personality emphasize learning, conditioning, and immediate effects of the environment (situational determinants).

12.5.2 Learning theorists John Dollard and Neal Miller consider habits the basic core of personality. Habits express the combined effects of drive, cue, response, and reward.

12.5.3 Social learning theory adds cognitive elements, such as perception, thinking, and understanding to the behavioral view of personality.

12.5.4 Social learning theory is exemplified by Julian Rotter’s concepts of the psychological situation, expectancies, and reinforcement value.

12.5.5 The behaviorist view of personality development holds that social reinforcement in four situations is critical. The critical situations are feeding, toilet or cleanliness training, sex training, and anger or aggression training.

12.5.6 Identification and imitation are of particular importance in learning to be “male” or “female.”

12.6 How do heredity and environment affect personality?

12.6.1 Temperament refers to the hereditary and physiological aspects of one’s emotional nature.

12.6.2 Behavioral genetics and studies of identical twins suggest that heredity contributes significantly to adult personality traits.

12.6.3 Biological predispositions (traits) interact with environment (situations) to explain our behavior.

12.7 Which personality theory is right?

12.7.1 Each of the four major theories of personality, trait, psychodynamic, behaviorist and social learning, and humanistic, is useful for understanding some aspects of personality.

12.8 How do psychologists measure personality?

12.8.1 Techniques typically used for personality assessment are interviews, observation, questionnaires, and projective tests.

12.8.2 Structured and unstructured interviews provide much information, but they are subject to interviewer bias and misperceptions. The halo effect may also lower the accuracy of an interview.

12.8.3 Direct observation, sometimes involving situational tests, behavioral assessment, or rating scales, allows psychologists to evaluate a person’s actual behavior.

12.8.4 Personality questionnaires, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2), are objective and reliable, but their validity is open to question.

12.8.5 Projective tests ask a person to project thoughts or feelings to an ambiguous stimulus or unstructured situation.

12.8.6 The Rorschach Technique, or inkblot test, is a well-known projective technique. A second is the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

12.8.7 Projective tests are low in validity and objectivity. Nevertheless, they are considered useful by many clinicians, particularly as part of a test battery.

12.9 What causes shyness and what can be done about it?

12.9.1 Shyness typically involves social anxiety, evaluation fears, self-defeating thoughts, public self-consciousness, and a lack of social skills.

12.9.2 Shyness is marked by heightened public self-consciousness and a tendency to regard one’s shyness as a lasting trait.

12.9.3 Shyness can be reduced by replacing self-defeating beliefs with more supportive thoughts and by learning social skills.

MEDIA RESOURCES

Web Resources

Internet addresses frequently change. To find an up-to-date list of URLs for the sites listed here, visit your Psychology CourseMate.

Personality Theories Explore an electronic textbook about personality theories.

The Personality Project Access a wide variety of information on personality.

Personality: Theory & Perspectives An undergraduate psychology course about individual differences.

Raymond Cattell Read about Raymond Cattell and his 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire.

Internet Personality Inventory Test yourself on the Big Five.

The Big Five Dimensions Provides additional information about the Big Five, with links to related sites.

Sigmund Freud and the Freud Archives This site provides an extensive collection of links to Internet resources related to Sigmund Freud and his works. Included in this collection are libraries, museums, and biographical materials as well as materials in the Brill Library archives.
Freud & Women  Read about the controversy surrounding Freud’s views on women.

Psychodynamic and Neo-Freudian Theories  Freud’s followers did not always agree with his views. Read about their views on personality.

About Humanistic Psychology  Discusses the history and future of humanistic psychology.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs  Read more about Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and self-actualization.

Some Observations on the Organization of Personality  Read an original article by Carl Rogers.

Information on Self-Efficacy  Read about Albert Bandura and the idea of self-efficacy.

Julian Rotter  Read about Julian Rotter and his Social Learning Theory.

Controlling Your Own Study Behavior  Apply the concept of self-reinforcement to your own studying.

Personality and IQ Tests  Multiple links to personality tests and IQ tests that are scored online.

MMPI  Explore a research project about the MMPI.

Take a Rorschach  Explore Hermann Rorschach’s famous inkblot test.

The Shyness Home Page  Try several shyness surveys.

Shake Your Shyness  Get some tips for dealing with shyness.

Overcoming Shyness  More on overcoming shyness.

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