

## The Balance of Personality



# The Balance of Personality

*CHRIS ALLEN*



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# Preface

This open access textbook was developed as an upper division undergraduate textbook for theories of personality. Its intended audience are students from Portland State University enrolled in Psychology 432 Personality course. The chapters are shorter than some personality textbooks and in this particular course Psy 432 the textbook is combined with other readings including scientific articles on personality. This open access textbook may be of interest to other courses interested in teaching about theory and research on personality. This book is best viewed online using the pressbooks format however, multiple formats (e.g., pdf, epub, mobi) are also made available.

# Acknowledgements

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- Chapter 1 Personality Traits
- Chapter 2 Personality Stability
- Chapter 3 Personality Assessment
- Chapter 7 The Nature-Nurture Question
- Chapter 8 Self-Regulation and Conscientiousness
- Chapter 9 Personality Disorders
- Chapter 11: Happiness: The Science of Subjective Well-Being

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- Chapter 4: Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Nancy Chodorow: Alternative Views of Psychodynamic Theory
- Chapter 5: Carl Jung
- Chapter 6: Humanistic and Existential Theory: Frankl, Rogers, and Maslow
- Chapter 10: Yoga, Buddhism, Personality and Non-Personality

**Please see individual chapters for further citation information.**

Chapters and sections were borrowed and adapted from the above existing OER textbooks on personality. Without these foundational texts, a lot more work would have been required to complete this project. Thank you to those who shared before us.

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## Special Thanks to:

Amy Stanforth and Karen Bjork at the Portland State University Library for their support in this project.

# Open Educational Resources

This text is provided to you as an Open Educational Resource (OER) which you access online. It is designed to give you a comprehensive introduction to personality psychology at no or very nominal cost. It contains both written and graphic text material, intra-text links to other internal material which may aid in understanding topics and concepts, intra-text links to the appendices and glossary for tables and definitions of words, and extra-text links to videos and web material that clarifies and augments topics and concepts.

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this textbook. The book focuses on the diversity and complexity of personality, and how personality is a carefully created balance of traits and behaviors and more, in each unique person.

Thanks,

Chris Allen PhD

Portland State University





# I. Personality Traits

This is an edited and adapted chapter by Diener, E. & Lucas, R. E. (2019) from the NOBA series on psychology. For full attribution see end of chapter.

Personality traits reflect people's characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Personality traits imply consistency and stability—someone who scores high on a specific trait like Extraversion is expected to be sociable in different situations and over time. Thus, trait psychology rests on the idea that people differ from one another in terms of where they stand on a set of basic trait dimensions that persist over time and across situations. The most widely used system of traits is called the Five-Factor Model. This system includes five broad traits that can be remembered with the acronym OCEAN: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Each of the major traits from the Big Five can be divided into facets to give a more fine-grained analysis of someone's personality. In addition, some trait theorists argue that there are other traits that cannot be completely captured by the Five-Factor Model. Critics of the trait concept argue that people do not act consistently from one situation to the next and that people are very influenced by situational forces. Thus, one major debate in the field concerns the relative power of people's traits versus the situations in which they find themselves as predictors of their behavior.

- Big five
- Five-Factor Model of personality
- OCEAN system of traits
- Person-situation debate
- Personality
- Personality traits
- Social learning

## Learning Objectives

- List and describe the “Big Five” (“OCEAN”) personality traits that comprise the Five-Factor Model of personality.
- Describe how the facet approach extends broad personality traits.
- Explain a critique of the personality-trait concept.
- Describe in what ways personality traits may be manifested in everyday behavior.
- Describe each of the Big Five personality traits, and the low and high end of the dimension.
- Give examples of each of the Big Five personality traits, including both a low and high example.
- Describe how traits and social learning combine to predict your social activities.
- Describe your theory of how personality traits get refined by social learning.

## Introduction

When we observe people around us, one of the first things that strikes us is how different people are from one another. Some people are very talkative while others are very quiet. Some are active whereas others are couch potatoes. Some worry a lot, others almost never seem anxious. Each time we use one of these words, words like “talkative,” “quiet,” “active,” or “anxious,” to describe those around us, we are talking about a person's personality—the characteristic ways that people differ from one another. Personality psychologists try to describe and understand these differences.



“Are you an introvert”? In popular culture it’s common to talk about people being introverts or extroverts as if these were precise descriptions that meant the same thing for everyone. But research shows that these traits and others are quite variable within individuals. [Image: Nguyen Hung Vu, <https://goo.gl/qKJUAC>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

Although there are many ways to think about the personalities that people have, Gordon Allport and other “personologists” claimed that we can best understand the differences between individuals by understanding their personality traits. Personality traits reflect basic dimensions on which people differ (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003). According to trait psychologists, there are a limited number of these dimensions (dimensions like Extraversion, Conscientiousness, or Agreeableness), and each individual falls somewhere on each dimension, meaning that they could be low, medium, or high on any specific trait.

An important feature of personality traits is that they reflect continuous distributions rather than distinct personality types. This means that when personality psychologists talk about Introverts and Extraverts, they are not really talking about two distinct types of people who are completely and qualitatively different from one another. Instead, they are talking about people who score relatively low or relatively high along a continuous distribution. In fact, when personality psychologists measure traits like Extraversion, they typically find that most people score somewhere in the middle, with smaller numbers showing more extreme levels. The figure below shows the distribution of Extraversion scores from a survey of thousands of people. As you can see, most people report being moderately, but not extremely, extraverted, with fewer people reporting very high or very low scores.

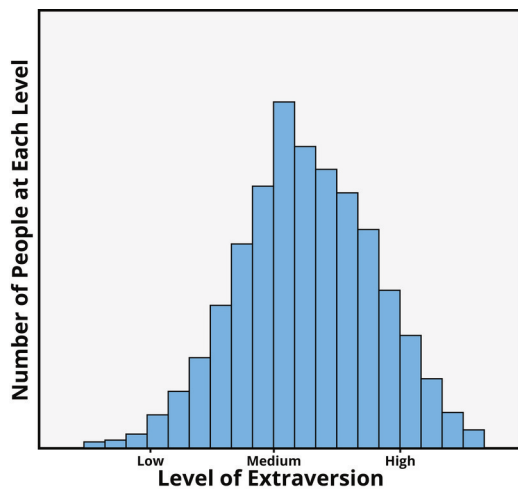


Figure 1. Distribution of Extraversion Scores in a Sample Higher bars mean that more people have scores of that level. This figure shows that most people score towards the middle of the extraversion scale, with fewer people who are highly extraverted or highly introverted.

There are three criteria that are characterize personality traits: (1) consistency, (2) stability, and (3) individual differences.

1. To have a personality trait, individuals must be somewhat consistent across situations in their behaviors related to the trait. For example, if they are talkative at home, they tend also to be talkative at work.
2. Individuals with a trait are also somewhat stable over time in behaviors related to the trait. If they are talkative, for example, at age 30, they will also tend to be talkative at age 40.
3. People differ from one another on behaviors related to the trait. Using speech is not a personality trait and neither is walking on two feet—virtually all individuals do these activities, and there are almost no individual differences. But people differ on how frequently they talk and how active they are, and thus personality traits such as Talkativeness and Activity Level do exist.

A challenge of the trait approach was to discover the major traits on which all people differ. Scientists for many decades generated hundreds of new traits, so that it was soon difficult to keep track and make sense of them. For instance, one psychologist might focus on individual differences in “friendliness,” whereas another might focus on the highly related concept of “sociability.” Scientists began seeking ways to reduce the number of traits in some systematic way and to discover the basic traits that describe most of the differences between people.

The way that Gordon Allport and his colleague Henry Odbert approached this was to search the dictionary for all descriptors of personality (Allport & Odbert, 1936). Their approach was guided by the lexical hypothesis, which states that all important personality characteristics should be reflected in the language that we use to describe other people. Therefore, if we want to understand the fundamental ways in which people differ from one another, we can turn to the words that people use to describe one another. So if we want to know what words people use to describe one another, where should we look? Allport and Odbert looked in the most obvious place—the dictionary. Specifically, they took all the personality descriptors that they could find in the dictionary (they started with almost 18,000 words but quickly reduced that list to a more manageable number) and then used statistical techniques to determine which words “went together.” In other words, if everyone who said that they were “friendly” also said that they were “sociable,” then this might mean that personality psychologists would only need a single trait to capture individual differences in these characteristics. Statistical techniques were used to determine whether a small number of dimensions might underlie all of the thousands of words we use to describe people.

## The Five-Factor Model of Personality

Research that used the lexical approach showed that many of the personality descriptors found in the dictionary do indeed overlap. In other words, many of the words that we use to describe people are synonyms. Thus, if we want to know what a person is like, we do not necessarily need to ask how sociable they are, how friendly they are, and how gregarious they are. Instead, because sociable people tend to be friendly and gregarious, we can summarize this personality dimension with a single term. Someone who is sociable, friendly, and gregarious would typically be described as an “Extravert.” Once we know she is an extravert, we can assume that she is sociable, friendly, and gregarious.

Statistical methods (specifically, a technique called factor analysis) helped to determine whether a small number of dimensions underlie the diversity of words that people like Allport and Odbert identified. The most widely accepted system to emerge from this approach was “The Big Five” or “Five-Factor Model” (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1987). The Big Five comprises five major traits shown in the Figure 2 below. A way to remember these five is with the acronym OCEAN (O is for Openness; C is for Conscientiousness; E is for Extraversion; A is for Agreeableness; N is for Neuroticism). Figure 3 provides descriptions of people who would score high and low on each of these traits.

<b>Big 5 Trait</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b><i>Openness</i></b>	The tendency to appreciate new art, ideas, values, feelings, and behaviors.
<b><i>Conscientiousness</i></b>	The tendency to be careful, on-time for appointments, to follow rules, and to be hardworking.
<b><i>Extraversion</i></b>	The tendency to be talkative, sociable, and to enjoy others; the tendency to have a dominant style.
<b><i>Agreeableness</i></b>	The tendency to agree and go along with others rather than to assert one’s own opinions and choices.
<b><i>Neuroticism</i></b>	The tendency to frequently experience negative emotions such as anger, worry, and sadness, as well as being interpersonally sensitive.

Figure 2. Descriptions of the Big Five Personality Traits

<b>Big 5 Trait</b>	<b>Example Behavior for LOW Scorers</b>	<b>Example Behavior for HIGH Scorers</b>
<b>Openness</b>	Prefers not to be exposed to alternative moral systems; narrow interests; inartistic; not analytical; down-to-earth	Enjoys seeing people with new types of haircuts and body piercing; curious; imaginative; untraditional
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	Prefers spur-of-the-moment action to planning; unreliable; hedonistic; careless; lax	Never late for a date; organized; hardworking; neat; persevering; punctual; self-disciplined
<b>Extraversion</b>	Preferring a quiet evening reading to a loud party; sober; aloof; unenthusiastic	Being the life of the party; active; optimistic; fun-loving; affectionate
<b>Agreeableness</b>	Quickly and confidently asserts own rights; irritable; manipulative; uncooperative; rude	Agrees with others about political opinions; good-natured; forgiving; gullible; helpful; forgiving
<b>Neuroticism</b>	Not getting irritated by small annoyances; calm, unemotional; hardy; secure; self-satisfied	Constantly worrying about little things; insecure; hypochondriacal; feeling inadequate

Figure 3. Example behaviors for those scoring low and high for the big 5 traits

Scores on the Big Five traits are mostly independent. That means that a person's standing on one trait tells very little about their standing on the other traits of the Big Five. For example, a person can be extremely high in Extraversion and be either high or low on Neuroticism. Similarly, a person can be low in Agreeableness and be either high or low in Conscientiousness. Thus, in the Five-Factor Model, you need five scores to describe most of an individual's personality.

Traits are important and interesting because they describe stable patterns of behavior that persist for long periods of time (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). Importantly, these stable patterns can have broad-ranging consequences for many areas of our life (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007). For instance, think about the factors that determine success in college. If you were asked to guess what factors predict good grades in college, you might guess something like intelligence. This guess would be correct, but we know much more about who is likely to do well. Specifically, personality researchers have also found the personality traits like Conscientiousness play an important role in college and beyond, probably because highly conscientious individuals study hard, get their work done on time, and are less distracted by nonessential activities that take time away from school work. In addition, highly conscientious people are often healthier than people low in conscientiousness because they are more likely to maintain healthy diets, to exercise, and to follow basic safety procedures like wearing seat belts or bicycle helmets. Over the long term, this consistent pattern of behaviors can add up to meaningful differences in health and longevity. Thus, personality traits are not just a useful way to describe people you know; they actually help psychologists predict how good a worker someone will be, how long he or she will live, and the types of jobs and activities the person will enjoy. Thus, there is growing interest in personality psychology among psychologists who work in applied settings, such as health psychology or organizational psychology.

## Facets of Traits (Subtraits)

So how does it feel to be told that your entire personality can be summarized with scores on just five personality traits? Do you think these five scores capture the complexity of your own and others' characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors? Most people would probably say no, pointing to some exception in their behavior that goes



against the general pattern that others might see. For instance, you may know people who are warm and friendly and find it easy to talk with strangers at a party yet are terrified if they have to perform in front of others or speak to large groups of people. The fact that there are different ways of being extraverted or conscientious shows that there is value in considering lower-level units of personality that are more specific than the Big Five traits. These more specific, lower-level units of personality are often called facets.

Trait	Facets of Trait
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fantasy-prone</li> <li>Open to new ideas</li> <li>Open to diverse behaviors</li> <li>Open to new and different roles</li> <li>Open to various values and beliefs</li> </ul>
Conscientiousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orderly</li> <li>Deliberate</li> <li>Self-disciplined</li> <li>Self-organized</li> <li>Deliberate</li> </ul>
Extraversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gregarious (social)</li> <li>Warm</li> <li>Assertive</li> <li>Active</li> <li>Excitement-seeking</li> <li>Positive emotionality</li> </ul>
Agreeableness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trusting</li> <li>Compassionate</li> <li>Compliant</li> <li>Modest</li> <li>Tender-minded</li> </ul>
Neuroticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anxious</li> <li>Self-conscious</li> <li>Impulsive</li> <li>Sensitive</li> <li>Vulnerable</li> </ul>

Figure 4. Facets of Traits

To give you a sense of what these narrow units are like, Figure 4 shows facets for each of the Big Five traits. It is important to note that although personality researchers generally agree about the value of the Big Five traits as a way to summarize one’s personality, there is no widely accepted list of facets that should be studied. The list seen here, based on work by researchers Paul Costa and Jeff McCrae, thus reflects just one possible list among many. It should, however, give you an idea of some of the facets making up each of the Five-Factor Model.

Facets can be useful because they provide more specific descriptions of what a person is like. For instance, if we take our friend who loves parties but hates public speaking, we might say that this person scores high on the “gregariousness” and “warmth” facets of extraversion, while scoring lower on facets such as “assertiveness” or “excitement-seeking.” This precise profile of facet scores not only provides a better description, it might also allow us to better predict how this friend will do in a variety of different jobs (for example, jobs that require public speaking versus jobs that involve one-on-one interactions with customers; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). Because different facets within a broad, global trait like extraversion tend to go together (those who are gregarious are often but not always assertive), the broad trait often provides a useful summary of what a person is like. But when we really want to know a person, facet scores add to our knowledge in important ways.

## Other Traits Beyond the Five-Factor Model

Despite the popularity of the Five-Factor Model, it is certainly not the only model that exists. Some suggest that there are more than five major traits, or perhaps even fewer. For example, in one of the first comprehensive models to be proposed, Hans Eysenck suggested that Extraversion and Neuroticism are most important. Eysenck believed that by combining people’s standing on these two major traits, we could account for many of the differences in personality that we see in people (Eysenck, 1981). So for instance, a neurotic introvert would be shy and nervous, while a stable introvert might avoid social situations and prefer solitary activities, but he may do so with a calm, steady attitude and little anxiety or emotion. Interestingly, Eysenck attempted to link these two major dimensions to underlying differences in people’s biology. For instance, he suggested that introverts experienced too much sensory stimulation and arousal, which made them want to seek out quiet settings and less stimulating environments. More recently, Jeffrey Gray suggested that these two broad traits are related to fundamental reward and avoidance systems in the brain—extraverts might be motivated to seek reward and thus exhibit assertive, reward-seeking behavior, whereas people high in neuroticism might be motivated to avoid punishment and thus may experience anxiety as a result of their heightened awareness of the threats in the world around them (Gray, 1981. This model has since been updated; see Gray & McNaughton, 2000). These early theories have led to a burgeoning interest in identifying the physiological underpinnings of the individual differences that we observe.

Another revision of the Big Five is the HEXACO model of traits (Ashton & Lee, 2007). This model is similar to the Big Five, but it posits slightly different versions of some of the traits, and its proponents argue that one important class of individual differences was omitted from the Five-Factor Model. The HEXACO adds Honesty-Humility as a sixth dimension of personality. People high in this trait are sincere, fair, and modest, whereas those low in the trait are manipulative, narcissistic, and self-centered. Thus, trait theorists are agreed that personality traits are important in understanding behavior, but there are still debates on the exact number and composition of the traits that are most important.

There are other important traits that are not included in comprehensive models like the Big Five. Although the five factors capture much that is important about personality, researchers have suggested other traits that capture interesting aspects of our behavior. In Figure 5 below we present just a few, out of hundreds, of the other traits that have been studied by personologists.

Personality Trait	Description
<b>Dark triad traits</b>	These traits refer to the darker side of personality. The dark triad includes Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These traits are associated with manipulative behavior, lack of empathy, and a focus on personal gain at any cost.
<b>Need for Achievement</b>	People high in this trait are motivated to excel and to achieve. They are high in self-esteem and have high standards of excellence for themselves. They are also high in self-direction and are the most goal-oriented. Their level of effort and persistence is high, and they are often the first to complete a task.
<b>Need for Cognition</b>	People high in this trait enjoy thinking and solving problems. They are high in intellectual curiosity and are often the first to learn about new things. They are also high in self-direction and are often the first to complete a task.
<b>Achievement Orientation</b>	People high in this trait are motivated to excel and to achieve. They are high in self-esteem and have high standards of excellence for themselves. They are also high in self-direction and are the most goal-oriented. Their level of effort and persistence is high, and they are often the first to complete a task.
<b>Materialism</b>	People high in this trait value material possessions and are often motivated by the desire for wealth and status. They are high in self-esteem and are often the first to complete a task.
<b>Self-esteem</b>	People high in this trait have a positive view of themselves and are often confident and assertive. They are high in self-direction and are often the first to complete a task.
<b>Optimism</b>	People high in this trait are positive and hopeful about the future. They are high in self-esteem and are often the first to complete a task.
<b>Altruism</b>	People high in this trait are helpful and caring towards others. They are high in self-esteem and are often the first to complete a task.

Figure 5. Other Traits Beyond Those Included in the Big Five

Not all of the above traits are currently popular with scientists, yet each of them has experienced popularity in the past. Although the Five-Factor Model has been the target of more rigorous research than some of the traits above, these additional personality characteristics give a good idea of the wide range of behaviors and attitudes that traits can cover.

## The Person-Situation Debate and Alternatives to the Trait Perspective



The way people behave is only in part a product of their natural personality. Situations also influence how a person behaves. Are you for instance a “different person” as a student in a classroom compared to when you’re a member of a close-knit social group? [Image: UO Education, <https://goo.gl/ylgV9T>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/VnKlK8>]

The ideas described in this module should probably seem familiar, if not obvious to you. When asked to think about what our friends, enemies, family members, and colleagues are like, some of the first things that come to mind are their personality characteristics. We might think about how warm and helpful our first teacher was, how irresponsible and careless our brother is, or how demanding and insulting our first boss was. Each of these descriptors reflects a



personality trait, and most of us generally think that the descriptions that we use for individuals accurately reflect their “characteristic pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors,” or in other words, their personality.

But what if this idea were wrong? What if our belief in personality traits were an illusion and people are not consistent from one situation to the next? This was a possibility that shook the foundation of personality psychology in the late 1960s when Walter Mischel published a book called *Personality and Assessment* (1968). In this book, Mischel suggested that if one looks closely at people’s behavior across many different situations, the consistency is really not that impressive. In other words, children who cheat on tests at school may steadfastly follow all rules when playing games and may never tell a lie to their parents. In other words, he suggested, there may not be any general trait of honesty that links these seemingly related behaviors. Furthermore, Mischel suggested that observers may believe that broad personality traits like honesty exist, when in fact, this belief is an illusion. The debate that followed the publication of Mischel’s book was called the person–situation debate because it pitted the power of personality against the power of situational factors as determinants of the behavior that people exhibit.

Because of the findings that Mischel emphasized, many psychologists focused on an alternative to the trait perspective. Instead of studying broad, context-free descriptions, like the trait terms we’ve described so far, Mischel thought that psychologists should focus on people’s distinctive reactions to specific situations. For instance, although there may not be a broad and general trait of honesty, some children may be especially likely to cheat on a test when the risk of being caught is low and the rewards for cheating are high. Others might be motivated by the sense of risk involved in cheating and may do so even when the rewards are not very high. Thus, the behavior itself results from the child’s unique evaluation of the risks and rewards present at that moment, along with her evaluation of her abilities and values. Because of this, the same child might act very differently in different situations. Thus, Mischel thought that specific behaviors were driven by the interaction between very specific, psychologically meaningful features of the situation in which people found themselves, the person’s unique way of perceiving that situation, and his or her abilities for dealing with it. Mischel and others argued that it was these social-cognitive processes that underlie people’s reactions to specific situations that provide some consistency when situational features are the same. If so, then studying these broad traits might be more fruitful than cataloging and measuring narrow, context-free traits like Extraversion or Neuroticism.

In the years after the publication of Mischel’s (1968) book, debates raged about whether personality truly exists, and if so, how it should be studied. And, as is often the case, it turns out that a more moderate middle ground than what the situationists proposed could be reached. It is certainly true, as Mischel pointed out, that a person’s behavior in one specific situation is not a good guide to how that person will behave in a very different specific situation. Someone who is extremely talkative at one specific party may sometimes be reticent to speak up during class and may even act like a wallflower at a different party. But this does not mean that personality does not exist, nor does it mean that people’s behavior is completely determined by situational factors. Indeed, research conducted after the person-situation debate shows that on average, the effect of the “situation” is about as large as that of personality traits. However, it is also true that if psychologists assess a broad range of behaviors across many different situations, there are general tendencies that emerge. Personality traits give an indication about how people will act on average, but frequently they are not so good at predicting how a person will act in a specific situation at a certain moment in time. Thus, to best capture broad traits, one must assess *aggregate* behaviors, averaged over time and across many different types of situations. Most modern personality researchers agree that there is a place for broad personality traits and for the narrower units such as those studied by Walter Mischel.

## Videos

**Video 1:** Gabriela Cintron’s – *5 Factors of Personality (OCEAN Song)*. This is a student-made video which cleverly describes, through song, common behavioral characteristics of the Big 5 personality traits.



*A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=74>*

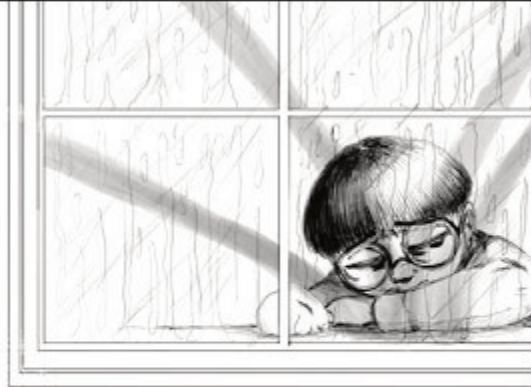
**Video 2:** Michael Harris' – *Personality Traits: The Big 5 and More*. This is a student-made video that looks at characteristics of the OCEAN traits through a series of funny vignettes. It also presents on the Person vs Situation Debate.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=74>

Video 3: David M. Cole's – *Grouchy with a Chance of Stomping*. This is a student-made video that makes a very important point about the relationship between personality traits and behavior using a handy weather analogy.

GROUCHY  
with a chance of  
STOMPING



using Personality Traits to Forecast Behavior



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## Vocabulary to Learn for this Chapter

### **Agreeableness**

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to be compassionate, cooperative, warm, and caring to others. People low in agreeableness tend to be rude, hostile, and to pursue their own interests over those of others.

### **Conscientiousness**

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to be careful, organized, hardworking, and to follow rules.

### **Continuous distributions**

Characteristics can go from low to high, with all different intermediate values possible. One does not simply have the trait or not have it, but can possess varying amounts of it.

### **Extraversion**

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to be sociable, outgoing, active, and assertive.

### **Facets**

Broad personality traits can be broken down into narrower facets or aspects of the trait. For example, extraversion has several facets, such as sociability, dominance, risk-taking and so forth.

**Factor analysis**

A statistical technique for grouping similar things together according to how highly they are associated.

**Five-Factor Model**

(also called the Big Five) The Five-Factor Model is a widely accepted model of personality traits. Advocates of the model believe that much of the variability in people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can be summarized with five broad traits. These five traits are Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

**HEXACO model**

The HEXACO model is an alternative to the Five-Factor Model. The HEXACO model includes six traits, five of which are variants of the traits included in the Big Five (Emotionality [E], Extraversion [X], Agreeableness [A], Conscientiousness [C], and Openness [O]). The sixth factor, Honesty-Humility [H], is unique to this model.

**Independent**

Two characteristics or traits are separate from one another— a person can be high on one and low on the other, or vice-versa. Some correlated traits are relatively independent in that although there is a tendency for a person high on one to also be high on the other, this is not always the case.

**Lexical hypothesis**

The lexical hypothesis is the idea that the most important differences between people will be encoded in the language that we use to describe people. Therefore, if we want to know which personality traits are most important, we can look to the language that people use to describe themselves and others.

**Neuroticism**

A personality trait that reflects the tendency to be interpersonally sensitive and the tendency to experience negative emotions like anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger.

**Openness to Experience**

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to seek out and to appreciate new things, including thoughts, feelings, values, and experiences.

**Personality**

Enduring predispositions that characterize a person, such as styles of thought, feelings and behavior.

**Personality traits**

Enduring dispositions in behavior that show differences across individuals, and which tend to characterize the person across varying types of situations.

**Person-situation debate**

The person-situation debate is a historical debate about the relative power of personality traits as compared to situational influences on behavior. The situationist critique, which started the person-situation debate, suggested that people overestimate the extent to which personality traits are consistent across situations.



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## 2. Personality Stability

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This module describes different ways to address questions about personality stability across the lifespan. Definitions of the major types of personality stability are provided, and evidence concerning the different kinds of stability and change are reviewed. The mechanisms thought to produce personality stability and personality change are identified and explained.

### Learning Objectives

- Explain the maturity, cumulative continuity, and corresponsive principles of personality development.
- Explain person-environment transactions, and distinguish between active, reactive, and evocative person-environment transactions.
- Identify the four processes that promote personality stability (attraction, selection, manipulation, and attrition). Provide examples of these processes.
- Describe the mechanisms behind the possibility of personality transformation.



## Introduction



How much of your personality was determined as a child? How much of it developed as you aged? What aspects of yourself are you thankful to have “grown out of?” [Image: Ah Wei , <https://goo.gl/nD3y7q>, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/rxiUsF>]

Personality psychology is about how individuals differ from each other in their characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Some of the most interesting questions about personality attributes involve issues of stability and change. Are shy children destined to become shy adults? Are the typical personality attributes of adults different from the typical attributes of adolescents? Do people become more self-controlled and better able to manage their negative emotions as they become adults? What mechanisms explain personality stability and what mechanisms account for personality change?



## Defining Different Kinds of Personality Stability

Something frustrating happens when you attempt to learn about personality stability[1]: As with many topics in psychology, there are a number of different ways to conceptualize and quantify personality stability (e.g., Caspi & Bem, 1990; Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). This means there are multiple ways to consider questions about personality stability. Thus, the simple (and obviously frustrating) way to respond to most blanket questions about personality stability is to simply answer that it depends on what one means by personality stability. To provide a more satisfying answer to questions about stability, I will first describe the different ways psychologists conceptualize and evaluate personality stability. I will make an important distinction between heterotypic and homotypic stability. I will then describe absolute and differential stability, two ways of considering homotypic stability. I will also draw your attention to the important concept of individual differences in personality development.

**Heterotypic stability** refers to the psychological coherence of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors across development. Questions about heterotypic stability concern the degree of consistency in underlying personality attributes. The tricky part of studying heterotypic stability is that the underlying psychological attribute can have different behavioral expressions at different ages. (You may already know that the prefix "hetero" means something like "different" in Greek.) Shyness is a good example of such an attribute because shyness is expressed differently by toddlers and young children than adults. The shy toddler might cling to a caregiver in a crowded setting and burst into tears when separated from this caregiver. The shy adult, on the other hand, may avoid making eye contact with strangers and seem aloof and distant at social gatherings. It would be highly unusual to observe an adult burst into tears in a crowded setting. The observable behaviors typically associated with shyness "look" different at different ages. Researchers can study heterotypic continuity only once they have a theory that specifies the different behavioral manifestations of the psychological attribute at different points in the lifespan. As it stands, there is evidence that attributes such as shyness and aggression exhibit heterotypic stability across the lifespan (Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989). Individuals who act shy as children often act shy as adults, but the degree of correspondence is far from perfect because many things can intervene between childhood and adulthood to alter how an individual develops. Nonetheless, the important point is that the patterns of behavior observed in childhood sometimes foreshadow adult personality attributes.

Homotypic stability concerns the amount of similarity in the same observable personality characteristics across time. (The prefix "homo" means something like the "same" in Greek.) For example, researchers might ask whether stress reaction or the tendency to become easily distressed by the normal challenges of life exhibits homotypic stability from age 25 to age 45. The assumption is that this attribute has the same manifestations at these different ages. Researchers make further distinctions between absolute stability and differential stability when considering homotypic stability.



When considering personality stability, researchers can think of it at the individual level (e.g., how is 18-year-old you different than 38-year-old you?) or at the group level (e.g., how are most 18-year-olds different than most 38-year-olds?). [Image: Ken Wytock, <https://goo.gl/G1qfcO>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/VnKlK8>]

The Big Five domains include extraversion (attributes such as assertive, confident, independent, outgoing, and sociable), agreeableness (attributes such as cooperative, kind, modest, and trusting), conscientiousness (attributes such as hard working, dutiful, self-controlled, and goal-oriented), neuroticism (attributes such as anxious, tense, moody, and easily angered), and openness (attributes such as artistic, curious, inventive, and open-minded). The Big Five is one of the most common ways of organizing the vast range of personality attributes that seem to distinguish one person from the next. This organizing framework made it possible for Roberts et al. (2006) to draw broad conclusions from the literature.

In general, average levels of extraversion (especially the attributes linked to self-confidence and independence), agreeableness, and conscientiousness appear to increase with age whereas neuroticism appears to decrease with age (Roberts et al., 2006). Openness also declines with age, especially after mid-life (Roberts et al., 2006). These changes are often viewed as positive trends given that higher levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness and lower levels of neuroticism are associated with seemingly desirable outcomes such as increased relationship stability and quality, greater success at work, better health, a reduced risk of criminality and mental health problems, and even decreased mortality (e.g., Kotov, Gamez, Schmidt, & Watson, 2010; Miller & Lynam 2001; Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007). This pattern of positive average changes in personality attributes is known as the **maturity principle** of adult personality development (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). The basic idea is that attributes associated with positive adaptation and attributes associated with the successful fulfillment of adult roles tend to increase during adulthood in terms of their average levels.

Roberts et al. (2006) found that young adulthood (the period between the ages of 18 and the late 20s) was the most active time in the lifespan for observing average changes, although average differences in personality attributes were observed across the lifespan. Such a result might be surprising in light of the intuition that adolescence is a time of personality change and maturation. However, young adulthood is typically a time in the lifespan that includes a number of life changes in terms of finishing school, starting a career, committing to romantic partnerships, and parenthood (Donnellan, Conger, & Burzette, 2007; Rindfuss, 1991). Finding that young adulthood is an active time for personality development provides circumstantial evidence that adult roles might generate pressures for certain patterns of personality development. Indeed, this is one potential explanation for the maturity principle of personality development. This pattern of increasing stability with age is called the **cumulative continuity principle of personality development** (Caspi et al., 2005). This general pattern holds for both women and men and applies to a wide range of different personality attributes ranging from extraversion to openness and curiosity. It is important to emphasize, however, that the observed correlations are never perfect at any age (i.e., the correlations do not reach 1.0). This indicates that personality changes can occur at any time in the lifespan; it just seems that greater inconsistency is observed in childhood and adolescence than in adulthood.

In general, the picture that emerges from the literature is that personality traits are relatively enduring attributes that become more stable from childhood to adulthood. Nonetheless, the stability of personality attributes is not perfect at any period in the lifespan. This is an important conclusion because it challenges two extreme perspectives that have been influential in psychological research. More than 100 years ago, the famous psychologist William James remarked that character (personality) was “set like plaster” for most people by age 30. This perspective implies near perfect stability of personality in adulthood. In contrast, other psychologists have sometimes denied there was any stability to personality at all. Their perspective is that individual thoughts and feelings are simply responses to transitory situational influences that are unlikely to show much consistency across the lifespan. Current research does not support either of these extreme perspectives. Nonetheless, the existence of some degree of stability raises important questions about the exact processes and mechanisms that produce personality stability (and personality change).



It's quite easy to imagine, "Once I'm 30, married, and with a family, I will be that person for the rest of my life." But the research shows that while some traits are stable, others continue to develop and adjust to our new environments. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

## The How and Why of Personality Stability and Change: Different Kinds of Interplay Between Individuals and Their Environments

Personality stability is the result of the interplay between the individual and her/his environment. Psychologists use the term person–environment transactions (e.g., Roberts et al., 2008) to capture the mutually transforming interplay between individuals and their contextual circumstances. Several different types of these transactions have been described by psychological researchers. **Active person–environment transactions** occur when individuals seek out certain kinds of environments and experiences that are consistent with their personality characteristics. Risk-taking individuals may spend their leisure time very differently than more cautious individuals. Some prefer extreme sports whereas others prefer less intense experiences. Reactive person–environment transactions occur when individuals react differently to the same objective situation because of their personalities. A large social gathering represents a psychologically different context to the highly extraverted person compared with the highly introverted person. Evocative person–environment transactions occur whenever individuals draw out or evoke certain kinds of responses from their social environments because of their personality attributes. A warm and secure individual invites different kinds of responses from peers than a cold and aloof individual.

Current researchers make distinctions between the mechanisms likely to produce personality stability and the mechanisms likely to produce changes (Roberts, 2006; Roberts et al., 2008). Brent Roberts coined the helpful acronym ASTMA to aid in remembering many of these mechanisms: Attraction (A), selection (S), manipulation (M), and attrition (A) tend to produce personality stability, whereas transformation (T) explains personality change.





Think to your own preference for hobbies and jobs. How do these activities reflect core attributes of your own personality? [Image: Dave Scriven, <https://goo.gl/4g9tCz>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/VnKlK8>]

Individuals sometimes select careers, friends, social clubs, and lifestyles because of their personality attributes. This is the active process of attraction—individuals are attracted to environments because of their personality attributes. Situations that match with our personalities seem to feel “right” (e.g., Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004). On the flipside of this process, gatekeepers, such as employers, admissions officers, and even potential relationship partners, often select individuals because of their personalities. Extraverted and outgoing individuals are likely to make better salespeople than quiet individuals who are uncomfortable with social interactions. All in all, certain individuals are “admitted” by gatekeepers into particular kinds of environments because of their personalities. Likewise, individuals with characteristics that are a bad fit with a particular environment may leave such settings or be asked to leave by gatekeepers. A lazy employee will not last long at a demanding job. These examples capture the process of attrition (dropping out). The processes of selection and attrition reflect evocative person–environment transactions. Last, individuals can actively manipulate their environments to match their personalities. An outgoing person will find ways

to introduce more social interactions into the workday, whereas a shy individual may shun the proverbial water cooler to avoid having contact with others.

These four processes of attraction, selection, attrition, and manipulation explain how a kind of matching occurs between personality attributes and environmental conditions for many individuals. This positive matching typically produces personality consistency because the “press” of the situation reinforces the attributes of the person. This observation is at the core of the **corresponsive principle of personality development** (Caspi et al., 2005; Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2003). Preexisting personality attributes and environmental contexts work in concert to promote personality continuity. The idea is that environments often reinforce those personality attributes that were partially responsible for the initial environmental conditions in the first place. For example, ambitious and confident individuals might be attracted to and selected for more demanding jobs (Roberts et al., 2003). These kinds of jobs often require drive, dedication, and achievement striving thereby accentuating dispositional tendencies toward ambition and confidence.

Additional considerations related to person–environment transactions may help to further explain personality stability. Individuals gain more autonomy to select their own environment as they transition from childhood to adulthood (Scarr & McCartney, 1983). This might help explain why the differential stability of personality attributes increases from adolescence into adulthood. Reactive and evocative person–environment transactions also facilitate personality stability. The overarching idea is that personality attributes shape how individuals respond to situations and shape the kinds of responses individuals elicit from their environments. These responses and reactions can generate self-fulfilling cycles. For example, aggressive individuals seem to interpret ambiguous social cues as threatening (something called a hostile attribution bias or a hostile attribution of intent; see Crick & Dodge, 1996; Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Kooops, Bosch, & Monshouwer, 2002). If a stranger runs into you and you spill your hot coffee all over a clean shirt, how do you interpret the situation? Do you believe the other person was being aggressive, or were you just unlucky? A rude, caustic, or violent response might invite a similar response from the individual who ran into you. The basic point is that personality attributes help shape reactions to and responses from the social world, and these processes often (but not always) end up reinforcing dispositional tendencies.

Although a number of mechanisms account for personality continuity by generating a match between the individual’s characteristics and the environment, personality change or transformation is nonetheless possible. Recall that differential stability is not perfect. The simplest mechanism for producing change is a cornerstone of behaviorism: Patterns of behavior that produce positive consequences (pleasure) are repeated, whereas patterns of behavior that produce negative consequences (pain) will diminish (Thorndike, 1933). Social settings may have the power to transform personality if the individual is exposed to different rewards and punishments and the setting places limitations on how a person can reasonably behave (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). For example, environmental contexts that limit agency and have very clear reward structures such as the military might be particularly powerful contexts for producing lasting personality changes (e.g., Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Lüdke, & Trautwein, 2012).

It is also possible that individuals might change their personality attributes by actively striving to change their behaviors and emotional reactions with help from outsiders. This idea lies at the heart of psychotherapy. As it stands, the conditions that produce lasting personality changes are an active area of research. Personality researchers have historically sought to demonstrate the existence of personality stability, and they are now turning their full attention to the conditions that facilitate personality change. There are currently a few examples of interventions that end up producing short-term personality changes (Jackson, Hill, Payne, Roberts, & Stine-Morrow, 2012), and this is an exciting area for future research (Edmonds, Jackson, Fayard, & Roberts, 2008). Insights about personality change are important for creating effective interventions designed to foster positive human development. Finding ways to promote self-control, emotional stability, creativity, and an agreeable disposition would likely lead to improvements for both individuals and society as a whole because these attributes predict a range of consequential life outcomes (Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006; Roberts et al., 2007)

## Conclusion



Our personality is the result of the self interacting with the environment. Who you are helps to determine what you do and like, and what you do and like helps to determine who you are. [Image: Nick Sheerbart, CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

There are multiple ways to evaluate personality stability. The existing evidence suggests that personality attributes are relatively enduring attributes that show predictable average-level changes across the lifespan. Personality stability is produced by a complicated interplay between individuals and their social settings. Many personality attributes are linked to life experiences in a mutually reinforcing cycle: Personality attributes seem to shape environmental contexts, and those contexts often then accentuate and reinforce those very personality attributes. Even so, personality change or transformation is possible because individuals respond to their environments. Individuals may also want to change their personalities. Personality researchers are now beginning to address important questions about the possibility of lasting personality changes through intervention efforts.

**Videos: Brian Little PhD on “Who are you Really”** Brian Little is a long-term personality researcher and author.



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## Vocabulary

### **Active person–environment transactions**

The interplay between individuals and their contextual circumstances that occurs whenever individuals play a key role in seeking out, selecting, or otherwise manipulating aspects of their environment.

### **Corresponsive principle**

The idea that personality traits often become matched with environmental conditions such that an individual's social context acts to accentuate and reinforce their personality attributes.

### **Cumulative continuity principle**

The generalization that personality attributes show increasing stability with age and experience.

**Heterotypic Stability:** effects of fundamental temperamental tendencies change with age, but temperament and personality stay the same. In other words, behaviors associated with traits manifest differently, but the trait stays similar in each of us.

### **Maturity principle**

The generalization that personality attributes associated with the successful fulfillment of adult roles increase with age and experience.



## Practice Quiz



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# 3. Personality Assessment

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This module provides a basic overview to the assessment of personality. It discusses objective personality tests (based on both self-report and informant ratings), projective and implicit tests, and behavioral/performance measures. It describes the basic features of each method, as well as reviewing the strengths, weaknesses, and overall validity of each approach.

## Learning Objectives

- Appreciate the diversity of methods that are used to measure personality characteristics.
- Understand the logic, strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- Gain a better sense of the overall validity and range of applications of personality tests.

## Introduction

Personality is the field within psychology that studies the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, goals, and interests of normal individuals. It therefore covers a very wide range of important psychological characteristics. Moreover, different theoretical models have generated very different strategies for measuring these characteristics. For example, humanistically oriented models argue that people have clear, well-defined goals and are actively striving to achieve them (McGregor, McAdams, & Little, 2006). It, therefore, makes sense to ask them directly about themselves and their goals. In contrast, psychodynamically oriented theories propose that people lack insight into their feelings and motives, such that their behavior is influenced by processes that operate outside of their awareness (e.g., McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Meyer & Kurtz, 2006). Given that people are unaware of these processes, it does not make sense to ask directly about them. One, therefore, needs to adopt an entirely different approach to identify these nonconscious factors. Not surprisingly, researchers have adopted a wide range of approaches to measure important personality characteristics. The most widely used strategies will be summarized in the following sections.



Do people possess the necessary awareness to see themselves as they are and provide accurate insights into their own personalities? [Image: fotEK10, <https://goo.gl/GCBDJL>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF>]

## Objective Tests

### Definition

Objective tests (Loevinger, 1957; Meyer & Kurtz, 2006) represent the most familiar and widely used approach to assessing personality. Objective tests involve administering a standard set of items, each of which is answered using a limited set of response options (e.g., true or false; strongly disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, strongly agree).







Carlson, 2011). For example, Oh et al. (2011) found that informant ratings were more strongly related to job performance than were self-ratings. Similarly, Oltmanns and Turkheimer (2009) summarized evidence indicating that informant ratings of Air Force cadets predicted early, involuntary discharge from the military better than self-ratings.

Nevertheless, informant ratings also are subject to certain problems and limitations. One general issue is the level of relevant information that is available to the rater (Funder, 2012). For instance, even under the best of circumstances, informants lack full access to the thoughts, feelings, and motives of the person they are rating. This problem is magnified when the informant does not know the person particularly well and/or only sees him or her in a limited range of situations (Funder, 2012; Beer & Watson, 2010).



Informant personality ratings are generally a reliable and valid assessment instrument, however in certain cases the informant may have some significant biases that make the rating less reliable. Newly married individuals for example are likely to rate their partners in an unrealistically positive way. [Image: Sociales El Heraldo de Saltillo, <https://goo.gl/3g3Qhh>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF>]



Informant ratings also are subject to some of the same response biases noted earlier for self-ratings. For instance, they are not immune to the reference group effect. Indeed, it is well-established that parent ratings often are subject to a **sibling contrast effect**, such that parents exaggerate the true magnitude of differences between their children (Pinto, Rijdsdijk, Frazier-Wood, Asherson, & Kuntsi, 2012). Furthermore, in many studies, individuals are allowed to nominate (or even recruit) the informants who will rate them. Because of this, it most often is the case that informants (who, as noted earlier, may be friends, relatives, or romantic partners) like the people they are rating. This, in turn, means that informants may produce overly favorable personality ratings. Indeed, their ratings actually can be more favorable than the corresponding self-ratings (Watson & Humrichouse, 2006). This tendency for informants to produce unrealistically positive ratings has been termed the letter of recommendation effect (Leising, Erbs, & Fritz, 2010) and the **honeymoon effect** when applied to newlyweds (Watson & Humrichouse, 2006).

## Other Ways of Classifying Objective Tests

### Comprehensiveness

In addition to the source of the scores, there are at least two other important dimensions on which personality tests differ. The first such dimension concerns the extent to which an instrument seeks to assess personality in a reasonably comprehensive manner. At one extreme, many widely used measures are designed to assess a single core attribute. Examples of these types of measures include the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and the Multidimensional Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire (Gamez, Chmielewski, Kotov, Ruggero, & Watson, 2011). At the other extreme, a number of omnibus inventories contain a large number of specific scales and purport to measure personality in a reasonably comprehensive manner. These instruments include the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1987), the Revised HEXACO Personality Inventory (HEXACO-PI-R) (Lee & Ashton, 2006), the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (Patrick, Curtin, & Tellegen, 2002), the NEO Personality Inventory-3 (NEO-PI-3) (McCrae et al., 2005), the Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1984), and the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1980).

### Breadth of the target characteristics

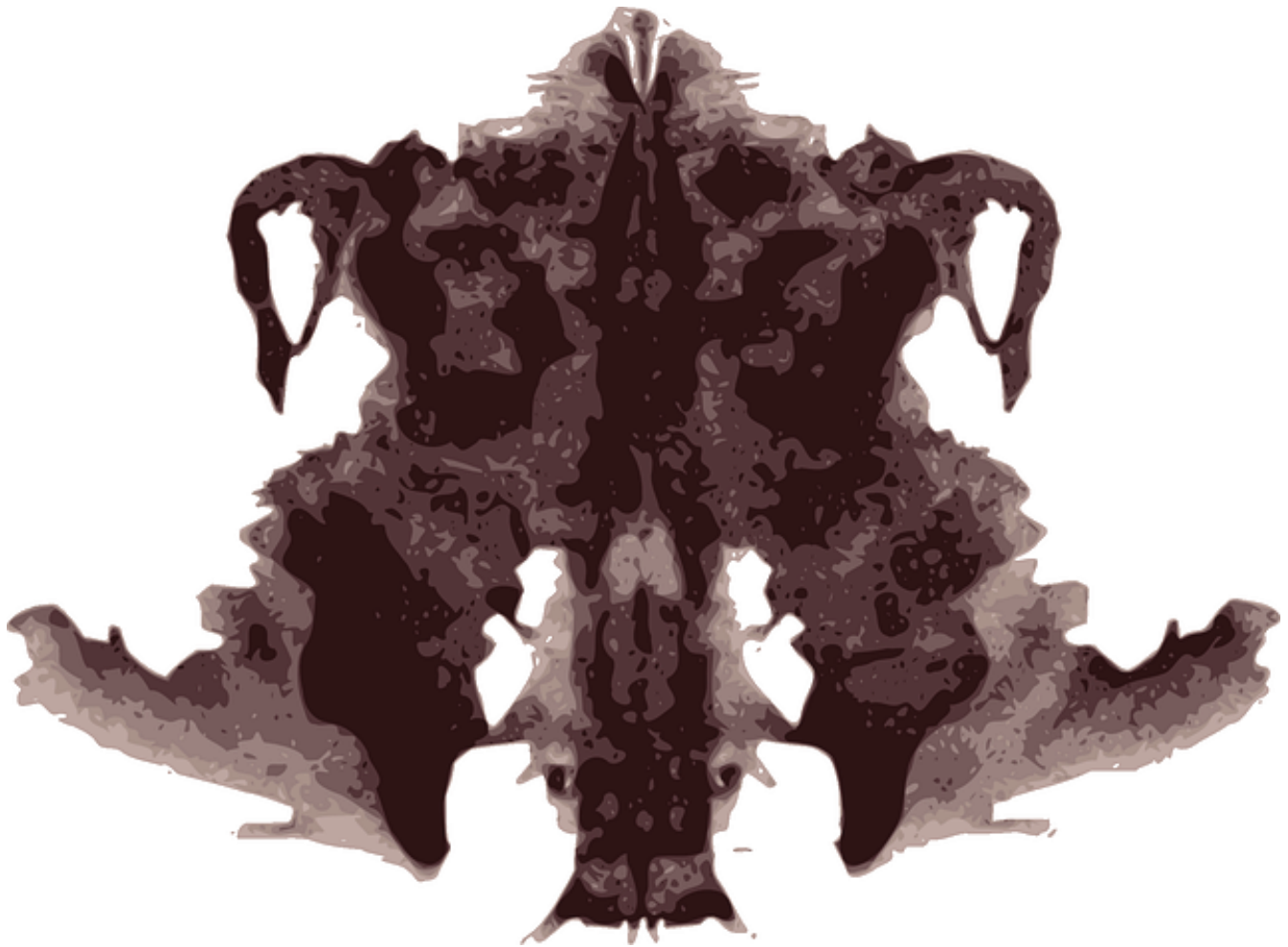
Second, personality characteristics can be classified at different levels of breadth or generality. For example, many models emphasize broad, “big” traits such as neuroticism and extraversion. These general dimensions can be divided up into several distinct yet empirically correlated component traits. For example, the broad dimension of extraversion contains such specific component traits as dominance (extraverts are assertive, persuasive, and exhibitionistic), sociability (extraverts seek out and enjoy the company of others), positive emotionality (extraverts are active, energetic, cheerful, and enthusiastic), and adventurousness (extraverts enjoy intense, exciting experiences).

Some popular personality instruments are designed to assess only the broad, general traits. For example, similar to the sample instrument displayed in Table 1, the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) contains brief scales assessing the broad traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. In contrast, many instruments—including several of the omnibus inventories mentioned earlier—were designed primarily to assess a large number of more specific characteristics. Finally, some inventories—including the HEXACO-PI-R and the NEO-PI-3—were explicitly designed to provide coverage of both general and specific trait characteristics. For instance, the

NEO-PI-3 contains six specific facet scales (e.g., Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Positive Emotions, Excitement Seeking) that then can be combined to assess the broad trait of extraversion.

## Projective and Implicit Tests

### Projective Tests



Projective tests, such as the famous Rorschach inkblot test require a person to give spontaneous answers that “project” their unique personality onto an ambiguous stimulus. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

As noted earlier, some approaches to personality assessment are based on the belief that important thoughts, feelings, and motives operate outside of conscious awareness. Projective tests represent influential early examples of this approach. Projective tests originally were based on the **projective hypothesis** (Frank, 1939; Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000): If a person is asked to describe or interpret ambiguous stimuli—that is, things that can be understood in a number of different ways—their responses will be influenced by *nonconscious needs*, feelings, and experiences (note, however, that the theoretical rationale underlying these measures has evolved over time) (see, for example, Spangler, 1992). Two prominent examples of projective tests are the Rorschach Inkblot Test (Rorschach, 1921) and the Thematic Apperception

Test (TAT) (Morgan & Murray, 1935). The former asks respondents to interpret symmetrical blots of ink, whereas the latter asks them to generate stories about a series of pictures.

For instance, one TAT picture depicts an elderly woman with her back turned to a young man; the latter looks downward with a somewhat perplexed expression. Another picture displays a man clutched from behind by three mysterious hands. What stories could you generate in response to these pictures?

In comparison to objective tests, projective tests tend to be somewhat cumbersome and labor intensive to administer. The biggest challenge, however, has been to develop a reliable and valid scheme to score the extensive set of responses generated by each respondent. The most widely used Rorschach scoring scheme is the Comprehensive System developed by Exner (2003). The most influential TAT scoring system was developed by McClelland, Atkinson and colleagues between 1947 and 1953 (McClelland et al., 1989; see also Winter, 1998), which can be used to assess motives such as the need for achievement.

The validity of the Rorschach has been a matter of considerable controversy (Lilienfeld et al., 2000; Mihura, Meyer, Dumitrascu, & Bombel, 2012; Society for Personality Assessment, 2005). Most reviews acknowledge that Rorschach scores do show some ability to predict important outcomes. Its critics, however, argue that it fails to provide important incremental information beyond other, more easily acquired information, such as that obtained from standard self-report measures (Lilienfeld et al., 2000).

Validity evidence is more impressive for the TAT. In particular, reviews have concluded that TAT-based measures of the need for achievement (a) show significant validity to predict important criteria and (b) provide important information beyond that obtained from objective measures of this motive (McClelland et al., 1989; Spangler, 1992). Furthermore, given the relatively weak associations between objective and projective measures of motives, McClelland et al. (1989) argue that they tap somewhat different processes, with the latter assessing **implicit motives** (Schultheiss, 2008).

## Implicit Tests

In recent years, researchers have begun to use implicit measures of personality (Back, Schmuckle, & Egloff, 2009; Vazire & Carlson, 2011). These tests are based on the assumption that people form *automatic or implicit* associations between certain concepts based on their previous experience and behavior. If two concepts (e.g., *me* and *assertive*) are strongly associated with each other, then they should be sorted together more quickly and easily than two concepts (e.g., *me* and *shy*) that are less strongly associated. Although validity evidence for these measures still is relatively sparse, the results to date are encouraging: Back et al. (2009), for example, showed that implicit measures of the FFM personality traits predicted behavior even after controlling for scores on objective measures of these same characteristics.

## Behavioral and Performance Measures



Observing real world behavior is one way to assess personality. Tendencies such as messiness and neatness are clues to personality. [Image: Crumley Roberts, <https://goo.gl/6Ahn8q>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

A final approach is to infer important personality characteristics from direct samples of behavior. For example, Funder and Colvin (1988) brought opposite-sex pairs of participants into the laboratory and had them engage in a five-minute “getting acquainted” conversation; raters watched videotapes of these interactions and then scored the participants on various personality characteristics. Mehl, Gosling, and Pennebaker (2006) used the electronically activated recorder (EAR) to obtain samples of ambient sounds in participants’ natural environments over a period of two days; EAR-based scores then were related to self- and observer-rated measures of personality. For instance, more frequent talking over

this two-day period was significantly related to both self- and observer-ratings of extraversion. As a final example, Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, and Morris (2002) sent observers into college students' bedrooms and then had them rate the students' personality characteristics on the Big Five traits. The averaged observer ratings correlated significantly with participants' self-ratings on all five traits. Follow-up analyses indicated that conscientious students had neater rooms, whereas those who were high in openness to experience had a wider variety of books and magazines.

Behavioral measures offer several advantages over other approaches to assessing personality. First, because behavior is sampled directly, this approach is not subject to the types of response biases (e.g., self-enhancement bias, reference group effect) that can distort scores on objective tests. Second, as is illustrated by the Mehl et al. (2006) and Gosling et al. (2002) studies, this approach allows people to be studied in their daily lives and in their natural environments, thereby avoiding the artificiality of other methods (Mehl et al., 2006). Finally, this is the only approach that actually assesses what people *do*, as opposed to what they think or feel (see Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007).

At the same time, however, this approach also has some disadvantages. This assessment strategy clearly is much more cumbersome and labor intensive than using objective tests, particularly self-report. Moreover, similar to projective tests, behavioral measures generate a rich set of data that then need to be scored in a reliable and valid way. Finally, even the most ambitious study only obtains relatively small samples of behavior that may provide a somewhat distorted view of a person's true characteristics. For example, your behavior during a "getting acquainted" conversation on a single given day inevitably will reflect a number of transient influences (e.g., level of stress, quality of sleep the previous night) that are idiosyncratic to that day.

## Conclusion

No single method of assessing personality is perfect or infallible; each of the major methods has both strengths and limitations. By using a diversity of approaches, researchers can overcome the limitations of any single method and develop a more complete and integrative view of personality.

## Vocabulary

**Honeymoon effect:** The tendency for newly married individuals to rate their spouses in an unrealistically positive manner. It illustrates the very important role played by relationship satisfaction in ratings made by romantic partners: As marital satisfaction declines (i.e., when the "honeymoon is over"), this effect disappears.

**Implicit motives:** These are goals that are important to a person, but that he/she cannot consciously express. Because the individual cannot verbalize these goals directly, they cannot be easily assessed via self-report. However, some researchers think they can be measured using projective devices such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). There is some debate whether implicit motives can be accurately measured by assessments.

**Projective hypothesis:** The theory that when people are confronted with ambiguous stimuli (that is, stimuli that can be interpreted in more than one way), their responses will be influenced by their unconscious thoughts, needs, wishes, and impulses. This, in turn, is based on the Freudian notion of projection, which is the idea that people attribute their own undesirable/unacceptable characteristics to other people or objects.

**Reliability:** The consistency of test scores across repeated assessments. For example, test-retest reliability examines the extent to which scores change over time.

**Self-enhancement bias:** The tendency for people to see and/or present themselves in an overly favorable way. This tendency can take two basic forms: defensiveness (when individuals actually believe they are better than they really are)



and impression management (when people intentionally distort their responses to try to convince others that they are better than they really are).

**Sibling contrast effect:** The tendency of parents to use their perceptions of all of their children as a frame of reference for rating the characteristics of each of them. For example, suppose that a mother has three children; two of these children are very sociable and outgoing, whereas the third is relatively average in sociability. Because of operation of this effect, the mother will rate this third child as less sociable and outgoing than he/she actually is. More generally, this effect causes parents to exaggerate the true extent of differences between their children. This effect represents a specific manifestation of the more general reference group effect when applied to ratings made by parents.

**Validity:** Evidence related to the interpretation and use of test scores. A particularly important type of evidence is criterion validity, which involves the ability of a test to predict theoretically relevant outcomes. For example, a presumed measure of conscientiousness should be related to academic achievement (such as overall grade point average).

Quiz:

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# 4. Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Nancy Chodorow: Viewpoints on Psychodynamic Theory

This is an edited and adapted chapter from Bornstein, R. (2019) in the NOBA series on psychology. For full attribution see end of chapter.

Originating in the work of Sigmund Freud, the psychodynamic perspective emphasizes unconscious psychological processes (for example, wishes and fears of which we're not fully aware), and contends that childhood experiences are crucial in shaping adult personality. The psychodynamic perspective has evolved considerably since Freud's time, and now includes innovative new approaches such as object relations theory and neuropsychanalysis. Some psychodynamic concepts have held up well to empirical scrutiny while others have not, and aspects of the theory remain controversial, but the psychodynamic perspective continues to influence many different areas of contemporary psychology.

## Learning Objectives

- Describe the basic ideas of Sigmund Freud
- Describe the basic ideas of Karen Horney
- Describe some ideas that Nancy Chodorow added to Psychodynamic Theories

## Introduction

Have you ever done something that didn't make sense? Perhaps you waited until the last minute to begin studying for an exam, even though you knew that delaying so long would ensure that you got a poor grade. Or maybe you spotted a person you liked across the room—someone about whom you had romantic feelings—but instead of approaching that person you headed the other way (and felt ashamed about it afterward). If you've ever done something that didn't seem to make sense—and who among us hasn't—the psychodynamic perspective on personality might be useful for you. It can help you understand why you chose not to study for that test, or why you ran the other way when the person of your dreams entered the room.



According to psychodynamic theory, a lot of our behaviors and preferences of adulthood are shaped by the experiences in our childhood. [Image: Rifqi Dahlgren, <https://goo.gl/hx4Oeb>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/VnKlK8>]

Psychodynamic theory (sometimes called *psychoanalytic theory*) explains personality in terms of unconscious psychological processes (for example, wishes and fears of which we're not fully aware), and contends that childhood experiences are crucial in shaping adult personality. Psychodynamic theory is most closely associated with the work of Sigmund Freud, and with psychoanalysis, a type of psychotherapy that attempts to explore the patient's unconscious thoughts and emotions so that the person is better able to understand him- or herself.

Freud's work has been extremely influential, its impact extending far beyond psychology (several years ago *Time* magazine selected Freud as one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century). Freud's work has been not only influential, but quite controversial as well. As you might imagine, when Freud suggested in 1900 that much of our behavior is determined by psychological forces of which we're largely unaware—that we literally don't know what's going

on in our own minds—people were (to put it mildly) displeased (Freud, 1900/1953a). When he suggested in 1905 that we humans have strong sexual feelings from a very early age, and that some of these sexual feelings are directed toward our parents, people were more than displeased—they were outraged (Freud, 1905/1953b). Few theories in psychology have evoked such strong reactions from other professionals and members of the public.

Controversy notwithstanding, no competent psychologist, or student of psychology, can ignore psychodynamic theory. It is simply too important for psychological science and practice, and continues to play an important role in a wide variety of disciplines within and outside psychology (for example, developmental psychology, social psychology, sociology, and neuroscience; see Bornstein, 2005, 2006; Solms & Turnbull, 2011). This module reviews the psychodynamic perspective on personality. We begin with a brief discussion of the core assumptions of psychodynamic theory, followed by an overview of the evolution of the theory from Freud's time to today. We then discuss the place of psychodynamic theory within contemporary psychology, and look toward the future as well.

## Core Assumptions of the Psychodynamic Perspective

The core assumptions of psychodynamic theory are surprisingly simple. Moreover, these assumptions are unique to the psychodynamic framework: No other theories of personality accept these three ideas in their purest form.

### Assumption 1: Primacy of the Unconscious

Psychodynamic theorists contend that the majority of psychological processes take place outside conscious awareness. In psychoanalytic terms, the activities of the mind (or *psyche*) are presumed to be largely unconscious. Research confirms this basic premise of psychoanalysis: Many of our mental activities—memories, motives, feelings, and the like—are largely inaccessible to consciousness (Bargh & Morsella, 2008; Bornstein, 2010; Wilson, 2009).

### Assumption 2: Critical Importance of Early Experiences

Psychodynamic theory is not alone in positing that early childhood events play a role in shaping personality, but the theory is unique in the degree to which it emphasizes these events as determinants of personality development and dynamics. According to the psychodynamic model, early experiences—including those occurring during the first weeks or months of life—set in motion personality processes that affect us years, even decades, later (Blatt & Levy, 2003; McWilliams, 2009). This is especially true of experiences that are outside the normal range (for example, losing a parent or sibling at a very early age).



### Assumption 3: Psychic Causality



Our every thought and behavior –even something as seemingly random as which seat you choose on the bus –results from biological or psychological influences. [Image: ryuu ji 竜次, <https://goo.gl/NrofGI>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

The third core assumption of psychodynamic theory is that nothing in mental life happens by chance—that there is no such thing as a random thought, feeling, motive, or behavior. This has come to be known as the principle of **psychic causality**, and though few psychologists accept the principle of psychic causality precisely as psychoanalysts conceive it, most theorists and researchers agree that thoughts, motives, emotional responses, and expressed behaviors do not arise randomly, but always stem from some combination of identifiable biological and psychological processes (Elliott, 2002; Robinson & Gordon, 2011).

## The Evolution of Psychodynamic Theory

Given Freud's background in neurology, it is not surprising that the first incarnation of psychoanalytic theory was

primarily biological: Freud set out to explain psychological phenomena in terms that could be linked to neurological functioning as it was understood in his day. Because Freud's work in this area evolved over more than 50 years (he began in 1885, and continued until he died in 1939), there were numerous revisions along the way. Thus, it is most accurate to think of psychodynamic theory as a set of interrelated models that complement and build upon each other. Three are particularly important: the topographic model, the psychosexual stage model, and the structural model.

## The Topographic Model

In his 1900 book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud introduced his topographic model of the mind, which contended that the mind could be divided into three regions: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. The conscious part of the mind holds information that you're focusing on at this moment—what you're thinking and feeling right now. The preconscious contains material that is capable of becoming conscious but is not conscious at the moment because your attention is not being directed toward it. You can move material from the preconscious into consciousness simply by focusing your attention on it. Consider, for example, what you had for dinner last night. A moment ago that information was preconscious; now it's conscious, because you “pulled it up” into consciousness. (Not to worry, in a few moments it will be preconscious again, and you can move on to more important things.)



Dreams play an important role in psychodynamic theory, as they are often considered the central route through which the unconscious expresses itself to the conscious mind. [Image: Danmo, CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

The unconscious—the most controversial part of the topographic model—contains anxiety-producing material (for example, sexual impulses, aggressive urges) that are deliberately *repressed* (held outside of conscious awareness as a form of self-protection because they make you uncomfortable). The terms *conscious*, *preconscious*, and *unconscious* continue to be used today in psychology, and research has provided considerable support for Freud's thinking regarding conscious and preconscious processing (Erdelyi, 1985, 2004). The existence of the unconscious remains controversial, with some researchers arguing that evidence for it is compelling and others contending that “unconscious” processing can be accounted for without positing the existence of a Freudian repository of repressed wishes and troubling urges and impulses (Eagle, 2011; Luborsky & Barrett, 2006).



## The Psychosexual Stage Model

Freud remained devoted to the topographic model, but by 1905 he had outlined the key elements of his **psychosexual stage model**, which argued that early in life we progress through a sequence of developmental stages, each with its own unique challenge and its own mode of sexual gratification. Freud's psychosexual stages—oral, anal, Oedipal, latency, and genital—are well-known even to non-analytic psychologists. Frustration or overgratification during a particular stage was hypothesized to result in “fixation” at that stage, and to the development of an oral, anal, or Oedipal personality style (Bornstein, 2005, 2006).

Table 1 illustrates the basic organization of Freud's (1905/1953b) psychosexual stage model, and the three personality styles that result. Note that—consistent with the developmental challenges that the child confronts during each stage—oral fixation is hypothesized to result in a dependent personality, whereas anal fixation results in a lifelong preoccupation with control. Oedipal fixation leads to an aggressive, competitive personality orientation.

In contemporary psychological circles, the psychosexual stage model is not commonly used as a basis for understanding mental illness, although some theories still consider the implications of developmental fixations, and some psychodynamic schools still utilize thinking surrounding the psychosexual stages. An example of current interest in psychosexual stages is examining the origin of sexual compulsions. Some sex therapists and researchers examine with their clients the information contained in their sexual arousal templates. (Carnes, 2011) A sexual arousal template consists of the total constellation of thoughts, images, behaviors, sounds, smells, sights, fantasies, and objects that arouse us sexually (Carnes, 2011). Some of these sexual arousal templates may be based in psychosexual development experiences. Psychoanalytic literature and sex therapy literature examine cases where a client, for example, has a fixation as an adult for example on breasts, and whether this relates to a psychosexual stage fixation in a stage such as the oral stage. Modern sex therapy is more often cognitive-behavioral in its emphasis, however psychosexual developmental stages and fixation models still hold the interest of not only of psychologists, but the imaginations of literary writers and movie makers.

## The Structural Model

Ultimately, Freud recognized that the topographic model was helpful in understanding how people process and store information, but not all that useful in explaining other important psychological phenomena (for example, why certain people develop psychological disorders and others do not). To extend his theory, Freud developed a complementary framework to account for normal and abnormal personality development—the structural model—which posits the existence of three interacting mental structures called the **id, ego, and superego**. The *id* is the seat of drives and instincts, whereas the *ego* represents the logical, reality-oriented part of the mind, and the *superego* is basically your conscience—the moral guidelines, rules, and prohibitions that guide your behavior. (You acquire these through your family and through the culture in which you were raised.)

According to the structural model, our personality reflects the interplay of these three psychic structures, which differ across individuals in relative power and influence. When the *id* predominates and instincts rule, the result is an impulsive personality style. When the *superego* is strongest, moral prohibitions reign supreme, and a restrained, overcontrolled personality ensues. When the *ego* is dominant, a more balanced set of personality traits develop (Eagle, 2011; McWilliams, 2009).

# The Ego and Its Defenses

In addition to being the logical, rational, reality-oriented part of the mind, the ego serves another important function: It helps us manage anxiety through the use of **ego defenses**. Ego defenses are basically mental strategies that we use automatically and unconsciously when we feel threatened (Cramer, 2000, 2006). They help us navigate upsetting events, but there's a cost as well: All ego defenses involve some distortion of reality. For example, repression (the most basic ego defense, according to Freud) involves removing from consciousness upsetting thoughts and feelings, and moving those thoughts and feelings to the unconscious. When you read about a person who “blocked out” upsetting memories of child abuse, that's an example of repression.

Another ego defense is denial. In denial (unlike repression), we are aware that a particular event occurred, but we don't allow ourselves to see the implications of that event. When you hear a person with a substance abuse problem say “I'm fine—even though people complain about my drinking I never miss a day of work,” that person is using denial. Table 2 lists some common ego defenses in psychodynamic theory, along with a definition and example of each.

Table 1: The Psychosexual Stage Model

Stage	Age Range	Development Task	Associated Personality Traits
Oral	0–18 months	Moving from infantile dependency toward autonomy	Dependency
Anal	18–36 months	Learning to exercise control over one's body, one's impulses, and other people	Obsessiveness
Oedipal	5–6 years	Mastering competitive urges and acquiring gender role related behaviors	Competitiveness
Latency	6 years–puberty	Investing energy in productive, rewarding tasks and activities	---
Genital	Puberty onward	Mature sexuality (sexuality blended with intimacy)	---

Note: Dashes indicate that no associated character traits exist for that stage (fixation in the latency and genital periods does not play a role in classical psychoanalytic theory).

Table 2: Some Common Ego Defenses

Defense	Description
Repression	Moving upsetting information (for example, sexual feelings regarding one's parents, aggressive feelings toward a sibling) from consciousness to the unconscious
Denial	Failing to appreciate the negative implications of an event or experience (for example, dismissing a potentially serious physical symptom as being unimportant)
Reaction Formation	Expressing outwardly the exact opposite of what one is feeling inwardly (for example, when a young boy feels affection for a young girl, but responds by making fun of her)
Displacement	Expressing a negative emotion—often anger—in a setting that is less risky than the setting one first experienced the emotion (for example, being yelled at by your boss, then coming home and taking it out on your partner)
Rationalization	Making excuses for engaging in unacceptable acts (for example, justifying cheating on your taxes by convincing yourself that everyone does it, so it's not really cheating)
Sublimation	Expressing unacceptable impulses in a way that actually brings rewards rather than punishment (for example, unleashing pent-up aggression by playing field hockey or football)

Note: This is a partial list of ego defenses; although psychologists disagree regarding the precise number of defenses we use, most lists include 10–15 defenses altogether.

## Karen Horney: A Contrast to Freud



Karen Horney stands alone as the only woman traditionally included in textbooks about the history of personality. She did not, however, focus her entire career on the psychology of women. Horney came to believe that culture was more important than gender in determining differences between men and women. Karen Horney's career intersected many areas of psychology, relevant both to the past and to the future. One of the first women trained in psychoanalysis, she was the first to challenge Freud's views on women. She did not, however, attempt to reject his influence, but rather, felt that she honored him by building upon his achievements. The most significant change that she felt needed to be made was a shift away from the biological/medical model of Freud to one in which cultural factors were at least as important. Indeed, she challenged Freud's fundamental belief that anxiety follows biological impulses, and instead suggested that our behaviors adapt themselves to a fundamental anxiety associated with the simple desire for survival and to cultural determinants of abnormal, anxiety-provoking situations.

Horney was also significant in the development of psychodynamic theory and psychoanalysis in America. She helped to establish psychoanalytic societies and training institutes in Chicago and New York. She was a friend and colleague to many influential psychoanalysts, including Harry Stack Sullivan and Erich Fromm. She encouraged cross-cultural research and practice through her own example, not only citing the work of anthropologists and sociologists, but also through her personal interest and support for the study of Zen Buddhism.

Although Horney herself abandoned the study of feminine psychology, suggesting instead that it represented the cultural effect of women being an oppressed minority group, her subsequent emphasis on the importance of relationships and interpersonal psychodynamic processes laid the foundation for later theories on the psychology of women (such as the relational-cultural model). Thus, her influence is still being felt quite strongly today.

### **Horney's Shifting Perspectives on Psychodynamic Theory**

#### *Feminine Psychology*

Horney was neither the first, nor the only, significant woman in the early days of psychodynamic theory and psychoanalysis. However, women such as Helene Deutsch, Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Melanie Klein remained faithful to Freud's basic theories. In contrast, Horney directly challenged Freud's theories, and offered her own alternatives. In doing so, she offered a very different perspective on the psychology of women and personality development in girls and women. Her papers have been collected and published in *Feminine Psychology* by her friend

and colleague Harold Kelman (1967), and an excellent overview of their content can be found in the biography written by Rubins (1978).

Of most importance, Horney thought, was the male bias inherent in society and culture. The very name *phallic* stage that Freud used for one of the psychosexual stages, implies that only someone with a phallus (penis) can achieve sexual satisfaction and healthy personality development. Girls are repeatedly made to feel inferior to boys, feminine values are considered inferior to masculine values, even motherhood is considered a burden for women to bear (according to the Bible, the pain of childbirth is a curse from God!). In addition, male-dominated societies do not provide women with adequate outlets for their creative drives. As a result, many women develop a **masculinity complex**, involving feelings of revenge against men and the rejection of their own feminine traits. Thus, it may be true that women are more likely to suffer from anxiety and other psychological disorders, but this is not due to an inherent inferiority as proposed by Freud. Rather, women find it difficult in a patriarchal society to fulfill their personal development in accordance with their individual personality (unless they naturally happen to fit into society's expectations).

Perhaps the most curious aspect of these early studies was the fact that Horney turned the tables on Freud and his concept of penis envy. The female's biological role in childbirth is vastly superior (if that is a proper term) to that of the male. Horney noted that many boys express an intense envy of pregnancy and motherhood. If this so-called **womb envy** is the male counterpart of penis envy, which is the greater problem? Horney suggests that the apparently greater need of men to depreciate women is a reflection of their unconscious feelings of inferiority, due to the very limited role they play in childbirth and the raising of children (particularly breast-feeding infants, which they cannot do). In addition, the powerful creative drives and excessive ambition that are characteristic of many men can be viewed, according to Horney, as overcompensation for their limited role in parenting. Thus, as wonderful and intimate as motherhood may be, it can be a burden in the sense that the men who dominate society have turned it against women. This is, of course, an illogical state of affairs, since the children being born and raised by women are also the children of the very men who then feel inferior and psychologically threatened.

For women, one of the most significant problems that results from these development processes is a desperate need to be in a relationship with a man, which Horney addressed in two of her last papers on feminine psychology: *The Overvaluation of Love* (1934/1967) and *The Neurotic Need for Love* (1937/1967). She recognized in many of her patients an obsession with having a relationship with a man, so much so that all other aspects of life seem unimportant. While others had considered this an inherent characteristic of women, Horney insisted that characteristics such as this **overvaluation of love** always include a significant portion of tradition and culture. Thus, it is not an inherent need in women, but one that has accompanied the patriarchal society's demeaning of women, leading to low self-esteem that can only be overcome within society by becoming a wife and mother. Indeed, Horney found that many women suffer an intense fear of not being normal. Unfortunately, as noted above, the men these women are seeking relationships with are themselves seeking to *avoid* long-term relationships (due to their own insecurities). This results in an intense and destructive attitude of rivalry between women (at least, those women caught up in this neurotic need for love). When a woman loses a man to another woman, which may happen again and again, the situation can lead to depression, permanent feelings of insecurity with regard to feminine self-esteem, and profound anger toward other women. If these feelings are repressed, and remain primarily unconscious, the effect is that the woman searches within her own personality for answers to her failure to maintain the coveted relationship with a man. She may feel shame, believe that she is ugly, or imagine that she has some physical defect. Horney described the potential intensity of these feelings as "self-tormenting."

In 1935, just a few years after coming to America, Horney rather abruptly stopped studying the psychology of women (though her last paper on the subject was not published until 1937). Bernard Paris found the transcript of a talk that Horney had delivered that year to the National Federation of Professional and Business Women's Clubs, which provided her reasoning for this change in her professional direction (see Paris, 1994). First, Horney suggested that women should be suspicious of any general interest in feminine psychology, since it usually represents an effort by men to keep women in their subservient position. In order to avoid competition, men praise the values of being a loving wife and mother. When women accept these same values, they themselves begin to demean any other pursuits in life. They become a teacher because they consider themselves unattractive to men, or they go into business because they aren't feminine and lack sex appeal (Horney, cited in Paris, 1994). The emphasis on attracting men and having children leads to a "cult

of beauty and charm,” and the overvaluation of love. The consequence of this tragic situation is that as women become mature, they become more anxious due to their fear of displeasing men:

...The young woman feels a temporary security because of her ability to attract men, but mature women can hardly hope to escape being devalued even in their own eyes. And this feeling of inferiority robs them of the strength for action which rightly belongs to maturity.

Inferiority feelings are the most common evil of our time and our culture. To be sure we do not die of them, but I think they are nevertheless more disastrous to happiness and progress than cancer or tuberculosis. (pg. 236; Horney cited in Paris, 1994)

The key to the preceding quote is Horney's reference to culture. Having been in America for a few years at this point, she was already questioning the difference between the greater opportunities for women in America than in Europe (though the difference was merely relative). She also emphasized that when women are demeaned by society, this had negative consequences on men and children. Thus, she wanted to break away from any perspective that led to challenges between men and women:

...First of all we need to understand that there are no unalterable qualities of inferiority of our sex due to laws of God or of nature. Our limitations are, for the greater part, culturally and socially conditioned. Men who have lived under the same conditions for a long time have developed similar attitudes and shortcomings.

Once and for all we should stop bothering about what is feminine and what is not. Such concerns only undermine our energies...In the meantime what we can do is to work together for the full development of the human personalities of all for the sake of general welfare. (pg. 238; Horney cited in Paris, 1994)

In her final paper on feminine psychology, Horney (1937/1967) concludes her discussion of the neurotic need for love with a general discussion of the relationship between anxiety and the need for love. Of course, this is true for both boys and girls. This conclusion provided a clear transition from Horney's study of the psychology of women to her more general perspectives on human development, beginning with the child's need for security and the anxiety that arises when that security seems threatened.

### **Connections Across Cultures: Cultural Differences in Interpersonal Relationship Styles**

As Horney repeatedly pointed out, neurotic behavior can only be viewed as such within a cultural context. Thus, in the competitive and individualistic Western world, our cultural tendencies are likely to favor moving against and moving away from others. The same is not true in many other cultures.

Relationships can exist in two basic styles: exchange or communal relationships. **Exchange relationships** are based on the expectation of some return on one's investment in the relationship. **Communal relationships**, in contrast, occur when one person feels responsible for the well-being of the other person(s). In African cultures we are much more likely to find communal relationships, and interpersonal relationships are considered to be a core value amongst people of African descent (Belgrave & Allison, 2006). While there may be a tendency in Western culture to consider this dependence on others as somehow “weak,” it provides a source of emotional attachment, need fulfillment, and the influence and involvement of people in each other's activities and lives. Tibetan Buddhist cultures have also been studied for their communal aspect. Tibetan Buddhists and Tibetan culture emphasizes caring for cousins, neighbors, relatives, and family members across the life cycle. Especially for more indigenous cultures, this communal living includes caring for animals and nature and the environment.

Cultural differences also come into play in love and marriage. In America, passionate love tends to be favored, whereas in China *companionate love* is favored. African cultures seem to fall somewhere in between (Belgrave & Allison, 2006). When considering the divorce rate in America, as compared to many other countries, it has been suggested that Americans marry the person they love, whereas people in many other cultures love the person they marry. In a study involving people from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Australia, England, and the United States, it was found that *individualistic cultures placed greater importance on the role of love in choosing to get married, and also on the loss of love as sufficient justification for divorce*. For intercultural marriages, these

differences are a significant, though not insurmountable, source of conflict (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). Attempting to maintain awareness of cultural differences when relationship conflicts occur, rather than attributing the conflict to the personality of the other person, can be an important first step in resolving intercultural conflict. However, it must also be remembered that different cultures acknowledge and tolerate conflict to different extents (Brislin, 2000; Matsumoto, 1997; Okun, Fried, & Okun, 1999; for a brief discussion of intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution options, see Miller & Garran, 2008).

These cultural differences are so fundamental, that even at the level of considering basic intelligence we see the effects of these contrasting perspectives. In a study on the Kiganda culture (within the country of Uganda, in Africa), Wober (1974) found that they consider intelligence to be more externally directed than we do, and they view successful social climbing and social interaction as evidence of intelligent behavior. This matches the attitude amongst Mediterranean cultures that notable people will be devoted to a life of public service (in contrast, the word “idiot” is derived from a Greek word meaning a private man).

Thus, moving toward others would be favored much more in other cultures than it might be in the Western world. Consequently, a significant attitude and the behavior of moving toward others would be less likely to be viewed as neurotic. Such issues are, of course, very important as we interact with people of other cultures, as we may consider their behavior to be odd according to our standards. Naturally, they may be thinking the same thing about us. What is probably most important is that we learn about and experience other cultures, so that differences in customs and behavior are not surprising when they occur.

#### *Horney's Challenge for Psychoanalysis*

One of the actions that made Horney most controversial was her willingness to challenge how psychoanalysis should be conducted with patients. In *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (Horney, 1939), Horney made it very clear why she thought that psychoanalysis needed to be questioned:

My desire to make a critical re-evaluation of psychoanalytical theories had its origin in a dissatisfaction with therapeutic results. (pg. 7; Horney, 1939)

Simply put, she had asked many leading psychoanalysts questions about problems in treating her patients, and none of them could offer meaningful answers (at least, they had no meaning for Horney). In addition, a few of them, such as Wilhelm Reich, encouraged her to question orthodox psychoanalytic theory. As always, Horney did not see this as a rejection of Freud. Indeed, she felt that as she pursued new ideas, she found stronger reasons to admire the foundation that Freud had established. More importantly, she was upset that those who criticized psychoanalysis often simply ignored it, rather than looking more deeply into the valuable insights she believed it still had to offer for any therapist. As before, she saved her most serious critiques for the study of feminine psychology, though she still considered psychoanalysis with an emphasis on culture to be a valid therapeutic approach:

The American woman is different from the German woman; both are different from certain Pueblo Indian women. The New York society woman is different from the farmer's wife in Idaho. The way specific cultural conditions engender specific qualities and faculties, in women as in men – this is what we may hope to understand. (pg. 119; Horney, 1939)

In her second book on therapy, Horney proposed something quite radical: the possibility of *Self-Analysis* (Horney, 1942). She considered **self-analysis** important for two main reasons. First, psychoanalysis was an important means of personal development, though not the only means. In this assertion, she was both emphasizing the value of psychoanalysis for many people, while at the same time saying that it wasn't so important that it had to be conducted in the orthodox manner by an extensively trained psychoanalyst, since there are many paths to self-development (e.g., good friends and a meaningful career). Second, even if many people sought traditional psychoanalysis, there simply aren't enough psychoanalysts to go around, and it can be very expensive. So, Horney provided a book to help those willing to pursue their own self-analysis, even if they do so only occasionally (which she believed could be quite effective for specific issues). She did not suggest that self-analysis was by any means easy, but more important was the realization that it

was possible. With regard to the possible criticism that self-analysts might not finish the job, that they might not delve into the darkest and most repressed areas of their psyche, she simply suggested that no analysis is ever complete. What matters more than being successful is the desire to continue (Horney, 1942). In her book on self-analysis, Horney encourages people to examine the role their attachment figures and internalized figures have on their adult behavior, and suggests friends and talking with others and journaling can help us get to know the effect of these internalized figures.

## Nancy Chodorow's Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Role of Mothering



The person best known today for attempting to combine elements of Freud's theory with an objective perspective on a psychology of women is Nancy Chodorow (1944-present), a sociologist and psychoanalyst who has focused on the special relationship between mothers and daughters.

In 1978, Chodorow published *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Twenty years later, she wrote a new preface for the second edition, in which she had the advantage of looking back at both the success of her book and the criticism that it drew from some. Chodorow acknowledged that many feminists felt obliged to choose between a biologically-based psychology of women and mothering (the essential Freudian perspective) versus a view in which the psychology of women and their feelings about mothering were determined by social structure and cultural mandate. Chodorow believed that social structure and culture were important, but she insisted nonetheless that the biological differences between males and females could not be dismissed. Indeed, they lead to an essential difference in the mother-daughter relationship as compared to the mother-son relationship (Chodorow, 1999a).

According to Chodorow, when a woman becomes a mother, the most important aspect of her relationship with any daughter is the recognition that they are alike. Thus, her daughter can also become a mother someday. This special connection is felt by the daughter and incorporated into her psyche, or ego. It is important to remember that much of this is happening at an unconscious level. It is not as if women choose to favor their daughters over their sons, and it is not as if women reject their sons. Chodorow argues that it just simply happens, because of the biological similarity between females. As a consequence of this special relationship, daughters are subtly shaped in ways that lead to what we often think of as feminine attributes: a sense of **self-in-relation**, feeling connected to others, being able to empathize, and being embedded in or dependent on relationships. For Chodorow, the internalization of the mother-daughter relationship, from the daughter's point of view, is the development of a most important **object relation**. **Object relations theory** is the study of how people relate to internalized images and representations of important persons in their lives. The term "objects" refers not to inanimate entities but to significant others with whom an individual relates,



usually one's mother, father, or primary caregiver. As adults, many women feel a desire to have children, which is often described as a maternal instinct or a biological drive (the feeling that their "biological clock" is ticking). As an alternative, Chodorow suggests that these feelings have instead been shaped by the unconscious fantasies and emotions associated with the woman's internal relationship to her own mother (Chodorow, 1999a).

In contrast to the development of daughters, Chodorow suggests that sons are influenced by the essential feelings of difference conveyed by their mother. Consequently, and in contrast to women, men grow up asserting their independence, and they will be anxious about intimacy if it signals dependence on another. In addition, within the cultural framework of society, men develop a greater concern with being masculine than women are concerned with their femininity (Chodorow, 1999a).

The cultural differences between men and women, as well as the early childhood differences in their relationships with their parents, create problems for the typical family structure. Since men tend to avoid relationships, they are unlikely to completely fulfill the relational needs that women have. In addition, young girls most likely experience their relationship with their father within the context of their relationship with their mother, whereas young boys have a more direct two-person relationship with their mother (in terms of heterosexual relationships; Chodorow, 1999a). Therefore, in order for a woman to balance the relational triangle she experienced with her mother and father, and the subsequent intrapsychic object-relational structure she developed, she needs to have a child. In other words, by having children, women can "reimpose intrapsychic relational structure on the social world," and they can relate to the father of their child in terms of a family structure they were familiar with in childhood. Furthermore, having a child recreates the intimacy a woman shared with her own mother.

Family therapy often focuses on the way children are pulled in to "triangulation" to stabilize a marriage or family. A triangle is stable, (think of a 3-legged stool) so, **Triangulation** occurs when an outside person is drawn into a conflicted or stressful dyad relationship (two people) in an attempt to ease tension and facilitate communication. This situation is often addressed in **family therapy**. Examples of triangulation could include a mother who becomes unduly close to a child to balance the lonely relationship with her husband, thus stabilizing her lonely marriage by depending on too much closeness with her child. Another example is a child who gets stomach aches when the parents start fighting. The child's stomach aches are functional in that they stop the parents from fighting and make the parents pay attention to the child, thus stabilizing the family temporarily.

## Contemporary Psychoanalysis: Object Relations Theory and the Growth of the Psychodynamic Perspective



Object relations theory holds that the impressions we develop of our parents and how they behave early in our lives serve as scripts that guide our behavior in future relationships. [Image: geralt, CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Object relations theory contends that personality can be understood as reflecting the mental images of significant figures (especially the parents) that we form early in life in response to interactions taking place within the family (Kernberg, 2004; Wachtel, 1997). These mental images (sometimes called *introjects*) serve as templates for later interpersonal relationships—almost like relationship blueprints or “scripts.” So if you internalized positive introjects early in life (for example, a mental image of mom or dad as warm and accepting), that’s what you expect to occur in later relationships as well. If you internalized a mental image of mom or dad as harsh and judgmental, you might instead become a self-critical person, and feel that you can never live up to other people’s standards . . . or your own (Luyten & Blatt, 2013).

Object relations theory has increased many psychologists’ interest in studying psychodynamic ideas and concepts, in part because it represents a natural bridge between the psychodynamic perspective and research in other areas of psychology. For example, developmental and social psychologists also believe that mental representations of significant people play an important role in shaping our behavior. In developmental psychology you might read about this in the context of *attachment theory* (which argues that attachments—or bonds—to significant people are key to understanding

human behavior; Fraley, 2002). In social psychology, mental representations of significant figures play an important role in *social cognition* (thoughts and feelings regarding other people; Bargh & Morsella, 2008; Robinson & Gordon, 2011).

## Empirical Research on Psychodynamic Theories

Empirical research assessing psychodynamic concepts has produced mixed results, with some concepts receiving good empirical support, and others not faring as well. For example, the notion that we express strong sexual feelings from a very early age, as the psychosexual stage model suggests, has not held up to empirical scrutiny. On the other hand, the idea that there are dependent, control-oriented, and competitive personality types—an idea also derived from the psychosexual stage model—does seem useful.

Many ideas from the psychodynamic perspective have been studied empirically. Luborsky and Barrett (2006) reviewed much of this research; other useful reviews are provided by Bornstein (2005), Gerber (2007), and Huprich (2009). For now, let's look at three psychodynamic hypotheses that have received strong empirical support.

- **Unconscious processes influence our behavior as the psychodynamic perspective predicts.** We perceive and process much more information than we realize, and much of our behavior is shaped by feelings and motives of which we are, at best, only partially aware (Bornstein, 2009, 2010). Evidence for the importance of unconscious influences is so compelling that it has become a central element of contemporary cognitive and social psychology (Robinson & Gordon, 2011).
- **We all use ego defenses and they help determine our psychological adjustment and physical health.** People really do differ in the degree that they rely on different ego defenses—so much so that researchers now study each person's "defense style" (the unique constellation of defenses that we use). It turns out that certain defenses are more adaptive than others: Rationalization and sublimation are healthier (psychologically speaking) than repression and reaction formation (Cramer, 2006). Denial is, quite literally, bad for your health, because people who use denial tend to ignore symptoms of illness until it's too late (Bond, 2004).
- **Mental representations of self and others do indeed serve as blueprints for later relationships.** Dozens of studies have shown that mental images of our parents, and other significant figures, really do shape our expectations for later friendships and romantic relationships. It's true that you expect to be treated by others as you were treated by your parents early in life (Silverstein, 2007; Wachtel, 1997). One way this can be studied is the idea of the "**family in the head**". The family in the head idea is that we have internalized representations of important people in our lives, and these internalized figures talk internally to us and influence our behavior. Even though we may not live with those persons anymore and they may not even be alive, their influence in our mind is still strong, and influences our behavior. It's as if we have an "inner mother" or "inner father" or "inner high school teacher" that is speaking to us, even if our real life mother or these other inner figures have passed away or are not around us in real life. These internalized figures are a normal part of development and attachment, yet if they are extreme in their messages and influence, such as a strongly critical *inner* mother or father, this can relate to personality imbalance. Lorna Smith Benjamin her her work on interpersonal approaches to personality disorders has researched the role of these internalizations in creating personality disorders (Benjamin, 2002). Benjamin's model suggests that a strong internalized voice or figure such as a voice of a threatening mother or father that says "you are only loveable if you act this way" can imbalance the personality and make people do extreme behaviors in order to gain the gift of love. The adult person may be trying to get the gift of love from their inner mother by acting a certain way, even if the mother has passed away. Thus Benjamin refers to these as internalized figures in contrast to real life mothers. Helping a person learn to not be overly influenced by these internalized figures is the goal of many psychoanalytic and interpersonal and cognitive therapies.

## Video 1: Tiffanie on Sublimation



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=63>

## Vocabulary

**Ego defenses:** Mental strategies, rooted in the ego, that we use to manage anxiety when we feel threatened (some examples include repression, denial, sublimation, and reaction formation). Also called defense mechanisms.

**Exchange relationships** are based on the expectation of some return on one's investment in the relationship. **Communal relationships**, in contrast, occur when one person feels responsible for the well-being of the other person(s). Countries and regions differ in their focus on exchange relationships vs communal relationships. Tibetan Buddhists live a strongly communal life for example, caring for cousins and neighbors as if they were family.

**Family in the Head:** The family in the head idea is that we have internalized representations of important people in our lives, and these internalized figures talk to us and influence our behavior

### **Id, Ego, and Superego.**

The id is the seat of drives and instincts, whereas the ego represents the logical, reality-oriented part of the mind, and the superego is basically your conscience—the moral guidelines, rules, and prohibitions that guide your behavior.

### **Object relations theory**

A modern offshoot of the psychodynamic perspective, this theory contends that personality can be understood as reflecting mental images of significant figures (especially the parents) that we form early in life in response to interactions taking place within the family; these mental images serve as templates (or “scripts”) for later interpersonal relationships.

**Overvaluation of love:** an idea by psychoanalyst Karen Horney that sexism and the demeaning of women’s value leads them to overvalue the experience of love and their connection to a male, usually through marriage.

### **Primacy of the Unconscious**

The hypothesis—supported by contemporary empirical research—that the vast majority of mental activity takes place outside conscious awareness.

### **Psychic causality**

The assumption that nothing in mental life happens by chance—that there is no such thing as a “random” thought or feeling.

### **Psychosexual stage model**

Probably the most controversial aspect of psychodynamic theory, the psychosexual stage model contends that early in life we progress through a sequence of developmental stages (oral, anal, Oedipal, latency, and genital), each with its own unique mode of sexual gratification.

**Self-in-relation,** feeling connected to others, being able to empathize, and being embedded in or dependent on relationships.

**Self-analysis:** An idea by Karen Horney and others that people can study themselves and don’t always have to use professionals, such as studying their own internalized figures and how these figures influence our behavior.

**Triangulation:** occurs when an outside person is drawn into a conflicted or stressful relationship in an attempt to ease tension and facilitate communication.

**Womb Envy:** An idea by psychoanalyst Karen Horney that men envy women’s ability to create life.

## Quiz



An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=63>

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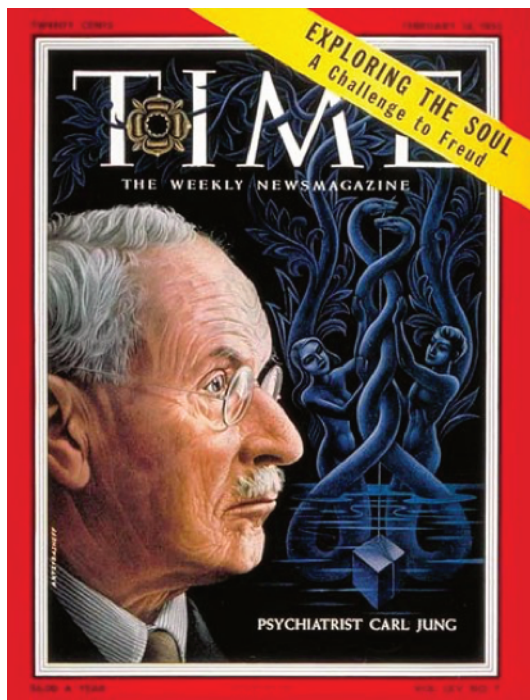
## 5. Carl Jung

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### Carl Jung: Analytic Psychology

\*Note: Historical personality theorists such as Jung wrote most often using the gendered term “man” rather than a word such as people or humans. To represent Jung’s historical writings accurately, quotes keep the usage of “man” and other gendered terminology. Readers can decide on their own if Jung’s thought applies more generally to other genders and class discussion will attempt to contextualize Jung’s thought with respect to gender and historical sexism.

As you read this chapter, you may realize the many ideas Jung contributed that to modern psychology. Jung is the broadest historical theorist of personality. He studied many world cultures to try to understand the universal symbols and nature of personality.



Carl Jung brought an almost mystical approach to psychodynamic theory. An early associate and follower of Freud, Jung eventually disagreed with Freud on too many aspects of personality theory to remain within a strictly Freudian perspective. Subsequently, Jung developed his own theory, which applied concepts from natural laws (primarily in physics) to psychological functioning. Jung also introduced the concept of personality types, and began to address personality development throughout the lifespan. In his most unique contribution, at least from a Western perspective, Jung proposed that the human psyche contains within itself psychological constructs developed throughout the evolution of the human species.

Jung has always been controversial and confusing. His blending of psychology and religion, as well as his openness to different religious and spiritual philosophies, was not easy to accept for many psychiatrists and psychologists trying

to pursue a purely scientific explanation of personality and mental illness. Perhaps no one was more upset than Freud, whose attitude toward Jung changed dramatically over just a few years. In 1907, Freud wrote a letter to Jung in which Freud offered high praise:

...I have already acknowledged...above all that your person has filled me with trust in the future, that I now know that I am dispensable like everyone else, and that I wish for no one other or better than you to continue and complete my work. (pg. 136; cited in Wehr, 1989)

Later Freud would turn against Jung, saying his ideas were unorthodox and incorrect.

Who was this man who inspired such profound confidence from Sigmund Freud, only to later inspire such contempt? And were his theories that difficult for the psychodynamic community, or psychology in general, to accept? Hopefully, this chapter will begin to answer those questions.

## A Brief Biography of Carl Jung

At the beginning of his autobiography, entitled *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung (1961) described his life as “a story of the self-realization of the unconscious.” Jung believed that our personality begins with a collective unconscious, developed within our species throughout time, and that we have only limited ability to control the psychic process that is our own personality. Thus, our true personality arises from within as our collective unconscious comes forth into our personal unconscious and then our consciousness. It can be helpful to view these concepts from an Eastern perspective, and it is interesting to note that “self-realization” was used in the name of the first Yoga society established in America (in 1920 by Paramahansa Yogananda).

Jung’s father, Johann Jung was a scholar of Oriental languages, studied Arabic, and was ordained a minister. In addition to being a pastor at two churches during Jung’s childhood, Johann Jung was the pastor at Friedmatt, the insane asylum in Basel. During Jung’s early childhood he did not always have the best of relationships with his parents. He considered his mother to be a good mother, but he felt that her true personality was always hidden. She spent some time in the hospital when he was three years old, in part due to problems in her marriage. Jung found this separation from his mother deeply troubling, and he became mistrustful of the spoken word “love.” Since his father was a pastor, there were often funerals and burials, all of which was very mysterious to the young Jung. In addition, his mother was considered a spiritual medium, and often helped Jung with his later studies on the occult. Perhaps most troubling of all, was *Jung’s belief that his father did not really know God*, but rather, had become a minister trapped in the performance of meaningless ritual (Jaffe, 1979; Jung, 1961; Wehr, 1989).

An only child until he was 9, Jung preferred to be left alone, or at least he came to accept his loneliness. Even when his parent’s guests brought their children over for visits, Jung would simply play his games alone:

...I recall only that I did not want to be disturbed. I was deeply absorbed in my games and could not endure being watched or judged while I played them. (pg. 18; Jung, 1961)

He also had extraordinarily rich and meaningful dreams, many of which were quite frightening, and they often involved deeply religious themes. This is hardly surprising, since two uncles on his father’s side of the family were ministers, and there were six more ministers on his mother’s side. Thus, he was often engaged in religious discussions at home. He was particularly impressed with a richly illustrated book on Hinduism, with pictures of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (the Hindu trinity of gods). Even at 6 years old, he felt a vague connection with the Hindu gods, something that once again would have an interesting influence on his later theories. These dreams led Jung into deep religious speculations, something he considered to be a secret that he could not share with anyone else (Jaffe, 1979; Jung, 1961; Wehr, 1989).

At age 12, Jung had been knocked down by another boy on the way home from school. He hit his head on a rock, and was nearly knocked out. He was so dizzy that others had to help him, and he suddenly realized that he did not have

to go to school if he was ill. Consequently, he began having fainting spells any time he was sent to school or to do his homework. He missed 6 months of school due his psychological problems, and Jung loved the opportunity to spend his days exploring the world in any way he wished. He was eventually diagnosed with epilepsy, though Jung himself knew the diagnosis was ridiculous. One day he heard his father expressing great fear to a friend about what would become of Jung if he were unable to earn his own living. The reality of this statement was shocking to Jung, and “From that moment on I became a serious child.” He immediately went to study Latin, and began to feel faint. However, he consciously made himself aware of his neurosis, and cognitively fought it off. He soon returned to school, recognizing “That was when I learned what a neurosis is” (Jaffe, 1979; Jung, 1961; Wehr, 1989).

As he continued through school, his personal life continued to be quite strange. He began to believe that he was two people, one having lived 100 years earlier. He also had heated religious debates with his father. Fueling his courage during these debates was his belief that a vision had led to his understanding of true spirituality:

One fine summer day that same year I came out of school at noon and went to the cathedral square. The sky was gloriously blue, the day one of radiant sunshine. The roof of the cathedral glittered, the sun sparkling from the new, brightly glazed tiles. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the sight, and thought: “The world is beautiful and the church is beautiful, and God made all this and sits above it far away in the blue sky on a golden throne and ...” Here came a great hole in my thoughts, and a choking sensation. I felt numbed, and knew only: “Don’t go on thinking now! Something terrible is coming, something I do not want to think, something I dare not even approach. Why not? Because I would be committing the most frightful of sins. What is the most terrible sin? Murder? No, it can’t be that. The most terrible sin is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which cannot be forgiven. Anyone who commits that sin is damned to hell for all eternity. That would be very sad for my parents, if their only son, to whom they are so attached, should be doomed to eternal damnation. I cannot do that to my parents. All I need do is not go on thinking.” (pg. 36; Jung, 1961)

However, Jung was not able to ignore his vision. He was tormented for days, and spent sleepless nights wondering why he would have to think something unforgivable as a result of praising God for the beauty of all creation. His mother saw how troubled he was, but Jung felt that he could not dare confide in her. Finally, he decided that it was God’s will that he should face the meaning of this vision:

I thought it over again and arrived at the same conclusion. “Obviously God also desires me to show courage,” I thought. “If that is so and I go through with it, then He will give me His grace and illumination.”

I gathered all my courage, as though I were about to leap forthwith into hell-fire, and let the thought come. I saw before me the cathedral, the blue sky. God sits on His golden throne, high above the world – and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling new roof, shatters it, and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder. (pg. 39; Jung 1961)

Jung was overjoyed by his understanding of this vision. He believed that God had shown him that what mattered in life was doing God’s will, not following the rules of any man, religion, or church. This was what Jung felt his own father had never come to realize, and therefore, his father did not know the “immediate living God.” This conviction that one should pursue truth, rather than dogma, was an essential lesson that returned when Jung faced his dramatic split with Sigmund Freud.

After attending medical school and studying psychiatry, in 1906, Jung sent Freud a copy of his book *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox* (an earlier term for schizophrenia), which Freud found quite impressive. The two met in February, 1907, and talked for nearly 13 straight hours. According to Jung, “Freud was the first man of real importance I had encountered...no one else could compare with him.” Very quickly, as evidenced in the letters quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Freud felt that Jung would become the leader of the psychoanalytic movement. In 1909, Jung’s psychoanalytic practice was so busy that he resigned from the Burgholzli clinic, and he traveled to America with Freud. During this trip the two men spent a great deal of time together. It quickly became evident to Jung that he could not be the successor that Freud was seeking; Jung had too many differences of opinion with Freud. More importantly, however,

Jung described Freud as neurotic, and wrote that the symptoms were sometimes highly troublesome (though Jung failed to identify those symptoms). Freud taught that everyone was a little neurotic, but Jung wanted to know how to cure neuroses:

Apparently neither Freud nor his disciples could understand what it meant for the theory and practice of psychoanalysis if not even the master could deal with his own neurosis. When, then, Freud announced his intention of identifying theory and method and making them into some kind of dogma, I could no longer collaborate with him; there remained no choice for me but to withdraw. (pg. 167; Jung, 1961)

Clearly Jung could not accept a dogmatic approach to psychoanalysis, since he believed that God Himself had told Jung not to follow any rigid system of rules. Even worse, this was when Jung first published his “discovery” of the collective unconscious. Freud wholly rejected this concept, and Jung felt that his creativity was being rejected. He offered to support Freud in public, while extending honest opinions in so-called “secret letters.” Freud wanted none of it. Almost as quickly as their relationship had grown, it fell apart (Jaffe, 1979; Jung, 1961; Wehr, 1989).

The loss of his relationship with Freud, following the loss of his father, led Jung in a period of personal crisis. He resigned his position at the University of Zurich, and began a lengthy series of experiments in order to understand the fantasies and dreams that arose from his unconscious. The more he studied these phenomena, the more he realized they were **not from his own memories, but from the collective unconscious**. He was particularly curious about mandala drawings, which date back thousands of years in all cultures. He studied Christian Gnosticism, alchemy, and the I Ching (or: Book of Changes). After meeting Richard Wilhelm, an expert on Chinese culture, Jung studied more Taoist philosophy, and he wrote a glowing foreword for Wilhelm’s translation of the I Ching (Wilhelm, 1950). These extraordinarily diverse interests led Jung to seek more in-depth knowledge from around the world. He traveled first to North Africa, then to America (to visit Pueblo Indians in New Mexico), next came East Africa (Uganda and Kenya), and finally India. Jung made every effort to get away from civilized areas, which might have been influenced by other cultures, in order to get a more realistic impression of the local culture, and he was particularly successful in this regard in meeting gurus in India (Jaffe, 1979; Jung, 1961; Wehr, 1989).

Carl Jung died at home in 1961, in Kusnacht, Switzerland, at the age of 85. As psychologists today examine more deeply the relationship between Eastern and Western perspectives, it may be that Jung’s legacy has yet to be fulfilled.

**Discussion Question:** Even as a child, Jung had vivid dreams that he believed were giving him insight and guidance for the future. Have you ever had dreams so vivid, dreams that left such a powerful impression on you, that you felt they must have some special meaning? How did you respond, and what consequences, if any, followed your responses?

## Placing Jung in Context: A Psychodynamic Enigma

Carl Jung holds an extraordinary place in the histories of psychiatry and psychology. Having already been an assistant to the renowned psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler, he went to Vienna to learn more about the fledgling science of psychoanalysis. He became Freud’s hand-picked heir to the psychoanalytic throne, and was one of the psychiatrists who accompanied Freud to America. Later, however, as he developed his own theories, he parted ways with Freud. Freud eventually came to describe Jung’s theories as incomprehensible, and Freud praised other psychiatrists who also opposed Jung’s ideas.

The most dramatic contribution that Jung made to psychodynamic thought was his concept of the **collective unconscious**, a mysterious reservoir of psychological constructs common to all people. Jung traveled extensively, including trips to Africa, India, and the United States (particularly to visit the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico), and he studied the cultures in those places. He also observed many basic similarities between different cultures. Those similarities led Jung to propose the collective unconscious. How else could so many significant cultural similarities have arisen within separate and distant lands?

Initially Jung’s theories had more influence on art, literature, and anthropology than they did on psychiatry and psychology. More recently, however, cognitive-behavioral theorists have begun to explore mindfulness as an addition

to more traditional aspects of cognitive-behavioral therapies. As psychologists today study concepts from Yoga and Buddhism that are thousands of years old, **Jung deserves the credit for bringing such an open-minded approach to the modern world of psychotherapy.** Many famous and influential people admired Jung's work, including psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, psychologist Erich Fromm, the authors Hermann Hesse and H. G. Wells, and Nobel Laureate (Physics) Wolfgang Pauli (for a number of interesting testimonials see Wehr, 1989). In addition, Jung was influential in the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous.

An American and alcoholic named Rowland Hazard was sent to Zurich, Switzerland, to Dr. Jung's clinic for treatment of alcoholism. After about a year, Jung told Rowland that he could not heal him. Rowland asked, "Is there no hope, then?" Dr. Jung's answer, an astonishing one for a man of science, was, "No, there is none – except that some people with your problem have recovered if they have had a transforming experience of the spirit." Rowland and friends went and sought religious experiences, which helped them stop drinking. They took their message to Bill W., the founder of A. A.. One of the critical messages they found in their approach was to "give yourself over to a higher power" which went along with Jung's thinking that higher powers and forces were at work and that being in touch with something with great meaning was helpful to overcome strong addictions and other types of problems.

## Basic Concepts

In order to distinguish his own approach to psychology from others that had come before, Jung felt that he needed a unique name. Freud, of course, had chosen the term "psychoanalysis," whereas Alfred Adler had chosen "individual psychology." Since Jung admired both men and their theories, he chose a name intended to encompass not only their approaches, but others as well. Thus, he chose to call his approach **analytical psychology** (Jung, 1933).

Analytical psychology, as presented by Jung, addresses the question of the psyche in an open-minded way. He laments the overly scientific approach of the late 1800s and efforts to explain away the psyche as a mere epiphenomenon of brain function. Curiously, that debate remains with us today, and is still unanswered in any definitive way. Jung did not accept the suggestion that the psyche must come from the activity of the brain. This allowed him to consider the possibility of a collective unconscious, and fit well with his acceptance of the wisdom of Eastern philosophers. Indeed, Jung suggests that psychology will find truth only when it accepts both Eastern and Western, as well as both scientific and spiritual, perspectives on the psyche (Jung, 1933).

## Dynamic Psychic Energy

An important element of Jung's conception of the psyche and libido is found in the nature of opposites. Indeed, all of nature is composed of opposites:

...The concept of energy implies that of polarity, since a current of energy necessarily presupposes two different states, or poles, without which there can be no current. Every energetic phenomenon...consists of pairs of opposites: beginning and end, above and below, hot and cold, earlier and later, cause and effect, etc. The inseparability of the energy concept from that of polarity also applies to the concept of libido. (pg. 202; Jung, 1971)

...opposites are the ineradicable and indispensable preconditions of all psychic life... (pg. 170; Jung, 1970)

In accordance with this view, Jung felt that the **psyche sought balance**, much like the concept of entropy from the field of physics. Entropy, in simple terms, is a thermodynamic principle that all energy within a system (including the universe) will eventually even out. Jung applied the principle of **dynamic psychic energy** to motivation, believing that **we are driven forward through our lives in such a way that we might reduce the imbalance of psychic energy between**

**opposing pairs of emotions** (such as love and hate; Jarvis, 2004; Jung, 1971). Getting to know different or opposing parts of ourselves and the world was the way our personality grew “whole”. Psychic dynamic energy included the idea that we should listen to different points of view inside ourselves, and outside ourselves, because opposing views usually had some truth to them and were trying to form a larger “whole” and a larger “whole person”. The person who could listen to various points of view such as love and hate within themselves, and balance these out, was a well-developed individual. The person who was constantly turning against other points of view was likely to be imbalanced and unhappy. Jung however did account for the fact that some people were freedom fighters or activists that were engaged in changing society, but even for activists they needed to examine their “opposites” so they could determine if they were fighting an internal battle or reaction to something from their past, or were they fighting legitimate oppression in the world.

Dreams and Dream Analysis. Jung believed that our dreams had important symbols in them, and could teach us to be more whole as a person. **Dream analysis** was the act of analyzing our dream symbols and their meanings. Dream analysis can be done in different ways, and Jung had a particular view of how to do dream analysis. Dreams were trying to communicate information to us. Jung believed that dreams could guide our future behavior, because of their profound relationship to the past, and their profound influence on our conscious mental life. Jung proposed that dreams can tell us something about the development and structure of the human psyche, and that dreams have evolved with our species throughout time. Since consciousness is limited by our present experience, dreams help to reveal much deeper and broader elements of our psyche than we can be aware of consciously. As such, dreams cannot easily be interpreted. Jung rejected the analysis of any single dream, believing that they belong within a series. He also rejected trying to learn dream analysis from a book. When done properly, however, dream analysis can provide unparalleled realism (see Jacobi & Hull, 1970; Jung, 1933):

Jung wrote that “dreams are the natural reaction of the self-regulating psychic system.” When we dream, the ongoing effort of our psyche to balance itself takes over, and the dreams counteract what we have done to imbalance our psychological selves. Thus, it is within the context of dreams, not the details, that meaning is to be found (Jung, 1959a, 1968).

Stated another way, dreams are trying to show us parts of our psyche that we are unaware of, and teach us to be more whole and to have psychic balance. For example if we dream of a dragon shooting fire from its mouth, over time we may begin to know that this fiery power of the dragon is somehow related to us. Perhaps we are passive in our ways, and dreams of fiery dragons begin to get us in touch with our fiery nature, which we have otherwise repressed or not expressed.

Jung’s theories have been developed by more recent theorists. For example Arnold Mindell PhD, a physicist and psychologist has written extensively about how the materials of dreams is reflected in other perceptual channels of experience. Jung was suggesting that dreams were trying to bring parts of our psyche to awareness (Mindell, 2011). Mindell calls his concept the **Dreambody** and suggests that body symptoms, as well as dreams, are trying to bring information to our awareness. Mindell gives the example of a woman who dreams of a tree on fire. The woman is also dealing with inflammatory arthritis. As the woman describes the dream as well as the arthritis, both have a fiery quality. Consistent with Jung’s ideas, the “fiery” part of this woman’s nature may be trying to come to awareness.

By talking about the information in our body symptoms we will arrive at similar information to what we dreamed about.

Mindell has expanded his work to include relationship problems and world problems as ways perceptual channels that bring psychic information to our awareness. For example a conflict in a relationship can reflect the same information we dreamed about last night. Dreams and body symptoms mirror or reflect similar information.

**Discussion Question:** Jung believed that the source of our motivation was a psychological drive to achieve balance (the effect of entropy on the psyche). Have you ever felt that you were being pushed or pulled in the wrong direction, or in too many directions at once, and simply wanted to achieve some balance in your life? In contrast, have there been times that your life was unfulfilling, and you needed something more in order to feel whole?

## The Unconscious Mind

Perhaps Jung's most unique contribution to psychology is the distinction between a **personal unconscious** and a **collective unconscious**. Whereas the contents of the personal unconscious are acquired during the individual's lifetime, the contents of the collective unconscious are invariably archetypes or images that were present from the beginning. (pp. 7-8; Jung, 1959c). Jung used the term complex which is similar to the modern term schema, to describe the collective unconscious. Jung was trying to communicate that we have a complex or cluster of emotions and images related to a concept. Some of those emotions and images are from our personal history, yet some seem to be not from us – they were with us from the start or they come from around us. In that sense, Jung suggested “people don't have ideas, ideas have people” which meant that we think we are being carried through life based on our own decisions, yet there is an aspect of a “bigger power” that is directing our life as well. Jung felt it was very important to be in contact with this sense of a bigger power (Jung, 1959c).

Thus, according to Jung, the collective unconscious is a reservoir of psychic resources common to all humans (something along the lines of psychological instinct). These psychic resources, known as **archetypes**, are passed down through the generations of a culture, but Jung considered them to be inherited, not learned. As generation after generation experienced similar phenomena, the archetypal images were formed. Despite cultural differences, the human experience has been similar in many ways throughout history.

It is important to note that archetypal images are considered to be ancient. Jung has referred to archetypes as primordial images, “impressed upon the mind since of old” (Jung, 1940). Archetypes have been expressed as myths and fables, some of which are thousands of years old even within recorded history. As the eternal, symbolic images representing archetypes were developed, they naturally attracted and fascinated people. That, according to Jung, is why they have such profound impact, even today, in our seemingly advanced, knowledgeable, and scientific societies.

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**Table 4.1: Common Archetypes in Jung's Theory of the Collective Unconscious\***

Self	Integration and wholeness of the personality, the center of the totality of the psyche; symbolically represented by, e.g., the mandala, Christ, or by helpful animals (such as Rin Tin Tin and Lassie or the Hindu monkey god Hanuman)
Shadow	The dark, inferior, emotional, and immoral aspects of the psyche; symbolically represented by, e.g., the Devil (or an evil character such as Dracula), dragons, monsters (such as Godzilla)
Anima	Strange, wraithlike image of an idealized women, yet contrary to the masculinity of the man, draws the man into feminine (as defined by gender roles) behavior, always a supernatural element; symbolically represented by, e.g., personifications of witches, the Greek Sirens, a femme fatale, or in more positive ways as the Virgin Mary, a romanticized beauty (such as Helen of Troy) or a cherished car
Animus	A source of meaning and power for women, it can be opinionated, divisive, and create animosity toward men, but also creates a capacity for reflection, deliberation, and self-knowledge; symbolically represented by, e.g., death, murderers (such as the pirate Bluebeard, who killed all his wives), a band of outlaws, a bewitched prince (such as the beast in “Beauty and the Beast”) or a romantic actor (such as Rudolph Valentino)
Persona	A protective cover, or mask, that we present to the world to make a specific impression and to conceal our inner self; symbolically represented by, e.g., a coat or mantle
Hero	One who overcomes evil, destruction, and death, often has a miraculous but humble birth; symbolically represented by, e.g., angels, Christ the Redeemer, or a god-man (such as Hercules)
Wise Old Man	Typically a personification of the self, associated with saints, sages, and prophets; symbolically represented as, e.g., the magician Merlin or an Indian guru
Trickster	A childish character with pronounced physical appetites, seeks only gratification and can be cruel and unfeeling; symbolically represented by, e.g., animals (such as Brer Rabbit, Wile E. Coyote or, often, monkeys) or a mischievous god (such as the Norse god Loki)

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## The Shadow

Jung described the **shadow** in many ways. At times Jungian psychology is referred to as shadow psychology. One way Jung described the shadow was (Jung, 1940, 1959c) that the shadow encompasses desires and feelings that are not acceptable to society or the conscious psyche. This might include aggression, lust, and other parts of a person that they are less comfortable showing to others. With effort the shadow can be somewhat assimilated into the conscious personality, but portions of it are highly resistant to moral control. Portions of the shadow have a transpersonal power to them, a power beyond what most people can imagine. *Most people, Jung thought, do not try to be aware of their shadow.* Yet the shadow had great creative power. As a result of not being in touch with our shadow aspects of our psyche, we tend to project those thoughts, feelings, or emotions onto other people. By projecting them on to other people and not identifying with them and saying “this is me that acts this way and feels these things”, the shadow can take on a life of its own and make us no longer approaching situations realistically. We also lose the creativity contained in the images and energies of the shadow. For example if we repress “lust” and sexual desires, we lose passion for life. Jung’s therapy tried to help people integrate their shadow aspects in ways that were creative and not destructive. Lust and sexual desires were about sex, yet they could also be about passion and creativity in a person’s broader life.

## Connections Across Cultures: Symbolism Throughout Time and Around the world

Near the end of Jung’s life, he was asked to write a book that might make his theories more accessible to common readers. Jung initially refused, but then he had an interesting dream, receiving advice from his unconscious psyche that he should reconsider his refusal:

...He dreamed that, instead of sitting in his study and talking to the great doctors and psychiatrists who used to call on him from all over the world, he was standing in a public place and addressing a multitude of people who were listening to him with rapt attention and understanding what he said... (pg. 10; John Freeman, in his introduction to *Man and His Symbols*, Jung et al., 1964)

Jung then agreed to write the book that became known as *Man and His Symbols*, but only if he could hand-pick the co-authors who would help him. Jung supervised every aspect of the book, which was nearly finished when he died. Written purposefully to be easily understood by a wide audience, the book presents an astonishingly wide variety of symbolism from art, archaeology, myth, and analysis within the context of Jung’s theories. Many of the symbols were represented in dreams, and symbolic dreams are the primary means by which our unconscious psyche communicates with our conscious psyche, or ego. It is extraordinary to see how similar such symbolism has been throughout time and across cultures, even though each individual example is unique to the person having the dream or expressing themselves openly.

Symbols, according to Jung, are terms, names, images, etc. that may be familiar in everyday life, but as symbols they come to represent something vague and unknown, they take on meaning that is hidden from us. More specifically, they represent something within our unconscious psyche that cannot ever be fully explained. Exploring the meaning will not unlock the secrets of the symbol, because its meaning is beyond reason. Jung suggests that this should not seem strange, since there is nothing that we perceive fully. Our eyesight is limited, as is our hearing. Even when we use tools to enhance our senses, we still only see better, or hear better. We don’t comprehend the true nature of visual objects or sounds, we only experience them differently, within our psychic realm as opposed to their physical reality. And yet, the

symbols created by our unconscious psyche are very important, since the unconscious is at least half of our being, and it is infinitely broader than our conscious psyche (Jung et al., 1964).

Jung believed that the symbols created in dreams have a deeper meaning than Freud recognized. Freud believed that dreams simply represent the unconscious aspects of one's psyche. Jung believed, however, that dreams represent a psyche all their own, a vast and ancient psyche connected to the entire history of humanity (the collective unconscious). Therefore, dreams can tell a story of their own, such as Jung's dream encouraging him to write a book for a common audience. Thus, his dream did not reflect some underlying neurosis connected to childhood trauma, but rather, his unconscious psyche was pushing him forward, toward a sort of wholeness of self by making his theories more readily accessible to those who are not sufficiently educated in the wide variety of complex topics that are typically found in Jung's writings. By virtue of the same reasoning, Jung considered dreams to be quite personal. They could not be interpreted with dream manuals, since no object has any fixed symbolic meaning.

What makes the symbolism within dreams, as well as in everyday life, most fascinating, however, is how common it is throughout the world, both in ancient times and today. In their examination of symbols and archetypes, Jung and his colleagues offer visual examples from: Egypt, England, Japan, the Congo, Tibet, Germany, Belgium, the United States, Bali, Haiti, Greece, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Cameroon, Java, France, Kenya, India, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Australia, China, Hungary, Malaysia, Borneo, Finland, the Netherlands, Rhodesia, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Ireland, Brazil, Monaco, Burma, Bolivia, Cambodia, Denmark, Macedonia, and Peru, as well as from Mayan, Celtic, Babylonian, Persian, Navaho, and Haidu cultures. There are also many Biblical references. It would be safe to say that no one else in the history of psychology has so clearly demonstrated the cross-cultural reality of their theory as is the case with Carl Jung.

Of course, as with dreams, many of these symbols are unique to the culture in which they have arisen. Therefore, it takes a great deal of training and experience for a psychotherapist to work with patients from different cultures. Nonetheless, the patterns represent the same basic concepts, such as self, shadow, anima, animus, hero, etc. Once recognized in their cultural context, the analyst would have a starting point from which to begin working with their patient, or the artist would understand how to influence their audience. One important type of art that relies heavily on cultural images and cues is advertising. Cultural differences can create problems for companies pursuing global marketing campaigns. Jung's theory suggests that similarities in how we react to certain archetypal themes should be similar in different countries, but of course the images themselves must be recognizable, and we may still be a long way from understanding those fundamental images:

...Our actual knowledge of the unconscious shows that it is a natural phenomenon and that, like Nature herself, it is at least neutral. It contains all aspects of human nature – light and dark, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, profound and silly. The study of individual, as well as of collective, symbolism is an enormous task, and one that has not yet been mastered. (pg. 103; Jung et al., 1964)

## Personality Types

One of Jung's most practical theories, and one that has been quite influential, is his work on personality types. Jung had conducted an extensive review of the available literature on personality types, including perspectives from ancient Brahmanic conceptions taken from the Indian Vedas (see below) and types described by the American psychologist William James. In keeping with one of Jung's favorite themes, James had emphasized opposing pairs as the characteristics of his personality types, such as rationalism vs. empiricism, idealism vs. materialism, or optimism vs. pessimism (see Jung, 1971). Based on his research and clinical experience, Jung proposed a system of personality types based on attitude-types and function-types (more commonly referred to simply as attitudes and functions). Once again, the attitudes and functions are based on *opposing ways* of interacting with one's environment.

The two attitude-types are based on *one's orientation to external objects* (which includes other people). **The introvert is intent on withdrawing libido (energy) from objects, as if to ensure that the object can have no power over**

**the person. In contrast, the extravert extends libido toward an object, establishing an active relationship.** Jung considered introverts and extraverts to be common amongst all groups of people, from all walks of life. Today, most psychologists acknowledge that there is a clear genetic component to these temperaments (Kagan, 1984, 1994; Kagan, Kearsley, & Zelazo 1978), a suggestion proposed by Jung as well (Jung, 1971).

Jung's four functions describe ways in which we orient ourselves to the external environment, given our basic tendency toward introversion or extraversion. The first opposing pair of functions is thinking vs. feeling. Thinking involves intellect, it tells you what a thing is, whereas feeling is values-based, it tells what a thing is worth to you. For example, if you are trying to choose classes for your next semester of college, perhaps you need to choose between a required general education course as opposed to a personally interesting course like Medical First Responder or Interior Design. If you are guided first by thinking, you will probably choose the course that fulfills a requirement, but if you are guided by feeling, you may choose the course that satisfies your more immediate interests. The second opposing pair of functions is sensing vs. intuition. Sensing describes paying attention to the reality of your external environment, it tells you that something is. In contrast, intuition incorporates a sense of time, and allows for hunches. Intuition may seem mysterious, and Jung freely acknowledges that he is particularly mystical, yet he offers an interesting perspective on this issue:

...Intuition is a function by which you see round corners, which you really cannot do; yet the fellow will do it for you and you trust him. It is a function which normally you do not use if you live a regular life within four walls and do regular routine work. But if you are on the Stock Exchange or in Central Africa, you will use your hunches like anything. You cannot, for instance, calculate whether when you turn round a corner in the bush you will meet a rhinoceros or a tiger – but you get a hunch, and it will perhaps save your life... (pg. 14; Jung, 1968)

The two attitudes and the four functions combine to form eight personality types. Jung described a so-called cross of the functions, with the ego in the center being influenced by the pairs of functions (Jung, 1968). Considering whether the ego's attitude is primarily introverted or extraverted, one could also propose a parallel pair of crosses. Jung's theory on personality types has proven quite influential and led to the development of two well-known and very popular instruments used to measure one's personality type, so that one might then make reasoned decisions about real-life choices.

In 1923, Katharine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers learned of Jung's personality types and became quite interested in his theory. After spending 20 years observing individuals of different types, they added one more pair of factors based on a person's preference for either a more structured lifestyle, called judging, or a more flexible or adaptable lifestyle, called perceiving. There were now, according to Briggs and Myers, sixteen possible personality types. In the 1940s, Isabel Myers began developing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) in order to help people learn about their personality type. To provide just one example of an MBTI profile, an individual who is extraverted and prefers sensing, thinking, and judging (identified by the initials ESTJ) would be described as: "Practical, realistic, matter-of-fact. Decisive, quickly move to implement decisions. Organize projects and people to get things done...Forceful in implementing their plans" (Myers, 1993; Myers & McCaulley, 1985; see also the website for the Myers & Briggs Foundation, at [www.myersbriggs.org](http://www.myersbriggs.org)). While it is relatively easy to find shortcut tests or variations of the MBTI online, if one plans to make any meaningful decisions based on their personality type they should consult a trained MBTI administrator. What sort of decision might one make? The MBTI has become a popular tool for looking at career choices and workplace relationships. A number of popular books, such as *Do What You Are* (Tieger & Barron-Tieger, 2001) and *Type Talk at Work* (Kroeger, Thuesen, & Rutledge, 2002), are available that provide information intended to help people choose satisfying careers and be successful in complex work environments. In addition to its use in career counseling, the MBTI has been used in individual counseling, marriage counseling, and in educational settings (Myers, 1993; Myers & McCaulley, 1985; Myers & Myers, 1980).

## Personality Development

Jung believed that “everyone’s ultimate aim and strongest desire lie in developing the fullness of human existence that is called personality” (Jung, 1940). However, he lamented the misguided attempts of society to educate children into their personalities. Not only did he doubt the abilities the average parent or average teacher to lead children through the child’s personality development, given their own personal limitations, he considered it a mistake to expect children to act like young adults:

It is best not to apply to children the high ideal of education to personality. For what is generally understood by personality – namely, a definitely shaped, psychic abundance, capable of resistance and endowed with energy – is an adult ideal...No personality is manifested without definiteness, fullness, and maturity. These three characteristics do not, and should not, fit the child, for they would rob it of its childhood. (pp. 284-285; Jung, 1940)

This is not to suggest that childhood is simply a carefree time for children:

No one will deny or even underestimate the importance of childhood years; the severe injuries, often lasting through life, caused by a nonsensical upbringing at home and in school are too obvious, and the need for reasonable pedagogic methods is too urgent...But who rears children to personality? In the first and most important place we have the ordinary, incompetent parents who are often themselves, all their lives, partly or wholly children. (pg. 282; Jung, 1940)

So, if childhood is a critical time, but most adults never grow up themselves, what hope does Jung see for the future? The answer is to be found in midlife. According to Jung, the middle years of life are “a time of supreme psychological importance” and “the moment of greatest unfolding” in one’s life (cited in Jacobi & Hull, 1970). In keeping with the ancient tradition of the Vedic stages of life, from Hindu and Indian culture, the earlier stages of life are about education, developing a career, having a family, and serving one’s proper role within society:

Man has two aims: The first is the aim of nature, the begetting of children and all the business of protecting the brood; to this period belongs the gaining of money and social position. When this aim is satisfied, there begins another phase, namely, that of culture. For the attainment of the former goal we have the help of nature, and moreover of education; but little or nothing helps us toward the latter goal... (pg. 125; Jung, cited in Jacobi & Hull, 1970)

So where does one look for the answers to life? Obviously, there is no simple answer to that question, or rather, than are many answers to that question. Some pursue spiritual answers, such as meditating or devoting themselves to charitable causes. Some devote themselves to their children and grandchildren, others to gardening, painting, or woodworking. The answer for any particular individual is based on that person’s individuation.

**Individuation** is the process by which a person actually becomes an “individual,” differentiated from all other people. It is not to be confused with the ego, or with the conscious psyche, since it includes aspects of the personal unconscious, as influenced by the collective unconscious. Jung also described individuation as the process by which one becomes a “whole” person. To some extent, this process draws the individual away from society, toward being just that, an individual. However, keeping in mind the collective unconscious, Jung believed that individuation leads to more intense and broader collective relationships, rather than leading to isolation. This is what is meant by a whole person, one who successfully integrates the conscious psyche, or ego, with the unconscious psyche. Jung also addresses the Eastern approaches, such as meditation, as being misguided in their attempts to master the unconscious mind. The goal of individuation is wholeness, wholeness of ego, unconscious psyche, and community (Jung, 1940, 1971):

## Personality Theory in Real Life: Synchronicity – Coincidence or an Experience with Mystical Spirituality?

Many people are deeply religious and many others consider themselves to be just as deeply spiritual, though not connected to any specific religion. As important as religion and spirituality are in the lives of many people, psychology has tended to avoid these topics, primarily because they do not lend themselves readily to scientific investigation. Jung certainly did not avoid these topics, and he studied a wide range of spiritual topics. For example, he wrote the foreword for Richard Wilhelm's translation of the I Ching (Wilhelm, 1950), he wrote psychological commentary for a translation of The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation (Evans-Wentz & Jung, 1954), he discussed the psychology of evil in Answer to Job (Jung, 1954), he wrote about Gnostic traditions at length (see Segal, 1992), and one of the volumes of his collected works is entitled Psychology and Religion: West and East (Jung, 1958). In addition to his varied spiritual interests, Jung became interested in psychological phenomena that could not be explained in scientific terms. Such phenomena do not necessarily require a spiritual explanation, but in the absence of any other way to explain them, they are often thought of in spiritual terms. One such topic is synchronicity.

Jung uses the term **synchronicity** to describe the “coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same or a similar meaning” (Jung & Pauli, 1955). In particular, it refers to the simultaneous occurrence of a particular psychic state with one or more external events that have a meaningful parallel to one's current experience or state of mind. Jung wrote that he was amazed by how many people have had experiences of synchronicity.

Before dismissing synchronicity as non-scientific, keep in mind the circumstances that led Jung to this theory. In addition to personally knowing Wolfgang Pauli, Jung also knew Nils Bohr and Albert Einstein (both of whom, like Pauli, had won a Nobel Prize in physics). Although these men are considered among the greatest scientists of modern times, Einstein perhaps the greatest, consider some of their theories. For instance, Einstein proposed that time isn't time, it's relative, except for the speed of light, which alone is always constant. In recent years, experimental physicists have exceeded the speed of light, broken Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (which, by definition, couldn't be broken), and proposed that it might be possible to get something colder than absolute zero. How can we accept things that cannot be observed or proved as scientific, while rejecting something that Jung and many others have observed time and time again? Jung was impressed by the possibility of splitting atoms, and wondered if such a thing might be possible with the psyche. As physics suggested strange new possibilities, Jung held out the same hope for humanity (Progoff, 1973).

Regardless of whether the strangest of Jung's theories are ever proven right or wrong, at the very least they provide an opportunity for interesting discussions! There also happens to be another well-known person in the history of psychology who has experienced synchronicity and who talked about many of her patients having had out-of-body and near-death experiences: Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. In her book *On Children and Death* (Kubler-Ross, 1983), Kubler-Ross describes even more serious concerns than Jung about discussing this topic, but as with Jung, she has also met many, many patients who have had these experiences:

...I have been called every possible name, from Antichrist to Satan himself; I have been labeled, reviled, and otherwise denounced...But it is impossible to ignore the thousands of stories that patients – children and adults alike – have shared with me. These illuminations cannot be explained in scientific language. Listening to these experiences and sharing many of them myself, it would seem hypocritical and dishonest to me not to mention them in my lectures and workshops. So I have shared all of what I have learned from my patients for the last two decades, and I intend to continue to do so. (pg. 106; Kubler-Ross, 1983)

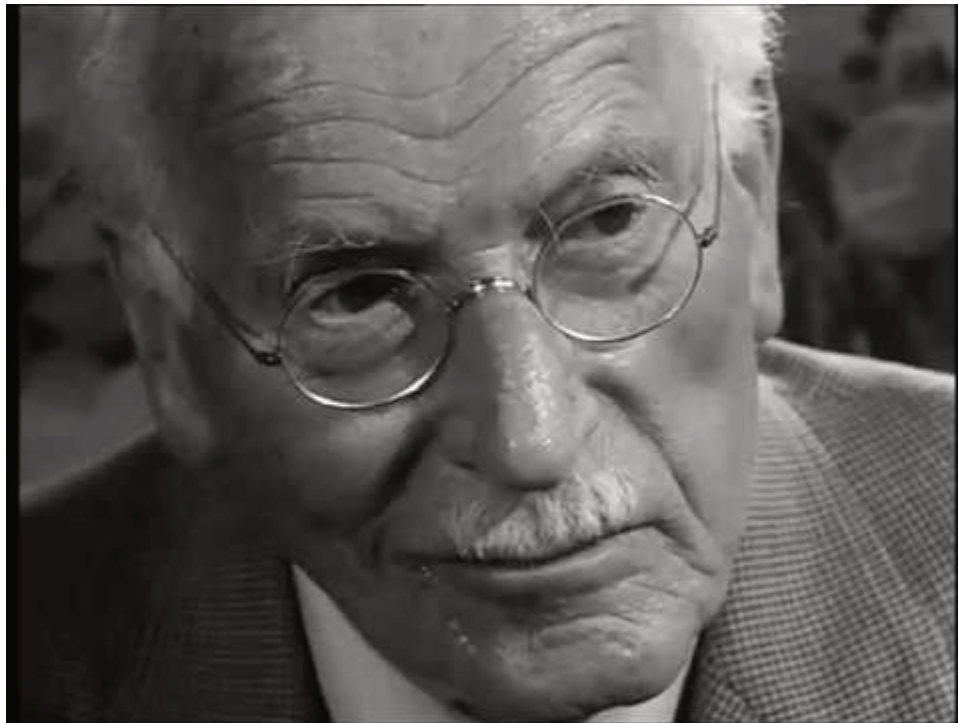
Discussion Question: Jung studied and wrote about topics as diverse as alchemy, astrology, flying saucers, ESP, the prophecies of Nostradamus, and synchronicity. Does this make it difficult for you to believe any of his theories? If you don't believe anything about any of these topics, are you still able to find value in other theories proposed by Jung?

## A Final Note on Carl Jung

It can be something of a challenge to view Jung's work as psychological. It lends itself more readily to, perhaps, the study of the humanities, with elements of medieval pseudo-science, Asian culture, and native religions (an odd combination, to be sure). With titles such as *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (Jung, 1959c) and *Mysterium Conjunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (Jung, 1970), Jung is not exactly accessible without a wide range of knowledge in areas other than psychology. Alchemy was of particular interest to Jung, but not in terms of turning base metals into gold (alchemy is a strange mixture of spirituality and chemistry). Rather, Jung believed that psychology could find its base in alchemy, and that it was the collective unconscious that came forth in the ongoing human effort to understand the nature of matter (Jaffe, 1979; Jung, 1961; Wehr, 1989). He even went so far as to write about flying saucers, the astrological seasons of time, and the prophecies of Nostradamus (Jung, 1959c; Storr, 1983).

And yet, Jung addressed some very important and interesting topics in psychology. His theory of psychological types is reflected in trait descriptions of personality and corresponding trait tests, such as Cattell's 16-PF and the MMPI. The value Jung placed on mid-life and beyond, based largely on the ancient Vedic stages of life, suggests that one is not doomed to the negative alternative in Erikson's final psychosocial crises. So Jung's personal interests, and his career as a whole, straddled the fence between surreal and practical. He may always be best-known for his personal relationship with Freud, brief as it was, but the blending of Eastern and Western thought is becoming more common in psychology. So perhaps Jung himself will become more accessible to the field of psychology, and we may find a great deal to be excited about in his curious approach to psychodynamic theory.

Videos 2: Face to Face with Carl Jung in 1959



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=77>

## Vocabulary

**Collective Unconscious**, a mysterious reservoir of psychological constructs common to all people. Jung believed this was the part of the unconscious mind which is derived from ancestral memory and experience and is common to all humankind, as distinct from the individual's personal unconscious.

**Dynamic psychic energy:** Jung's idea that our personality is trying to balance itself. It does this through the opposition of parts. For example having an "aggressive" part inside ourselves and a "passive" part inside ourselves, would eventually cause us to develop a balanced self that is not too aggressive and not too passive. Getting to know different or opposing parts of ourselves and the world was the way our personality grew "whole" and we became wise and well-developed people.

**Archetypes:** Carl Jung understood archetypes as universal, archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious. They are inherited potentials which are actualized when they enter consciousness as images or manifest in behavior on interaction with the outside world. Archetypes are patterns of behavior, that manifest for example in certain ways such as a "hero" type person or a "warrior" type person. These potential patterns of behavior are inherited patterns that manifest in different ways across world cultures but have patterns in common across cultures.

**Complex:** clusters of emotions that arise based on past experiences and associations, such as those resulting in a particular attitude toward one's father or other father figures. Similar to a schema in modern day cognitive psychology. When these clusters of emotions are activated, they can be so strong that the person feels "possessed" by the strong emotions related to a theme. Jung thought we should get to know our complexes and how they are activated, so under pressure these complexes don't possess us.

**Dream analysis:** the act of analyzing our dream symbols and their meanings. Dream analysis can be done in different ways, and Jung had a particular view of how to do dream analysis. Jung's view was that dreams were trying to communicate information to us. Jung believed that dreams could guide our future behavior, because of their profound relationship to the past, and their profound influence on our conscious mental life. Jung would talk with patients about their dreams and listen to multiple dreams, to help patients understand what the symbols were trying to teach. In general Jung believed the dreams were trying to teach us to be more whole, and to more fully understand parts of our personality.

**Dreambody:** the idea that body symptoms, as well as dreams, are trying to bring psychic information to our awareness. Dreams and body symptoms mirror or reflect similar information. By talking about the information in our body symptoms we will arrive at similar information to what we dreamed about.

**Shadow:** Jung described the shadow as desires and feelings that are not acceptable to society or the conscious psyche. People often try to hide their shadow or project it on to others. Jung thought people should try to get to know their shadow so it doesn't destroy their lives or others. An example is "lust" or "greed" and that a person keeps having a lot of sexual lust or financial greed, but denies this. If they deny this too much, the energy of that lust or greed operates on its own in their psyche, and may make them have destructive or odd sexual boundaries or destructive odd financial behaviors. Denying the shadow also created repressed people that could not fully express themselves and had a tendency to blame others. Jung essentially wanted people to know all parts of themselves.



**Individuation** is the process by which a person actually becomes an “individual,” differentiated from all other people. Jung also described individuation as the process by which one becomes a “whole” person.

**Synchronicity:** Jung uses the term synchronicity to describe the “coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same or a similar meaning”

**For References,** please see the Reference section at the end of this Pressbooks book, where references are listed for Chapters 5 and 6.

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# 6. Humanistic and Existential Theory: Frankl, Rogers, and Maslow

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## HUMANISTIC AND EXISTENTIAL THEORY: VIKTOR FRANKL, CARL ROGERS, AND ABRAHAM MASLOW

Viktor Frankl, Existential Psychology, and Logotherapy

Carl Rogers, Humanistic Psychotherapy

Abraham Maslow, Hierarchy of Needs

### Viktor Frankl, Existential Psychology, and Logotherapy



Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) was truly an extraordinary person. His first paper was submitted for publication by Sigmund Freud; his second paper was published at the urging of Alfred Adler. Gordon Allport was instrumental in getting Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl, 1946/1992) published in English, a book that went on to be recognized by the Library of Congress as one of the ten most influential books in America. He lectured around the world, and received some thirty honorary doctoral degrees in addition to the medical degree and the Ph.D. he had earned as a student. He was invited to a private audience with Pope Paul VI, even though Frankl was Jewish. All of this was accomplished in spite of, and partly because of, the fact that he spent several years in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, camps where his parents, brother, wife, and millions of other Jews died.

#### A Brief Biography of Viktor Frankl

Viktor Frankl was born in Vienna, Austria on March 26, 1905. Although his father had been forced to drop out of medical school for financial reasons, Gabriel Frankl held a series of positions with the Austrian government, working primarily

with the department of child protection and youth welfare. He instilled in his son the importance of being intensely rational and having a firm sense of social justice, and Frankl became something of a perfectionist. Frankl described his mother Elsa as a kindhearted and deeply pious woman, but during his childhood she often described him as a pest, and she even changed the words of Frankl's favorite childhood lullaby to include calling him a pest. This may have been due to the fact that Frankl was often asking questions, so much so that a family friend nicknamed him "The Thinker" (Frankl, 1995/2000). From his mother, Frankl inherited a deep emotionality. One aspect of this emotionality involved a deep attachment to his childhood home, and he often felt homesick as his responsibilities kept him away. And those responsibilities began at an early age (Frankl, 1995/2000; Pattakos, 2004).

Even in high school Frankl was developing a keen interest in existential philosophy and psychology. At the age of 16 he delivered a public lecture "On the Meaning of Life" and at 18 he wrote his graduation essay "On the Psychology of Philosophical Thought." Throughout his high school years he maintained a correspondence with Sigmund Freud (letters that were later destroyed by the Gestapo when Frankl was deported to his first concentration camp). When Frankl was just 19, Freud submitted one of Frankl's papers for publication in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

Frankl proceeded to develop his own practice and his own school of psychotherapy, known as **logotherapy** (the therapy of meaning, as in finding meaning in one's life). As early as 1929, Frankl had begun to recognize three possible ways to find meaning in life: a deed we do or a work we create; a meaningful human encounter, particularly one involving love; and choosing one's attitude in the face of unavoidable suffering. Logotherapy eventually became known as the third school of Viennese psychotherapy, after Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's individual psychology. During the 1930s Frankl did much of his work with suicidal patients and teenagers. He had extensive talks with Wilhelm Reich in Berlin, who was also involved in youth counseling by that time. As the 1930s came to an end, and Austria had been taken over by the Nazis, Frankl sought a visa to emigrate to the United States, which was eventually granted. However, Frankl's parents could not get a visa, so he chose to remain in Austria with them. He also began work on his first book, eventually published in English under the title *The Doctor and the Soul* (Frankl, 1946/1986), which provided the foundation for logotherapy. He fell in love with Tilly Grosser, and they were married in 1941, the last legal Jewish marriage in Vienna under the Nazis.

Shortly thereafter, the realities of Nazi Germany overcame what little privilege Frankl had enjoyed as a doctor at a major hospital. Since it was illegal for Jews to have children, Tilly Frankl was forced to abort their first child. Frankl later dedicated *The Unheard Cry for Meaning* "To Harry or Marion an unborn child" (Frankl, 1978). Then the entire Frankl family, except for his sister who had gone to Australia, was deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp (the same camp from which Anna Freud cared for orphans after the war). As they marched into the camp with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other prisoners, his father tried to calm those who panicked by saying again and again: "Be of good cheer, for God is near." Frankl's parents, his only brother, and his wife Tilly died in the concentration camps. Most tragically, Frankl believed that his wife died after the war, but before the liberating Allied forces could care for all of the many, many suffering people (Frankl, 1995/2000).

When Frankl was deported, he tried to hide and save his only copy of *The Doctor and the Soul* by sewing it into the lining of his coat. However, he was forced to trade his good coat for an old one, and the manuscript was lost. While imprisoned, he managed to obtain a few scraps of paper on which to make notes. Those notes later helped him to recreate his book, and that goal gave such meaning to his life that he considered it an important factor in his will to survive the horrors of the concentration camps. It would be difficult to adequately describe the conditions of the concentration camps, or how they affected the minds of those imprisoned, especially since the effects were quite varied. Frankl describes those conditions in *Man's Search for Meaning*. The book is rather short, but its contents are deep beyond comprehension. Frankl himself, however, might take exception to referring to his book as "deep." Depth psychology was a term used for psychodynamically-oriented psychology. In 1938 Frankl coined the term "height psychology" in order to supplement, but not replace, depth psychology (Frankl, 1978).

After the war, Frankl's life was nothing less than amazing. He returned to his home city of Vienna, married Eleonore

Katharina, née Schwindt, and raised a daughter named Gabriele, whose husband and the Frankl's grandchildren all lived in Vienna. He lectured around the world, received many honors, wrote numerous books, all while continuing to practice psychiatry and teach at the University of Vienna, Harvard, and elsewhere. He had a great interest in humor and in cartooning. Throughout his life, Frankl steadfastly refused to acknowledge the validity of collective guilt toward the German people. When asked repeatedly how he could return to Vienna, after all that happened to him and his family, Frankl replied:

...I answered with a counter-question: "Who did what to me?" There had been a Catholic baroness who risked her life by hiding my cousin for years in her apartment. There had been a Socialist attorney (Bruno Pitterman, later vice chancellor of Austria), who knew me only casually and for whom I had never done anything; and it was he who smuggled some food to me whenever he could. For what reason, then, should I turn my back on Vienna? (pp. 101-102; Frankl, 1995/2000)

Viktor Frankl died peacefully on September 2, 1997. He was 92 years old. During his life, his work influenced many people, from the ordinary to the famous and influential. "Viktor Frankl, to be sure, leaves a profound legacy" (pg. 24; Pattakos, 2004).

## The Theoretical Basis for Logotherapy

The word *logos* is Greek for "meaning," and this third Viennese school of psychotherapy focuses on the meaning of human existence and man's search for such a meaning. Logotherapy, therefore, focuses on person's will-to-meaning, in contrast to Freud's will-to-pleasure (the drive to satisfy the desires of the id, the pleasure principle) or Adler's will-to-power (the drive to overcome inferiority and attain superiority; adopted from Nietzsche) (Frankl, 1946/1986, 1946/1992).

**The will-to-meaning is, according to Frankl, the primary source of one's motivation in life.** It is not a secondary rationalization of the instinctual drives, and meaning and values are not simply defense mechanisms. As Frankl eloquently points out:

...as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my "defense mechanisms," nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my "reaction formations." Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values! (pg. 105; Frankl, 1946/1992)

Unfortunately, one's search for meaning can be frustrated. This existential frustration can lead to what Frankl identified as a noogenic neurosis (a neurosis of the mind or, in other words, the specifically human dimension). Frankl suggested that when neuroses arise from an individual's inability to find meaning in their life, what they need is logotherapy, not psychotherapy. More specifically, they need help to find some meaning in their life, some reason to be. It would be safe to say that many of us find it difficult to find meaning in our own lives, and research has indeed shown that the will-to-meaning is a significant concern throughout the world (Frankl, 1946/1992). In order to make sense of this problem, Frankl has suggested that we should not ask what we expect from life, but rather, we should understand that life expects something from us:

A colleague, an aged general practitioner, turned to me because he could not come to terms with the loss of his wife, who had died two years before. His marriage had been very happy, and he was now extremely depressed. I asked him quite simply: "Tell me what would have happened if you had died first and your wife had survived you?" "That would have been terrible," he said. "How my wife would have suffered?" "Well, you see," I answered, "your wife has been spared that, and it was you who spared her, though of course you must now pay by surviving and mourning her." In that very moment his mourning had been given a meaning – the meaning of a sacrifice. (pg. xx; Frankl, 1946/1986)

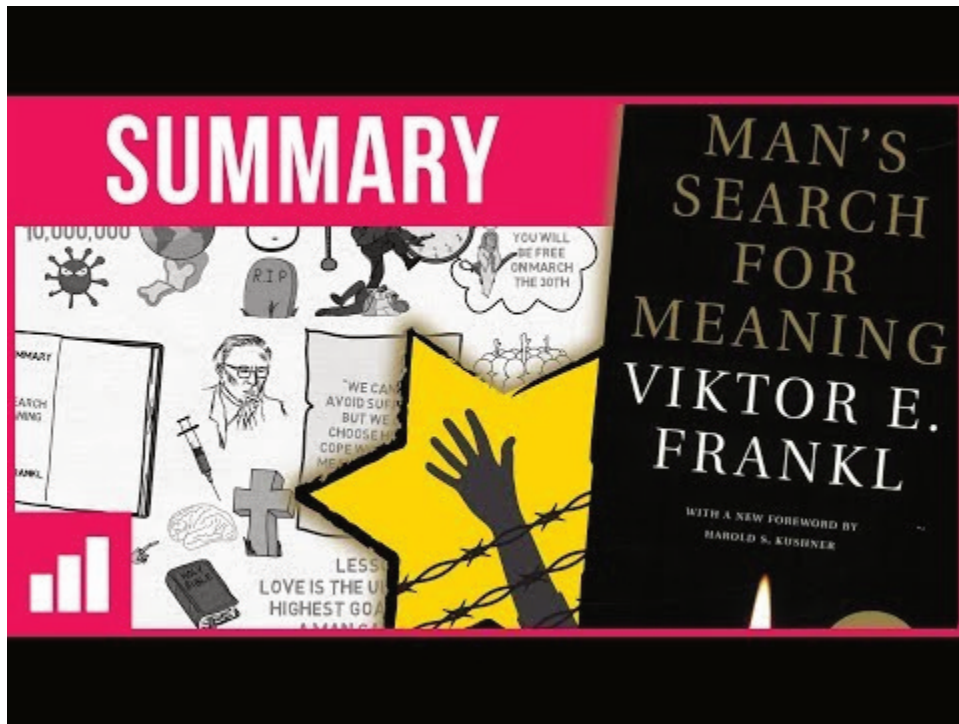
The latter point brings us back to Frankl's discussion of how one can find meaning in life: through creating a work or doing a deed; by experiencing something or encountering someone, particularly when love is involved; or by choosing one's attitude toward unavoidable suffering. Those of us who have lost someone dear know how easily it leads to deep suffering. Frankl had already written the first version of *The Doctor and the Soul* when he entered the Theresienstadt concentration camp, so his views on how one should choose their attitude toward unavoidable suffering were put to a test that no research protocol could ever hope to achieve! His observations form the basis for much of *Man's Search for Meaning*. Both his observations of others and his own reactions in this unimaginably horrible and tragic situation are quite fascinating:

...as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking his wife...my mind clung to my wife's image...Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun...A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. (pp. 48-49; Frankl, 1946/1992)

...One evening, when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run out to the assembly grounds and see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red...Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, "How beautiful the world could be!" (pg. 51; Frankl, 1946/1992)

...The experiences of camp life show that man does have a choice of action. There were enough examples, often of a heroic nature, which proved that apathy could be overcome, irritability suppressed. Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress.

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. (pp. 74-75; Frankl, 1946/1992)



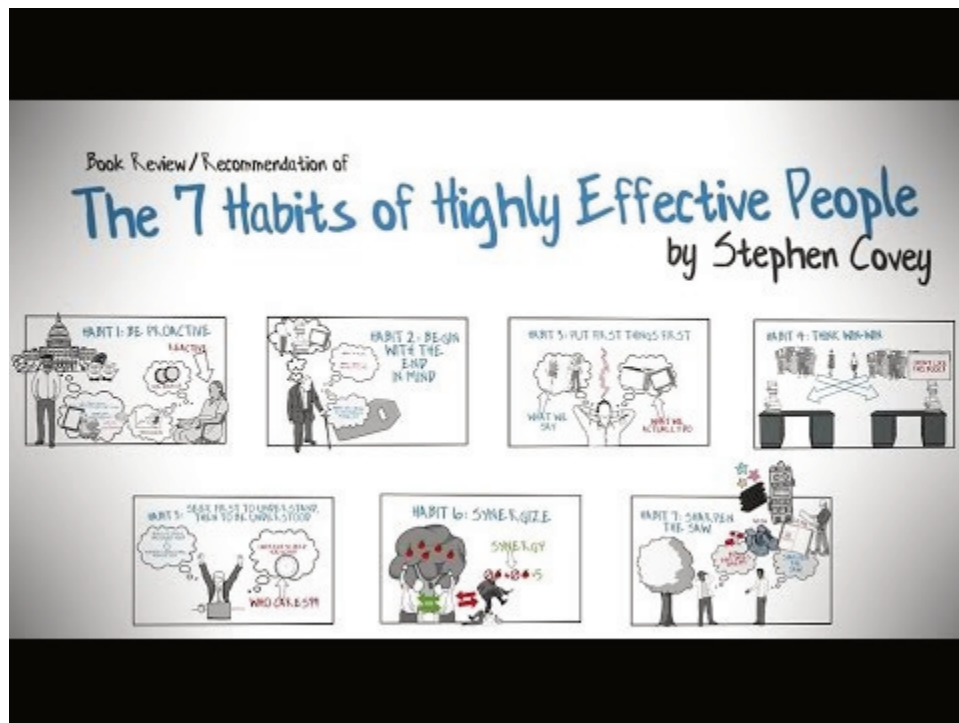
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Discussion Question: Frankl considered the most important aspect of survival to be the ability to find meaning in one's life. Have you found meaning in your life? Are there goals you have that you believe might add meaning to your life? Do you know anyone personally whose life seems to be filled with meaning, and if so, how does it appear to affect them?

### Logotherapy as a Technique

As a technique, logotherapy (Frankl, 1946/1986, 1946/1992) is based on a simple trap in which neurotic individuals often find themselves. When a person thinks about or approaches a situation that provokes a neurotic symptom, such as fear, the person experiences anticipatory anxiety. This anticipatory anxiety takes the form of the symptom, which reinforces their anxiety. And so on... In order to help people break out of this negative cycle, Frankl recommends having them focus intently on the very thing that evokes their symptoms, even trying to exhibit their symptoms more severely than ever before! As a result, the patient is able to separate themselves from their own neurosis, and eventually the neurosis loses its potency. In some ways this is similar to modern day exposure therapy for trauma and anxiety, where a client is progressively exposed to the things they fear or anxiously anticipate, and clients learn gradual desensitization to what they fear or avoid.

## Real life Application Example of Frankl's Work



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In 1989, Stephen Covey published *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey's book became perhaps the best selling business book in history, selling millions of copies and still in use today in many business schools and on many of the "best reads" lists on Amazon or Goodreads. Covey, a devout practicing Mormon (Latter Day Saints) and influenced by his faith, presents a very existential approach to understanding our lives, particularly with regard to the problems we experience every day. Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that in the chapters describing the first two of these seven habits he cites and quotes Viktor Frankl numerous times. Indeed, Covey cites Frankl's first two books as being profoundly influential in his own life, and how impressed Covey was having met Frankl shortly before Frankl's death (see Covey's foreword in Pattakos, 2004).

The first two habits, according to Covey, are: 1) be proactive, and 2) begin with the end in mind. He briefly describes Frankl's experiences in the concentration camps, and refers to Frankl's most widely quoted saying, that Frankl himself could decide how his experiences would affect him, and that no one could take that freedom away from Frankl! People who choose to develop this level of personal freedom are certainly being proactive, as opposed to responding passively to events that occur around them and to them. It is not necessary, of course, to suffer such tragic circumstances in order to become proactive in one's own life:

...It is in the ordinary events of every day that we develop the proactive capacity to handle the extraordinary pressures of life. It's how we make and keep commitments, how we handle a traffic jam, how we respond to an



irate customer or a disobedient child. It's how we view our problems and where we focus our energies. It's the language we use. (pg. 92; Covey, 1989)

Covey compares his habit of beginning with the end in mind to logotherapy, helping people to recognize the meaning that their life holds. Covey works primarily in business leadership training, so the value of working toward a greater goal than simply keeping a company in business from day to day is clear, especially for those who care about employee morale and quality control (see also Principle-Centered Leadership; Covey, 1990). When employees share a sense of purpose in their work, they are likely to have higher intrinsic motivation. Think about it for a moment. Have you ever had a job you didn't really understand, and didn't care about? Have you ever been given that sort of homework in school or college? So, how much effort did you really put into that job or assignment?

Covey's remaining habits are: 3) put first things first, 4) think win/win, 5) seek first to understand, then to be understood, 6) synergize, and 7) sharpen the saw. At first glance these principles seem reasonably straight forward, emphasizing practical and responsible actions. However, what does "sharpen the saw" mean? Sharpening the saw refers to keeping our tools in good working order, and we are our most important tool. Covey considers it essential to regularly and consistently, in wise and balanced ways, to exercise the four dimensions of our nature: physical, mental, social/emotional, and spiritual. By investing in ourselves, we are taking care to live an authentic life.

Covey, 2004 published a book about the "eighth habit". He said that this was not simply an important habit he had overlooked before, but one that has risen to new significance as we have fully entered the age of information and technology in the twenty-first century. As communication has become much easier (e.g., email), it has also become less personal and meaningful. Thus the need for the eighth habit: find your voice and inspire others to find theirs. According to Covey, "**voice is unique personal significance.**" Essentially, it is the same as finding meaning in one's life, and then helping others to find meaning in their own lives. It is through finding a mission or a purpose in life that we can move "from effectiveness to greatness" (Covey, 2004).

Frankl, Covey, and other humanist theorists have suggested is is less a matter of what our specific job might be, it is the work we do that represents who we are. When we meet our work with enthusiasm, appreciation, generosity, and integrity, we meet it with meaning. And no matter how mundane a job might seem at the time, we can transform it with meaning. Meaning is life's legacy, and it is as available to us at work as it is available to us in our deepest spiritual quests. We breathe, therefore we are – spiritual. Life is; therefore it is – meaningful. We do, therefore we work.

Viktor Frankl's legacy was one of hope and possibility. He saw the human condition at its worst, and human beings behaving in ways intolerable to the imagination. He also saw human beings rising to heights of compassion and caring in ways that can only be described as miraculous acts of unselfishness and transcendence. There is something in us that can rise above and beyond everything we think possible... (pg. 162; Pattakos, 2004)

## Carl Rogers, Humanistic Psychotherapy



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Video of Carl Rogers Interviewing a Client named Gloria -notice how Rogers focuses deeply on her experience, and each question he asks tries to deepen her own understanding of her experience. At the same time he presents an unconditional regard for her story.

### Placing Rogers in Context: A Psychology 2,600 Years in the Making

Carl Rogers was an extraordinary individual whose approach to psychology emphasized individuality. Raised with a strong Christian faith, exposed to Eastern culture and spirituality in college, and then employed as a therapist for children, he came to value and respect each person he met. Because of that respect for the ability of each person to grow, and the belief that we are innately driven toward actualization, Rogers began the distinctly humanistic approach to psychotherapy that became known as **client-centered therapy**.

Taken together, client-centered therapy and self-actualization offer a far more positive approach to fostering the growth of each person than most other disciplines in psychology. Unlike the existing approaches of psychoanalysis, which aimed to uncover problems from the past, or behavior therapies, which aimed to identify problem behaviors and control or “fix” them, client-centered therapy grew out of Rogers’ simple desire to help his clients move forward in their

lives. Indeed, he had been trained as a psychoanalyst, but Rogers found the techniques unsatisfying, both in their goals and their ability to help the children he was working with at the time. The seemingly hands-off approach of client-centered therapy fit well with a Taoist perspective, something Rogers had studied, discussed, and debated during his trip to China. In *A Way of Being*, Rogers (1980) quotes an ancient philosopher Lao Tsu, where he says Lao Tsu sums up many of his deeper beliefs:

If I keep from meddling with people, they take care of themselves,

If I keep from commanding people, they behave themselves,

If I keep from preaching at people, they improve themselves,

If I keep from imposing on people, they become themselves.

Lao Tsu, c600 B.C.

Rogers, like Maslow, wanted to see psychology contribute far more to society than merely helping individuals with psychological distress. He extended his sincere desire to help people learn to really communicate, with empathic understanding, to efforts aimed at bringing peace to the world. On the day he died, he had just been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Since a Nobel Prize cannot be awarded to someone who has died, he was not eligible to be nominated again. If he had lived a few more years, he may well have received that award. His later years were certainly committed to peace in a way that deserved such recognition.

## Basic Concepts

Rogers believed that each of us lives in a constantly changing private world, which he called the experiential field. Everyone exists at the center of their own experiential field, and that field can only be fully understood from the perspective of the individual. This concept has a number of important implications. The individual's behavior must be understood as a reaction to their experience and perception of the field. They react to it as an organized whole, and it is their reality. The problem this presents for the therapist is that only the individual can really understand their experiential field. This is quite different than the Freudian perspective, in which only the trained and objective psychoanalyst can break through the defense mechanisms and understand the basis of the patient's unconscious impulses. One's perception of the experiential field is limited, however. Rogers believed that certain impulses, or sensations, can only enter into the conscious field of experience under certain circumstances. Thus, the experiential field is not a true reality, but rather an individual's potential reality (Rogers, 1951).

The one basic tendency and striving of the individual is to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing of the individual or, in other words, an actualizing tendency. Rogers borrowed the term self-actualization, a term first used by Kurt Goldstein, to describe this basic striving.

For Rogers, *self-actualization was a tendency to move forward, toward greater maturity and independence, or self-responsibility*. This development occurs throughout life, both biologically (the differentiation of a fertilized egg into the many organ systems of the body) and psychologically (self-government, self-regulation, socialization, even to the point of choosing life goals).

The ability of individuals to make the choices necessary for actualizing their self and to then fulfill those choices is what Rogers called **personal power** (Rogers, 1977). He believed there are many self-actualized individuals revolutionizing the world by trusting their own power, without feeling a need to have "power over" others. They are also willing to foster the latent actualizing tendency in others. We can easily see the influence of Alfred Adler here, both in terms of the creative

power of the individual and seeking superiority within a healthy context of social interest. Client-centered therapy was based on making the context of personal power a clear strategy in the therapeutic relationship:

...the client-centered approach is a conscious renunciation and avoidance by the therapist of all control over, or decision-making for, the client. It is the facilitation of self-ownership by the client and the strategies by which this can be achieved...based on the premise that the human being is basically a trustworthy organism, capable of...making constructive choices as to the next steps in life, and acting on those choices. (pp. 14-15; Rogers, 1977)

Discussion Question: Rogers claimed that no one can really understand your experiential field. Would you agree, or do you sometimes find that close friends or family members seem to understand you better than you understand yourself? Are these relationships congruent?

## Personality Development

Although Rogers described personality within the therapist-client relationship, the focus of his therapeutic approach was based on how he believed the person had arrived at a point in their life where they were suffering from psychological distress. Therefore, the same issues apply to personality development as in therapy. A very important aspect of personality development, according to Rogers, is the parent-child relationship. The nature of that relationship, and whether it fosters self-actualization or impedes personal growth, determines the nature of the individual's personality and, consequently, their self-structure and psychological adjustment.

A child begins life with an actualizing tendency. As they experience life, and perceive the world around them, they may be supported in all things by those who care for them, or they may only be supported under certain conditions (e.g., if their behavior complies with strict rules). As the child becomes self-aware, it develops a need for **positive regard**. When the parents offer the child **unconditional positive regard**, the child continues moving forward in concert with its actualizing tendency. So, when there is no discrepancy between the child's self-regard and its positive regard (from the parents), the child will grow up psychologically healthy and well-adjusted. However, if the parents offer only conditional positive regard, if they only support the child according to the desires and rules of the parents, the child will develop conditions of worth. As a result of these conditions of worth, the child will begin to perceive their world selectively; they will avoid those experiences that do not fit with its goal of obtaining positive regard. The child will begin to live the life of those who set the conditions of worth, rather than living its own life.

As the child grows older, and more aware of its own condition in the world, their behavior will either fit within their own self-structure or not. If they have received unconditional positive regard, such that their self-regard and positive regard are closely matched, they will experience **congruence**. In other words, **their sense of self and their experiences in life will fit together**, and the child will be relatively happy and well-adjusted. But, if their sense of self and their ability to obtain positive regard do not match, the child will develop incongruence. Consider, for example, children playing sports. That alone tells us that parents have established guidelines within which the children are expected to "play." Then we have some children who are naturally athletic, and other children who are more awkward and/or clumsy. They may become quite athletic later in life, or not, but during childhood there are many different levels of ability as they grow. If a parent expects their child to be the best player on the team, but the child simply isn't athletic, how does the parent react? Do they support the child and encourage them to have fun, or do they pressure the child to perform better and belittle them when they can't? Children are very good at recognizing who the better athletes are, and they know their place in the hierarchy of athletics, i.e., their athletic self-structure. So if a parent demands dominance from a child who knows they just aren't that good, the child will develop incongruence. Rogers believed, quite understandably, that such conditions are threatening to a child, and will activate defense mechanisms. Over time, however, excessive or

sudden and dramatic incongruence can lead to the breakdown and disorganization of the self-structure. As a result, the individual is likely to experience psychological distress that will continue throughout life (Rogers, 1959/1989).

Discussion Question: Conditions of worth are typically first established in childhood, based on the relationship between a child and his or her parents. Think about your relationship with your own parents and, if you have children, think about how you treat them. Are most of the examples that come to mind unconditional positive regard, or conditional positive regard? How has that affected your relationship with your parents and/or your own children?

What about individuals who have developed congruence, having received unconditional positive regard throughout development or having experienced successful client-centered therapy? They become, according to Rogers (1961), a fully functioning person. He also said they lead a good life. The good life is a process, not a state of being, and a direction, not a destination. It requires psychological freedom, and is the natural consequence of being psychologically free to begin with. Whether or not it develops naturally, thanks to a healthy and supportive environment in the home, or comes about as a result of successful therapy, there are certain characteristics of this process. The fully functioning person is increasingly open to new experiences, they live fully in each moment, and they trust themselves more and more. They become more able and more willing to experience all of their feelings, they are creative, they trust human nature, and they experience the richness of life. The fully functioning person is not simply content, or happy, they are alive:

## Abraham Maslow, Hierarchy of Needs

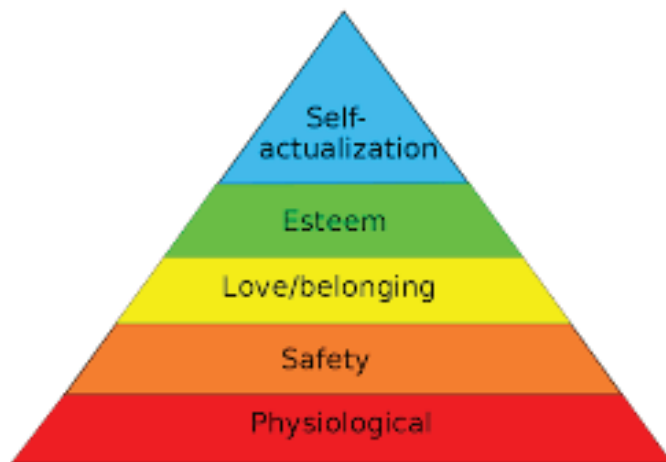




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Abraham Maslow developed the Hierarchy, (or Pyramid), of Needs which is one of the central ideas in modern economics and sociology. The work of a once little-known American psychologist, it has grown into an indispensable guide to understanding the modern world. This film explains who Maslow was, what his pyramid is, and why it matters so much.

## The Hierarchy of Needs



Abraham Maslow is a personality theorist who is undoubtedly best known for his **hierarchy of needs**. Although Maslow did not develop the commonly viewed triangle of needs, this image has become iconic for the view of the hierarchy of human needs. Developed within the context of a theory of human motivation, Maslow believed that *human behavior is driven and guided by a set of basic needs: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization*. It is generally accepted that individuals must move through the hierarchy in order, satisfying the needs at each level before one can move on to a higher level. The reason for this is that *lower needs tend to occupy the mind if they remain unsatisfied*. How easy is it to work or study when you are really hungry or thirsty? But Maslow did not consider the hierarchy to be rigid. For example, he encountered some people for whom self-esteem was more important than love, individuals suffering from antisocial personality disorder seem to have a permanent loss of the need for love, or if a need has been satisfied for a long time it may become less important. As lower needs are becoming satisfied, though not yet fully satisfied, higher needs may begin to present themselves. And of course there are sometimes multiple determinants of behavior, making the relationship between a given behavior and a basic need difficult to identify (Maslow, 1943/1973; Maslow, 1970).

The physiological needs are based, in part, on the concept of homeostasis, the natural tendency of the body to maintain critical biological levels of essential elements or conditions, such as water, salt, energy, and body temperature. Sexual activity, though not essential for the individual, is biologically necessary for the human species to survive. Maslow described the physiological needs as the most prepotent. In other words, if a person is lacking everything in life, having failed to satisfy physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and esteem needs, their consciousness will most likely be consumed with their desire for food and water. As the lowest and most clearly biological of the needs, these are also the most animal-like of our behavior. In Western culture, however, it is rare to find someone who is actually starving. So when we talk about being hungry, we are really talking about an appetite, rather than real hunger (Maslow, 1943/1973; Maslow, 1970). Many Americans are fascinated by stories such as those of the ill-fated Donner party, trapped in the Sierra Nevada mountains during the winter of 1846-1847, and the Uruguayan soccer team whose plane crashed in the Andes mountains in 1972. In each case, either some or all of the survivors were forced to cannibalize those who had died. As shocking as such stories are, they demonstrate just how powerful our physiological needs can be.

The safety needs can easily be seen in young children. They are easily startled or frightened by loud noises, flashing lights, and rough handling. They can become quite upset when other family members are fighting, since it disrupts the



feeling of safety usually associated with the home. According to Maslow, many adult neurotics are like children who do not feel safe. From another perspective, that of Erik Erikson, children and adults raised in such an environment do not trust the environment to provide for their needs. Although it can be argued that few people in America seriously suffer from a lack of satisfying physiological needs, there are many people who live unsafe lives. For example, inner city crime, abusive spouses and parents, incurable diseases, all present life threatening dangers to many people on a daily basis.

Throughout the evolution of the human species we found safety primarily within our family, tribal group, or our community. It was within those groups that we shared the hunting and gathering that provided food. Once the physiological and safety needs have been fairly well satisfied, according to Maslow, “the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children” (Maslow, 1970). Most notable among personality theorists who addressed this issue was Wilhelm Reich. An important aspect of love and affection is sex. Although sex is often considered a physiological need, given its role in procreation, sex is what Maslow referred to as a multidetermined behavior. In other words, it serves both a physiological role (procreation) and a belongingness/love role (the tenderness and/or passion of the physical side of love). Maslow was also careful to point out that love needs involve both giving and receiving love in order for them to be fully satisfied (Maslow, 1943/1973; Maslow, 1970).

Maslow believed that all people desire a stable and firmly based high evaluation of themselves and others (at least the others who comprise their close relationships). This need for self-esteem, or self-respect, involves two components. First is the desire to feel competent, strong, and successful (similar to Bandura’s self-efficacy). Second is the need for prestige or status, which can range from simple recognition to fame and glory. Maslow credited Adler for addressing this human need, but felt that Freud had neglected it. Maslow also believed that the need for self-esteem was becoming a central issue in therapy for many psychotherapists. However, as we saw in Chapter 12, Albert Ellis considers self-esteem to be a sickness. Ellis’ concern is that self-esteem, including efforts to boost self-esteem in therapy, requires that people rate themselves, something that Ellis felt will eventually lead to a negative evaluation (no one is perfect!). Maslow did acknowledge that the healthiest self-esteem is based on well-earned and deserved respect from others, rather than fleeting fame or celebrity status (Maslow, 1943/1973; Maslow, 1970).

When all of these lower needs (physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and esteem) have been largely satisfied, we may still feel restless and discontented unless we are doing what is right for ourselves. “What a man can be, he must be” (pg. 46; Maslow, 1970). Thus, the need for self-actualization, which Maslow described as the highest of the basic needs, can also be referred to as a **Being-need**, as opposed to the lower deficiency-needs (Maslow, 1968). We will examine self-actualization in more detail in the following section.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is based on a theory of motivation. Individuals must essentially satisfy the lower deficiency needs before they become focused on satisfying the higher Being needs. Beyond even the Being needs there is something more, a state of transcendence that ties all people and the whole of creation together.

Although Maslow recognized that humans share basic drives with other animals. We get hungry, even though how and what we eat is determined culturally. We need to be safe, like any other animal, but again we seek and maintain our safety in different ways (such as having a police force to provide safety for us). Given our fundamental similarity to other animals, therefore, Maslow referred to the basic needs as *instinctoid*. The lower the need the more animal-like it is, the higher the need, the more human it is, and self-actualization was, in Maslow’s opinion, uniquely human (Maslow, 1970).

There are also classic studies on the importance of environmental enrichment on the structural development of the brain itself (Diamond et al., 1975; Globus, et al., 1973; Greenough & Volkmar, 1973; Rosenzweig, 1984; Spinelli & Jensen, 1979; Spinelli, Jensen, & DiPrisco, 1980). Even less is known about the aesthetic needs, but Maslow was convinced that some people need to experience, indeed they crave, beauty in their world. Ancient cave drawings have been found that seem to serve no other purpose than being art. The cognitive and aesthetic needs may very well have been fundamental to our evolution as modern humans.

## Self-Actualization

Maslow began his studies on self-actualization in order to satisfy his own curiosity about people who seemed to be fulfilling their unique potential as individuals. He did not intend to undertake a formal research project, but he was so impressed by his results that he felt compelled to report his findings. Amongst people he knew personally and public and historical figures, he looked for individuals who appeared to have made full use of their talents, capacities, and potentialities. In other words, “people who have developed or are developing to the full stature of which they are capable” (Maslow, 1970). His list of those who clearly seemed self-actualized included Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Addams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Aldous Huxley, and Baruch Spinoza. His list of individuals who were most-likely self-actualized included Goethe (possibly the great-grandfather of Carl Jung), George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Harriet Tubman (born into slavery, she became a conductor on the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War), and George Washington Carver (born into slavery at the end of the Civil War, he became an agricultural chemist and prolific inventor). In addition to the positive attributes listed above, Maslow also considered it very important that there be no evidence of psychopathology in those he chose to study. After comparing the seemingly self-actualized individuals to people who did not seem to have fulfilled their lives, Maslow identified fourteen characteristics of self-actualizing people (Maslow, 1950/1973, 1970), as follows:

Maslow had something else interesting to say about self-actualization in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*: “What does self-actualization mean in moment-to-moment terms? What does it mean on Tuesday at four o’clock?” (pg. 41). Consequently, he offered a preliminary suggestion for an operational definition of the process by which self-actualization occurs. In other words, what are the behaviors exhibited by people on the path toward fulfilling or achieving the fourteen characteristics of self-actualized people described above? Sadly, this could only remain a preliminary description, i.e., they are “ideas that are in midstream rather than ready for formulation into a final version,” because this book was published after Maslow’s death (having been put together before his sudden and unexpected heart attack).

What does one do when he self-actualizes? Does he grit his teeth and squeeze? What does self-actualization mean in terms of actual behavior, actual procedure? I shall describe eight ways in which one self-actualizes. (pg. 45; Maslow, 1971)

- They experience full, vivid, and selfless concentration and total absorption.
- Within the ongoing process of self-actualization, they make growth choices (rather than fear choices; progressive choices rather than regressive choices)
- They are aware that there is a self to be actualized.
  
- When in doubt, they choose to be honest rather than dishonest.
- They trust their own judgment, even if it means being different or unpopular (being courageous is another version of this behavior).
- They put in the effort necessary to improve themselves, working regularly toward self-development no matter how arduous or demanding .
- They embrace the occurrence of peak experiences, doing what they can to facilitate and enjoy more of them (as opposed to denying these experiences as many people do).
- They identify and set aside their ego defenses (they have “the courage to give them up”). Although this requires that they face up to painful experiences, it is more beneficial than the consequences of defenses such as repression.

## Connections Across Cultures: Is Nothing Sacred?

Maslow described some lofty ambitions for humanity in *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968) and *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971), as well as some challenges we face along the way. Transcendence, according to Maslow, is a loss of our sense of Self, as we begin to feel an intimate connection with the world around us and all other people. But transcendence is exceedingly difficult when we are hindered by the defense mechanism of desecralization. What exactly does the word “sacred” mean? A dictionary definition of sacred says that it is “connected with God (or the gods) or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserving veneration.” However, there is another definition that does not require a religious context: “regarded with great respect and reverence by a particular religion, group, or individual” (The Oxford American College Dictionary, 2002). Maslow described desecralization as a rejection of the values and virtues of one’s parents. As a result, people grow up without the ability to see anything as sacred, eternal, or symbolic. In other words, they grow up without meaning in their lives.

The process of **resacralization**, which Maslow considered an essential task of therapists working with clients who seek help in this critical area of their life, requires that we have some concept of what is sacred. So, what is sacred? Many answers can be found, but there does seem to be at least one common thread.

...Compassion is the wish that others be free of suffering. It is by means of compassion that we aspire to attain enlightenment. It is compassion that inspires us to engage in the virtuous practices that lead to Buddhahood. We must therefore devote ourselves to developing compassion. The Dalai Lama (2001)

I have been engaged in peace work for more than thirty years: combating poverty, ignorance, and disease; going to sea to help rescue boat people; evacuating the wounded from combat zones; resettling refugees; helping hungry children and orphans; opposing wars; producing and disseminating peace literature; training peace and social workers; and rebuilding villages destroyed by bombs. It is because of the practice of meditation – stopping, calming, and looking deeply – that I have been able to nourish and protect the sources of my spiritual energy and continue this work.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1995)

...Our progress is the penetrating of the present moment, living life with our feet on the ground, living in compassionate, active relationship with others, and yet living in the awareness that life has been penetrated by the eternal moment of God and unfolds in the power of that moment.

Fr. Laurence Freeman (1986)

Keep your hands busy with your duties in this world, and your heart busy with God.

Sheikh Muzaffer (cited in *Essential Sufism* by Fadiman & Frager, 1997)

Forgiveness is a letting go of past suffering and betrayal, a release of the burden of pain and hate that we carry.

Forgiveness honors the heart’s greatest dignity. Whenever we are lost, it brings us back to the ground of love.

Jack Kornfield (2002)

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself...”

Jesus Christ (The Holy Bible, 1962)

Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, as well as members of other religions and humanists, all have some variation of what has been called The Golden Rule: treating others as you would like to be treated. If that is sacred, then even amongst atheists, young people can evaluate the values and virtues of their parents, community, and culture, and then decide

whether those values are right or wrong, whether they want to perpetuate an aspect of that society based on their own thoughts and feelings about how they, themselves, may be treated someday by others. This resacralization need not be religious or spiritual, but it commonly is, and some psychologists are comfortable embracing spirituality as such.

Kenneth Pargament and Annette Mahoney (2005) wrote a chapter entitled *Spirituality: Discovering and Conserving the Sacred*, which was included in the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). First, they point out that religion is an undeniable fact in American society. Some 95 percent of Americans believe in God, and 86 percent believe that He can be reached through prayer and that He is important or very important to them. Spirituality, according to Pargament and Mahoney, is the process in which individuals seek both to *discover and to conserve that which is sacred*. It is interesting to note that Maslow and Rogers consider self-actualization and transcendence to be a process as well, not something that one can get and keep permanently. An important aspect of defining what is sacred is that it is imbued with divinity. God may be seen as manifest in marriage, work can be seen as a vocation to which the person is called, the environment can be seen as God's creation. In each of these situations, and in others, what is viewed as sacred has been sanctified by those who consider it sacred. Unfortunately, this can have negative results as well, such as when the Heaven's Gate cult followed their sanctified leader to their deaths. Thus, spirituality is not necessarily synonymous with a good and healthy lifestyle.

Still, there is research that has shown that couples who sanctify their marriage (decide their marriage is sacred and important) experience greater marital satisfaction, less marital conflict, and more effective marital problem-solving strategies. Likewise, mothers and fathers who sanctify the role of parenting report less aggression and more consistent discipline in raising their children. For college students, spiritual striving was more highly correlated with well-being than any other form of goal-setting (see Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). So there appear to be real psychological advantages to spiritual pursuits. This may be particularly true during challenging times in our lives:

...there are aspects of our lives that are beyond our control. Birth, developmental transitions, accidents, illnesses, and death are immutable elements of existence. Try as we might to affect these elements, a significant portion of our lives remains beyond our immediate control. In spirituality, however, we can find ways to understand and deal with our fundamental human insufficiency, the fact that there are limits to our control... (pg. 655; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005)

## Vocabulary and Concepts

**Congruence:** Carl Rogers believed that for a person to achieve self-actualization they must be in a state of congruence. This means that self-actualization occurs when a person's "ideal self" (i.e., who they would like to be) is congruent with their actual behavior (self-image).

**Hierarchy of Needs:** Maslow believed that human behavior is driven and guided by a set of basic needs: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization. It is generally accepted that individuals must move through the hierarchy in order, satisfying the needs at each level before one can move on to a higher level.

**Logotherapy:** the therapy of meaning, as in finding meaning in one's life.

**Personal Power:** Rogers defined this as the ability of individuals to make the choices necessary for actualizing their self and to then fulfill those choices.

**Resacralization:** the process of deciding what is sacred and treating certain things as sacred and important. Maslow

felt this was very important and what we found sacred should guide our life, similar to Stephen Covey's idea of "put the end in mind" by which he meant to follow what was most important and sacred to a person.

**Self-Actualization:** Maslow described self-actualization as the highest of the basic needs, or the Being-need. Maslow felt these were needs related to meaning, and doing or experiencing personally meaningful things in life.

**Will-to-Meaning:** Viktor Frankl believed this was the primary motivator in life, and his therapy called logotherapy helped people find meaningfulness in life.

**Unconditional Positive Regard:** According to Rogers, unconditional positive regard involves showing complete support and acceptance of a person no matter what that person says or does. Therapists can do this, and parents and friends can do this. People can still have boundaries and say yes and no, but an overall attitude of acceptance from a parent or friend or therapist Roger's thought was a great gift.

**Quiz: Choose the theorist that best matches the concept they emphasized. Drag the concept on to the theorists name.**



An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:  
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**For references,** please see the end of this book under the References for chapters 5 and 6 section.

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# 7. The Nature-Nurture Question

This is an edited and adapted chapter originally written by Eric Turkheimer PhD for the NOBA series in psychology. For full attribution please see the end of this chapter.

People have a deep intuition about what has been called the “nature–nurture question.” Some aspects of our behavior feel as though they originate in our genetic makeup, while others feel like the result of our upbringing or our own hard work. The scientific field of behavior genetics attempts to study these differences empirically, either by examining similarities among family members with different degrees of genetic relatedness, or, more recently, by studying differences in the DNA of people with different behavioral traits. The scientific methods that have been developed are ingenious, but often inconclusive. Many of the difficulties encountered in the empirical science of behavior genetics turn out to be conceptual, and our intuitions about nature and nurture get more complicated the harder we think about them. In the end, it is an oversimplification to ask how “genetic” some particular behavior is. Genes and environments always combine to produce behavior, and the real science is in the discovery of how they combine for a given behavior.

## Learning Objectives

- Understand what the nature–nurture debate is and why the problem fascinates us.
- Understand why nature–nurture questions are difficult to study empirically.
- Know the major research designs that can be used to study nature–nurture questions.
- Appreciate the complexities of nature–nurture and why questions that seem simple turn out not to have simple answers.

## Introduction

There are three related problems at the intersection of philosophy and science that are fundamental to our understanding of our relationship to the natural world: the mind–body problem, the free will problem, and the nature–nurture problem. These great questions have a lot in common. Everyone, even those without much knowledge of science or philosophy, has opinions about the answers to these questions that come simply from observing the world we live in. Our feelings about our relationship with the physical and biological world often seem incomplete. We are in control of our actions in some ways, but at the mercy of our bodies in others; it feels obvious that our consciousness is some kind of creation of our physical brains, at the same time we sense that our awareness must go beyond just the physical. This incomplete knowledge of our relationship with nature leaves us fascinated and a little obsessed, like a cat that climbs into a paper bag and then out again, over and over, mystified every time by a relationship between inner and outer that it can see but can’t quite understand.

It may seem obvious that we are born with certain characteristics while others are acquired, and yet of the three great questions about humans’ relationship with the natural world, only nature–nurture gets referred to as a “debate.” In the history of psychology, no other question has caused so much controversy and offense: We are so concerned with nature–nurture because our very sense of moral character seems to depend on it. While we may admire the athletic skills of a great basketball player, we think of his height as simply a gift, a payoff in the “genetic lottery.” For the same reason, no one blames a short person for his height or someone’s congenital disability on poor decisions: To state the obvious, it’s “not their fault.” But we do praise the concert violinist (and perhaps her parents and teachers as well) for her dedication, just as we condemn cheaters, slackers, and bullies for their bad behavior.

The problem is, most human characteristics aren’t usually as clear-cut as height or instrument-mastery, affirming our

nature–nurture expectations strongly one way or the other. In fact, even the great violinist might have some inborn qualities—perfect pitch, or long, nimble fingers—that support and reward her hard work. And the basketball player might have eaten a diet while growing up that promoted his genetic tendency for being tall. When we think about our own qualities, they seem under our control in some respects, yet beyond our control in others. And often the traits that don't seem to have an obvious cause are the ones that concern us the most and are far more personally significant. What about how much we drink or worry? What about our honesty, or religiosity, or sexual orientation? They all come from that uncertain zone, neither fixed by nature nor totally under our own control.



Researchers have learned a great deal about the nature–nurture dynamic by working with animals. But of course many of the techniques used to study animals cannot be applied to people. Separating these two influences in human subjects is a greater research challenge. [Image: Sebastián Dario, <https://goo.gl/OPiIWd>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/Fllc2e>]



One major problem with answering nature-nurture questions about people is, how do you set up an experiment? In nonhuman animals, there are relatively straightforward experiments for tackling nature-nurture questions. Say, for example, you are interested in aggressiveness in dogs. You want to test for the more important determinant of aggression: being born to aggressive dogs or being raised by them. You could mate two aggressive dogs—angry Chihuahuas—together, and mate two nonaggressive dogs—happy beagles—together, then switch half the puppies from each litter between the different sets of parents to raise. You would then have puppies born to aggressive parents (the Chihuahuas) but being raised by nonaggressive parents (the Beagles), and vice versa, in litters that mirror each other in puppy distribution. The big questions are: Would the Chihuahua parents raise aggressive beagle puppies? Would the beagle parents raise *nonaggressive* Chihuahua puppies? Would the puppies' *nature* win out, regardless of who raised them? Or... would the result be a combination of nature *and* nurture? Much of the most significant nature-nurture research has been done in this way (Scott & Fuller, 1998), and animal breeders have been doing it successfully for thousands of years. In fact, it is fairly easy to breed animals for behavioral traits.

With people, however, we can't assign babies to parents at random, or select parents with certain behavioral characteristics to mate, merely in the interest of science (though history does include horrific examples of such practices, in misguided attempts at "**eugenics**," the shaping of human characteristics through intentional breeding). In typical human families, children's biological parents raise them, so it is very difficult to know whether children act like their parents due to genetic (nature) or environmental (nurture) reasons. Nevertheless, despite our restrictions on setting up human-based experiments, we do see real-world examples of nature-nurture at work in the human sphere—though they only provide partial answers to our many questions.

The science of how genes and environments work together to influence behavior is called **behavioral genetics**. The easiest opportunity we have to observe this is the **adoption study**. When children are put up for adoption, the parents who give birth to them are no longer the parents who raise them. This setup isn't quite the same as the experiments with dogs (children aren't assigned to random adoptive parents in order to suit the particular interests of a scientist) but adoption still tells us some interesting things, or at least confirms some basic expectations. For instance, if the biological child of tall parents were adopted into a family of short people, do you suppose the child's growth would be affected? What about the biological child of a Spanish-speaking family adopted at birth into an English-speaking family? What language would you expect the child to speak? And what might these outcomes tell you about the difference between height and language in terms of nature-nurture?



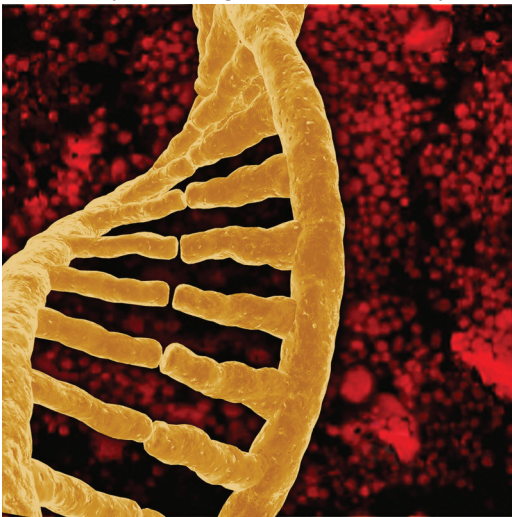
Studies focused on twins have led to important insights about the biological origins of many personality characteristics.

Another option for observing nature-nurture in humans involves **twin studies**. There are two types of twins: monozygotic (MZ) and dizygotic (DZ). Monozygotic twins, also called “identical” twins, result from a single zygote

(fertilized egg) and have the same DNA. They are essentially clones. Dizygotic twins, also known as “fraternal” twins, develop from two zygotes and share 50% of their DNA. Fraternal twins are ordinary siblings who happen to have been born at the same time. To analyze nature–nurture using twins, we compare the similarity of MZ and DZ pairs. Sticking with the features of height and spoken language, let’s take a look at how nature and nurture apply: Identical twins, unsurprisingly, are almost perfectly similar for height. The heights of fraternal twins, however, are like any other sibling pairs: more similar to each other than to people from other families, but hardly identical. This contrast between twin types gives us a clue about the role genetics plays in determining height. Now consider spoken language. If one identical twin speaks Spanish at home, the co-twin with whom she is raised almost certainly does too. But the same would be true for a pair of fraternal twins raised together. In terms of spoken language, fraternal twins are just as similar as identical twins, so it appears that the genetic match of identical twins doesn’t make much difference.

Twin and adoption studies are two instances of a much broader class of methods for observing nature–nurture called quantitative genetics, the scientific discipline in which similarities among individuals are analyzed based on how biologically related they are. We can do these studies with siblings and half-siblings, cousins, twins who have been separated at birth and raised separately (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, & Segal, 1990; such twins are very rare and play a smaller role than is commonly believed in the science of nature–nurture), or with entire extended families (see Plomin, DeFries, Knopik, & Neiderhiser, 2012, for a complete introduction to research methods relevant to nature–nurture).

For better or for worse, contentions about nature–nurture have intensified because quantitative genetics produces a number called a **heritability coefficient**, varying from 0 to 1, that is meant to provide a single measure of genetics’ influence of a trait. In a general way, a heritability coefficient measures how strongly differences among individuals are related to differences among their genes. But beware: Heritability coefficients, although simple to compute, are deceptively difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, numbers that provide simple answers to complicated questions tend to have a strong influence on the human imagination, and a great deal of time has been spent discussing whether the heritability of intelligence or personality or depression is equal to one number or another.



Quantitative genetics uses statistical methods to study the effects that both heredity and environment have on test subjects. These methods have provided us with the heritability coefficient which measures how strongly differences among individuals for a trait are related to differences among their genes. [Image: EMSL, <https://goo.gl/IRfn9g>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/fbv27n>]

One reason nature–nurture continues to fascinate us so much is that we live in an era of great scientific discovery in genetics, comparable to the times of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, with regard to astronomy and physics. Every day, it seems, new discoveries are made, new possibilities proposed. When Francis Galton first started thinking about nature–nurture in the late-19th century he was very influenced by his cousin, Charles Darwin, but genetics *per se* was unknown. Mendel’s famous work with peas, conducted at about the same time, went undiscovered for 20 years; quantitative genetics was developed in the 1920s; DNA was discovered by Watson and Crick in the 1950s; the human

genome was completely sequenced at the turn of the 21st century; and we are now on the verge of being able to obtain the specific DNA sequence of anyone at a relatively low cost. No one knows what this new genetic knowledge will mean for the study of nature–nurture, but as we will see in the next section, answers to nature–nurture questions have turned out to be far more difficult and mysterious than anyone imagined.

## What Have We Learned About Nature–Nurture?

It would be satisfying to be able to say that nature–nurture studies have given us conclusive and complete evidence about where traits come from, with some traits clearly resulting from genetics and others almost entirely from environmental factors, such as childrearing practices and personal will; but that is not the case. Instead, *everything* has turned out to have some footing in genetics. The more genetically-related people are, the more similar they are—for *everything*: height, weight, intelligence, personality, mental illness, etc. Sure, it seems like common sense that some traits have a genetic bias. For example, adopted children resemble their biological parents even if they have never met them, and identical twins are more similar to each other than are fraternal twins. And while certain psychological traits, such as personality or mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia), seem reasonably influenced by genetics, it turns out that the same is true for political attitudes, how much television people watch (Plomin, Corley, DeFries, & Fulker, 1990), and whether or not they get divorced (McGue & Lykken, 1992).





Research over the last half century has revealed how central genetics are to behavior. The more genetically related people are the more similar they are not just physically but also in terms of personality and behavior. [Image: Paul Altobelli, <https://goo.gl/SWLwm2>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/9uSnqN>]

It may seem surprising, but genetic influence on behavior is a relatively recent discovery. In the middle of the 20th century, psychology was dominated by the doctrine of behaviorism, which held that behavior could only be explained in terms of environmental factors. Psychiatry concentrated on psychoanalysis, which probed for roots of behavior in individuals' early life-histories. The truth is, neither behaviorism nor psychoanalysis is incompatible with genetic influences on behavior, and neither Freud nor Skinner was naive about the importance of organic processes in behavior. Nevertheless, in their day it was widely thought that children's personalities were shaped entirely by imitating their parents' behavior, and that schizophrenia was caused by certain kinds of "pathological mothering." Whatever the outcome of our broader discussion of nature–nurture, the basic fact that the best predictors of an adopted child's personality or mental health are found in the biological parents he or she has never met, rather than in the adoptive parents who raised him or her, presents a significant challenge to purely environmental explanations of personality or

psychopathology. The message is clear: You can't leave genes out of the equation. But keep in mind, no behavioral traits are completely inherited, so you can't leave the environment out altogether, either.

Trying to untangle the various ways nature-nurture influences human behavior can be messy, and often common-sense notions can get in the way of good science. One very significant contribution of behavioral genetics that has changed psychology for good can be very helpful to keep in mind: When your subjects are biologically-related, no matter how clearly a situation may seem to point to environmental influence, it is never safe to interpret a behavior as wholly the result of nurture without further evidence. For example, when presented with data showing that children whose mothers read to them often are likely to have better reading scores in third grade, it is tempting to conclude that reading to your kids out loud is important to success in school; this may well be true, but the study as described is inconclusive, because there are genetic *as well as* environmental pathways between the parenting practices of mothers and the abilities of their children. This is a case where “correlation does not imply causation,” as they say. To establish that reading aloud causes success, a scientist can either study the problem in adoptive families (in which the genetic pathway is absent) or by finding a way to randomly assign children to oral reading conditions.

The outcomes of nature-nurture studies have fallen short of our expectations (of establishing clear-cut bases for traits) in many ways. The most disappointing outcome has been the inability to organize traits from *more-* to *less-*genetic. As noted earlier, everything has turned out to be at least *somewhat* heritable (passed down), yet nothing has turned out to be *absolutely* heritable, and there hasn't been much consistency as to which traits are *more* heritable and which are *less* heritable once other considerations (such as how accurately the trait can be measured) are taken into account (Turkheimer, 2000). The problem is conceptual: The heritability coefficient, and, in fact, the whole quantitative structure that underlies it, does not match up with our nature-nurture intuitions. We want to know how “important” the roles of genes and environment are to the development of a trait, but in focusing on “important” maybe we're emphasizing the wrong thing. First of all, genes and environment are both crucial to *every* trait; without genes the environment would have nothing to work on, and too, genes cannot develop in a vacuum. Even more important, because nature-nurture questions look at the differences among people, the cause of a given trait depends not only on the trait itself, but also on the differences in that trait between members of the group being studied.

The classic example of the heritability coefficient defying intuition is the trait of having two arms. No one would argue against the development of arms being a biological, genetic process. But fraternal twins are just as similar for “two-armedness” as identical twins, resulting in a heritability coefficient of zero for the trait of having two arms. Normally, according to the heritability model, this result (coefficient of zero) would suggest all nurture, no nature, but we know that's not the case. The reason this result is not a tip-off that arm development is less genetic than we imagine is because people *do not vary* in the genes related to arm development—which essentially upends the heritability formula. In fact, in this instance, the opposite is likely true: the extent that people differ in arm number is likely the result of accidents and, therefore, environmental. For reasons like these, we always have to be very careful when asking nature-nurture questions, especially when we try to express the answer in terms of a single number. The heritability of a trait is not simply a property of that trait, but a property of the trait in a particular context of relevant genes and environmental factors.

Another issue with the heritability coefficient is that it divides traits' determinants into two portions—genes and environment—which are then calculated together for the total variability. This is a little like asking how much of the experience of a symphony comes from the horns and how much from the strings; the ways instruments or genes integrate is more complex than that. It turns out to be the case that, for many traits, genetic differences affect behavior under some environmental circumstances but not others—a phenomenon called **gene-environment interaction**, or G x E. In one well-known example, Caspi et al. (2002) showed that among maltreated children, those who carried a particular allele of the MAOA gene showed a predisposition to violence and antisocial behavior, while those with other alleles did not. Whereas, in children who had not been maltreated, the gene had no effect. Making matters even more complicated are very recent studies of what is known as epigenetics, a process in which the DNA itself is modified by environmental events, and those genetic changes transmitted to children.

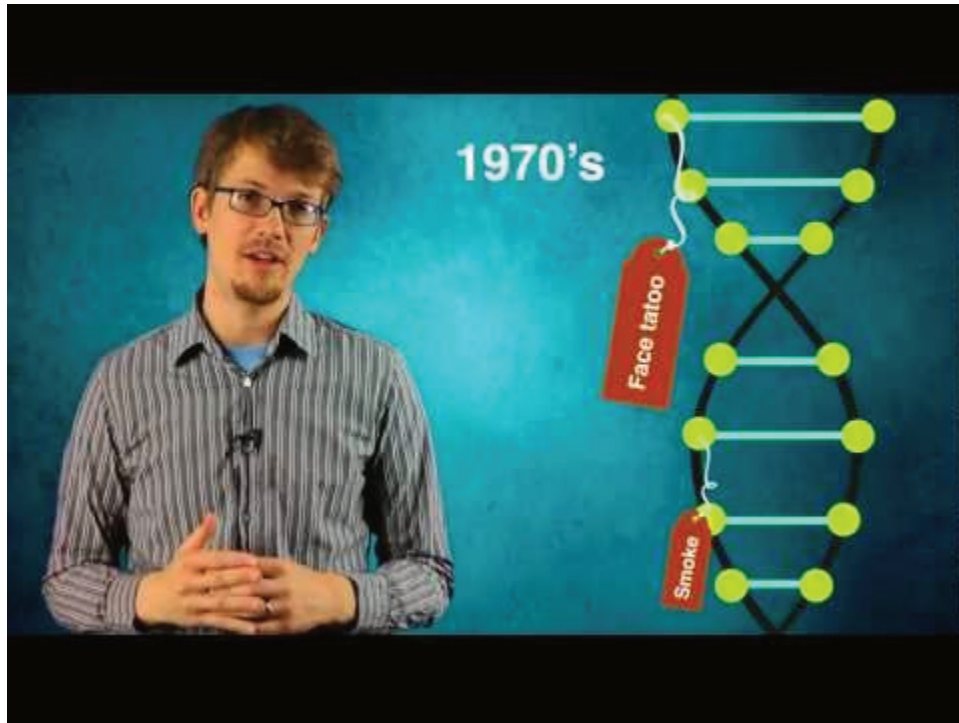


The answer to the nature –nurture question has not turned out to be as straightforward as we would like. The many questions we can ask about the relationships among genes, environments, and human traits may have many different answers, and the answer to one tells us little about the answers to the others. [Image: Sundaram Ramaswamy, <https://goo.gl/Bv8lp6>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/9uSnqN>]

**Epigenetics** is the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself. Epigenetics has the potential to provide answers to these important questions and refers to the transmission of **phenotype** in terms of gene expression in the absence of changes in DNA sequence—hence the name epi- (Greek: επί- over, above) genetics (Waddington, 1942; Wolffe & Matzke, 1999). The **genotype–phenotype distinction** is drawn in genetics. “**Genotype**” is an organism’s full hereditary information. ... The genes contribute to a trait, and the **phenotype** is the observable expression of the genes (and therefore the **genotype** that affects the trait). Genotype studies have provided insights into epigenetic regulation of developmental pathways in response to a range of external environmental factors (Dolinoy, Weidman, & Jirtle, 2007). These environmental factors during early childhood and adolescence can cause changes in expression of genes



conferring risk of mental health and chronic physical conditions. Thus, the examination of genetic–epigenetic–environment interactions from a developmental perspective may determine the nature of gene misregulation in psychological disorders. **Identical twins** develop from a single fertilized egg, they **have the same** genome. However recent studies **have** shown that many environmentally induced differences are reflected in the epigenome for identical twins. The **epigenome** refers to the genomic pattern and information made up of chemical compounds and proteins that can attach to DNA and direct such actions as turning genes on or off, controlling the production of proteins in particular cells and changing the expression of a gene. These changes in the epigenome may be passed down through heritage, or may be changed by environmental experiences.



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<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=108>

The video above explains basics of epigenetics, and shares the story of two “clones” or persons that were born identical, but had very different life circumstances. One person was stressed and ate poorly, the other had an easier life and ate healthy ways. If you and your clone person were examined at age 50, you would look quite different. The one who had eaten poorly would probably look more tired. If scientists looked at your DNA however, your DNA would be still the same, or your genomes would be the same. However you would have different epigenomes – meaning that some markers on your genes would look differently. If you think of DNA and genes as a paragraph, then epigenomes could be the punctuation of the paragraph. As you know, punctuation changes the meaning and expression of a paragraph. The epigenome is the “marching orders” for what the gene is supposed to do, and can be affected by environmental experiences. What we do, what we eat, what we smoke, who we hang out with, all of these affect our epigenomes or the expression of our genes.

One of the most educational findings (and historically tragic events) on the impact of adverse environmental conditions (phenotype experiences) and physical health (genotype experiences) comes from studies of the children of women who were pregnant during two civilian famines of World War II: the Siege of Leningrad (1941–44) (Bateson,

2001) and the Dutch Hunger Winter (1944–1945) (Stanner et al., 1997). In the Netherlands famine, women who were previously well nourished were subjected to low caloric intake and associated environmental stressors. Women who endured the famine in the late stages of pregnancy gave birth to smaller babies (Lumey & Stein, 1997) and these children had an increased risk of insulin resistance later in life (Painter, Roseboom, & Bleker, 2005). In addition, offspring who were starved prenatally later experienced impaired glucose tolerance in adulthood, even when food was more abundant (Stanner et al., 1997). Famine exposure at various stages of gestation was associated with a wide range of risks such as increased obesity, higher rates of coronary heart disease, and lower birth weight (Lumey & Stein, 1997). Interestingly, when examined 60 years later, people exposed to famine prenatally showed reduced DNA methylation compared with their unexposed same-sex siblings (Heijmans et al., 2008).

## **Parental investment and programming of stress responses in the offspring**

The most comprehensive study to date of variations in parental investment and epigenetic inheritance in mammals is that of the maternally transmitted responses to stress in rats. In rat pups, maternal nurturing (licking and grooming) during the first week of life is associated with long-term programming of individual differences in stress responsiveness, emotionality, cognitive performance, and reproductive behavior (Caldji et al., 1998; Francis, Diorio, Liu, & Meaney, 1999; Liu et al., 1997; Myers, Brunelli, Shair, Squire, & Hofer, 1989; Stern, 1997). In adulthood, the offspring of mothers that exhibit increased levels of pup licking and grooming over the first week of life show increased expression of the glucocorticoid receptor in the hippocampus (a brain structure associated with stress responsivity as well as learning and memory) and a lower hormonal response to stress compared with adult animals reared by low licking and grooming mothers (Francis et al., 1999; Liu et al., 1997). Moreover, rat pups that received low levels of maternal licking and grooming during the first week of life showed decreased histone acetylation and increased DNA methylation of a neuron-specific promoter of the glucocorticoid receptor gene (Weaver et al., 2004). The expression of this gene is then reduced, the number of glucocorticoid receptors in the brain is decreased, and the animals show a higher hormonal response to stress throughout their life. The effects of maternal care on stress hormone responses and behaviour in the offspring can be eliminated in adulthood by pharmacological treatment (HDAC inhibitor trichostatin A, TSA) or dietary amino acid supplementation (methyl donor L-methionine), treatments that influence histone acetylation, DNA methylation, and expression of the glucocorticoid receptor gene (Weaver et al., 2004; Weaver et al., 2005). This series of experiments shows that histone acetylation and DNA methylation of the glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter is a necessary link in the process leading to the long-term physiological and behavioral sequelae of poor maternal care. This points to a possible molecular target for treatments that may reverse or ameliorate the traces of childhood maltreatment.

Several studies have attempted to determine to what extent the findings from model animals are transferable to humans. Examination of post-mortem brain tissue from healthy human subjects found that the human equivalent of the glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter (NR3C1 exon 1F promoter) is also unique to the individual (Turner, Pelascini, Macedo, & Muller, 2008). A similar study examining newborns showed that methylation of the glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter maybe an early epigenetic marker of maternal mood and risk of increased hormonal responses to stress in infants 3 months of age (Oberlander et al., 2008). Although further studies are required to examine the functional consequence of this DNA methylation, these findings are consistent with our studies in the neonate and adult offspring of low licking and grooming mothers that show increased DNA methylation of the promoter of the glucocorticoid receptor gene, decreased glucocorticoid receptor gene expression, and increased hormonal responses to stress (Weaver et al., 2004). Examination of brain tissue from suicide victims found that the human glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter is also more methylated in the brains of individuals who had experienced maltreatment during childhood (McGowan et al., 2009). These finding suggests that DNA methylation mediates the effects of early environment in both rodents and humans and points to the possibility of new therapeutic approaches stemming from translational epigenetic research. Indeed, similar processes at comparable epigenetic labile regions could explain why the adult offspring of high and low licking/grooming mothers exhibit widespread differences in hippocampal gene expression and cognitive function (Weaver, Meaney, & Szyf, 2006).

However, this type of research is limited by the inaccessibility of human brain samples. The translational potential of this finding would be greatly enhanced if the relevant epigenetic modification can be measured in an accessible tissue.

Examination of blood samples from adult patients with bipolar disorder, who also retrospectively reported on their experiences of childhood abuse and neglect, found that the degree of DNA methylation of the human glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter was strongly positively related to the reported experience of childhood maltreatment decades earlier. For a relationship between a molecular measure and reported historical exposure, the effects size is extraordinarily large. This opens a range of new possibilities: given the large effect size and consistency of this association, measurement of the GR promoter methylation may effectively become a blood test measuring the physiological traces left on the genome by early experiences. Although this blood test cannot replace current methods of diagnosis, this unique and addition information adds to our knowledge of how disease may arise and be manifested throughout life. Near-future research will examine whether this measure adds value over and above simple reporting of early adversities when it comes to predicting important outcomes, such as response to treatment or suicide.

## **Epigenetic strategy to understanding gene-environment interactions**



Although there is some evidence that a dysfunctional upbringing can increase one's likelihood for schizophrenia (an epigenetically inherited disease), some people who have both the predisposition and the stressful environment never develop the mental illness. [Image: Steve White, CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

While the cellular and molecular mechanisms that influence on physical and mental health have long been a central focus of neuroscience, only in recent years has attention turned to the epigenetic mechanisms behind the dynamic changes in gene expression responsible for normal cognitive function and increased risk for mental illness. The links between early environment and epigenetic modifications suggest a mechanism underlying gene-environment interactions. Early environmental adversity alone is not a sufficient cause of mental illness, because many individuals with a history of severe childhood maltreatment or trauma remain healthy. It is increasingly becoming evident that inherited differences in the segments of specific genes may moderate the effects of adversity and determine who is sensitive and who is resilient through a gene-environment interplay. Genes such as the glucocorticoid receptor appear to moderate the effects of childhood adversity on mental illness. Remarkably, epigenetic DNA modifications have been

identified that may underlie the long-lasting effects of environment on biological functions. This new epigenetic research is pointing to a new strategy to understanding gene–environment interactions.

Some common questions about nature–nurture are, how susceptible is a trait to change, how malleable is it, and do we “have a choice” about it? These questions are much more complex than they may seem at first glance. For example, phenylketonuria is an inborn error of metabolism caused by a single gene; it prevents the body from metabolizing phenylalanine. Untreated, it causes mental retardation and death. But it can be treated effectively by a straightforward environmental intervention: avoiding foods containing phenylalanine. Height seems like a trait firmly rooted in our nature and unchangeable, but the average height of many populations in Asia and Europe has increased significantly in the past 100 years, due to changes in diet and the alleviation of poverty. Even the most modern genetics has not provided definitive answers to nature–nurture questions. When it was first becoming possible to measure the DNA sequences of individual people, it was widely thought that we would quickly progress to finding the specific genes that account for behavioral characteristics, but that hasn’t happened. There are a few rare genes that have been found to have significant (almost always negative) effects, such as the single gene that causes Huntington’s disease, or the Apolipoprotein gene that causes early onset dementia in a small percentage of Alzheimer’s cases. Aside from these rare genes of great effect, however, the genetic impact on behavior is broken up over many genes, each with very small effects. For most behavioral traits, the effects are so small and distributed across so many genes that we have not been able to catalog them in a meaningful way. In fact, the same is true of environmental effects. We know that extreme environmental hardship causes catastrophic effects for many behavioral outcomes, but fortunately extreme environmental hardship is very rare. Within the normal range of environmental events, those responsible for differences (e.g., why some children in a suburban third-grade classroom perform better than others) are much more difficult to grasp.

The difficulties with finding clear-cut solutions to nature–nurture problems bring us back to the other great questions about our relationship with the natural world: the mind-body problem and free will. Investigations into what we mean when we say we are aware of something reveal that consciousness is not simply the product of a particular area of the brain, nor does choice turn out to be an orderly activity that we can apply to some behaviors but not others. So it is with nature and nurture: What at first may seem to be a straightforward matter, able to be indexed with a single number, becomes more and more complicated the closer we look. The many questions we can ask about the intersection among genes, environments, and human traits—how sensitive are traits to environmental change, and how common are those influential environments; are parents or culture more relevant; how sensitive are traits to differences in genes, and how much do the relevant genes vary in a particular population; does the trait involve a single gene or a great many genes; is the trait more easily described in genetic or more-complex behavioral terms?—may have different answers, and the answer to one tells us little about the answers to the others.

It is tempting to predict that the more we understand the wide-ranging effects of genetic differences on all human characteristics—especially behavioral ones—our cultural, ethical, legal, and personal ways of thinking about ourselves will have to undergo profound changes in response. Perhaps criminal proceedings will consider genetic background. Parents, presented with the genetic sequence of their children, will be faced with difficult decisions about reproduction. These hopes or fears are often exaggerated. In some ways, our thinking may need to change—for example, when we consider the meaning behind the fundamental American principle that all men are created equal. Human beings differ, and like all evolved organisms they differ genetically. The Declaration of Independence predates Darwin and Mendel, but it is hard to imagine that Jefferson—whose genius encompassed botany as well as moral philosophy—would have been alarmed to learn about the genetic diversity of organisms. One of the most important things modern genetics has taught us is that almost all human behavior is too complex to be nailed down, even from the most complete genetic information, unless we’re looking at identical twins. The science of nature and nurture has demonstrated that genetic differences among people are vital to human moral equality, freedom, and self-determination, not opposed to them. As Mordecai Kaplan said about the role of the past in Jewish theology, genetics gets a vote, not a veto, in the determination of human behavior. We should indulge our fascination with nature–nurture while resisting the temptation to oversimplify it.

# Vocabulary

## Adoption study

A behavior genetic research method that involves comparison of adopted children to their adoptive and biological parents.

## Behavioral genetics

The empirical science of how genes and environments combine to generate behavior

**Epigenetics** is the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself. Epigenetics looks at all events that occur in the absence of changes in DNA sequence. Epigenetics is looking at changes of the gene expression, rather than changes in the DNA code itself.

**Epigenome:** epigenome refers to the genetic patterns and information made up of chemical compounds and proteins that can attach to DNA, and direct such actions as turning genes on or off, controlling the production of proteins in particular cells and changing the expression of a gene. These changes in the epigenome may be passed down through heritance, or may be changed by environmental experiences.

## Heritability coefficient

An easily misinterpreted statistical construct that purports to measure the role of genetics in the explanation of differences among individuals.

**Genotype:** is an organism's full hereditary information. ... The genes that contribute to a trait". Genotype is an organism's full hereditary information.

**Phenotype:** is an organism's actual observed properties, such as morphology, development, or behavior.

## Twin studies

A behavior genetic research method that involves comparison of the similarity of identical (monozygotic; MZ) and fraternal (dizygotic; DZ) twins.

## Quiz



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# 8. Self-Regulation and Conscientiousness

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Self-regulation means changing oneself based on standards, that is, ideas of how one should or should not be. It is a centrally important capacity that contributes to socially desirable behavior, including moral behavior. Effective self-regulation requires knowledge of standards for proper behavior, careful monitoring of one's actions and feelings, and the ability to make desired changes.

Learning Objectives

- Understand what self-regulation means and how it works.
- Understand the requirements and benefits of effective self-regulation.
- Understand differences in state (ego depletion) and trait (conscientiousness).

## Introduction

**Self-regulation** is the capacity to alter one's responses. It is broadly related to the term "self-control". The term "regulate" means to change something—but not just any change, rather change to bring it into agreement with some idea, such as a rule, a goal, a plan, or a moral principle. To illustrate, when the government regulates how houses are built, that means the government inspects the buildings to check that everything is done "up to code" or according to the rules about good building. In a similar fashion, when you regulate yourself, you watch and change yourself to bring your responses into line with some ideas about how they should be.



When you find that quiet spot in the library and keep yourself focused on your study tasks for a few hours you're demonstrating self-regulation. Certainly you're controlling your thinking, but you may also be controlling your impulses to do other things. [Image: Clemson University Library, <https://goo.gl/RtZrqu>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/VnKlK8>]

People regulate four broad categories of responses. They control their thinking, such as in trying to concentrate or to shut some annoying earworm tune out of their mind. They control their emotions, as in trying to cheer themselves up or to calm down when angry (or to stay angry, if that's helpful). They control their impulses, as in trying not to eat fattening food, trying to hold one's tongue, or trying to quit smoking. Last, they try to control their task performances, such as in pushing themselves to keep working when tired and discouraged, or deciding whether to speed up (to get more done) or slow down (to make sure to get it right).

## Early Work on Delay of Gratification

**Delayed gratification**, or deferred **gratification**, describes the process that the subject undergoes when the subject resists the temptation of an immediate reward in preference for a later reward. Research on self-regulation was greatly stimulated by early experiments conducted by Walter Mischel and his colleagues (e.g., Mischel, 1974) on the capacity to delay gratification, which means being able to refuse current temptations and pleasures to work toward future benefits. In a typical study with what later came to be called the “marshmallow test,” a 4-year-old child would be seated in a room, and a favorite treat such as a cookie or marshmallow was placed on the table. The experimenter would tell the child, “I have to leave for a few minutes and then I’ll be back. You can have this treat any time, but if you can wait until I come back, you can have two of them.” Two treats are better than one, but to get the double treat, the child had to wait. Self-regulation was required to resist that urge to gobble down the marshmallow on the table so as to reap the larger reward.

Many situations in life demand similar delays for best results. Going to college to get an education often means living in poverty and debt rather than getting a job to earn money right away. But in the long run, the college degree increases your lifetime income by hundreds of thousands of dollars. Very few nonhuman animals can bring themselves to resist immediate temptations so as to pursue future rewards, but this trait is an important key to success in human life.

## Benefits of Self-Control



If you have never seen a 4-year-old try to resist eating a marshmallow, you may not realize how difficult (and funny) a task like this is. See the “Outside Resources” of this module for a great video demonstration. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

People who are good at self-regulation do better than others in life. Follow-up studies with Mischel's samples found that the children who resisted temptation and delayed gratification effectively grew into adults who were better than others in school and work, more popular with other people, and who were rated as nicer, better people by teachers and others (Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988; Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). College students with high self-control get better grades, have better close relationships, manage their emotions better, have fewer problems with drugs and alcohol, are less prone to eating disorders, are better adjusted, have higher self-esteem, and get along better with other people, as compared to people with low self-control (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). They are happier and have less stress and conflict (Hofmann, Vohs, Fisher, Luhmann, & Baumeister, 2013). Longitudinal studies have found that children with good self-control go through life with fewer problems, are more successful, are less likely to be arrested or have a child out of wedlock, and enjoy other benefits (Moffitt et al., 2011). Criminologists have concluded that low self-control is a—if not the—key trait for understanding the criminal personality (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Pratt & Cullen, 2000).

Some researchers have searched for evidence that too much self-control can be bad (Tangney et al., 2004)—but without success. There is such a thing as being highly inhibited or clinically “over-controlled,” which can impair initiative and reduce happiness, but that does not appear to be an excess of self-regulation. Rather, it may stem from having been punished excessively as a child and, therefore, adopting a fearful, inhibited approach to life. In general, self-control resembles intelligence in that the more one has, the better off one is, and the benefits are found through a broad range of life activities.

## Four Ingredients of Effective Self-Regulation

For self-regulation to be effective, four parts or ingredients are involved. The first is **standards**, which are ideas about how things should (or should not) be. The second is **monitoring**, which means keeping track of the target behavior that is to be regulated. The third is the **capacity to change**, and the fourth is **motivation**.

Standards are an indispensable foundation for self-regulation. We already saw that self-regulation means change in relation to some idea; without such guiding ideas, change would largely be random and lacking direction. Standards include goals, laws, moral principles, personal rules, other people's expectations, and social norms. Dieters, for example, typically have a goal in terms of how much weight they wish to lose. They help their self-regulation further by developing standards for how much or how little to eat and what kinds of foods they will eat.





With some self-regulation goals (like increasing your distance in preparation for a 10K race), it is easier to monitor your actual progress. With other goals, however, if there isn't a helpful standard to compare oneself to it may be harder to know if you are progressing. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

The second ingredient is monitoring. It is hard to regulate something without being aware of it. For example, dieters count their calories. That is, they keep track of how much they eat and how fattening it is. In fact, some evidence suggests that dieters stop keeping track of how much they eat when they break their diet or go on an eating binge, and the failure of monitoring contributes to eating more (Polivy, 1976). Alcohol has been found to impair all sorts of self-regulation, partly because intoxicated persons fail to keep track of their behavior and compare it to their standards.

The combination of standards and monitoring was featured in an influential theory about self-regulation by Carver and Scheier (1981, 1982, 1998). Those researchers started their careers studying self-awareness, which is a key human trait. The study of self-awareness recognized early on that people do not simply notice themselves the way they might notice a tree or car. Rather, self-awareness always seemed to involve comparing oneself to a standard. For example, when a man looks in a mirror, he does not just think, "Oh, there I am," but more likely thinks, "Is my hair a mess? Do my clothes look good?" Carver and Scheier proposed that the reason for this comparison to standards is that it enables people to regulate themselves, such as by changing things that do not measure up to their standards. In the mirror example, the man might comb his hair to bring it into line with his standards for personal appearance. Good students keep track of their grades, credits, and progress toward their degree and other goals. Athletes keep track of their times, scores, and achievements, as a way to monitor improvement.

The process of monitoring oneself can be compared to how a thermostat operates. The thermostat checks the temperature in the room, compares it to a standard (the setting for desired temperature), and if those do not match, it turns on the heat or air conditioner to change the temperature. It checks again and again, and when the room temperature matches the desired setting, the thermostat turns off the climate control. In the same way, people compare themselves to their personal standards, make changes as needed, and stop working on change once they have met their

goals. People feel good not just when they reach their goals but even when they deem they are making good progress (Carver & Scheier, 1990). They feel bad when they are not making sufficient progress.

That brings up the third ingredient, which is the capacity to change oneself. In effective self-regulation, people operate on themselves to bring about these changes. The popular term for this is “willpower,” which suggests some kind of energy is expended in the process. Psychologists hesitate to adopt terms associated with folk wisdom, because there are many potential implications. Here, the term is used to refer specifically to some energy that is involved in the capacity to change oneself.

The fourth ingredient is motivation – specifically, motivation to achieve the goal or meet the standard, which in practice amounts to *motivation to regulate the self*. Even if the standards are clear, monitoring is fully effective, and the person’s resources are abundant, he or she may still fail to self-regulate due to not caring about reaching the goal. Thus, the proper way to understand the role of motivation in self regulation is as one of four ingredients

Consistent with the popular notion of willpower, people do seem to expend some energy during self-regulation. Many studies have found that after people exert self-regulation to change some response, they perform worse on the next unrelated task if it too requires self-regulation (Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010). That pattern suggests that some energy such as willpower was used up during the first task, leaving less available for the second task. The term for this state of reduced energy available for self-regulation is **ego depletion** (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). As people go about their daily lives, they have to resist many desires and impulses and must control themselves in other ways, and so over the course of a typical day many people gradually become ego depleted. The result is that they become increasingly likely to give in to impulses and desires that they would have resisted successfully earlier in the day (Hofmann, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2012). During the state of ego depletion, people become less helpful and more aggressive, prone to overeat, misbehave sexually, express more prejudice, and in other ways do things that they may later regret.



People can get worn down from exercising self-control. And when they do they're more likely to make the kinds of decisions that are not in their own best interests. [Image: Tim Caynes, <https://goo.gl/vaoc3q>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/VnKlK8>]

Thus, a person's capacity for self-regulation is not constant, but rather it fluctuates. To be sure, some people are generally better than others at controlling themselves (Tangney et al., 2004). But even someone with excellent self-control may occasionally find that control breaks down under ego depletion. In general, self-regulation can be improved by getting enough sleep and healthy food, and by minimizing other demands on one's willpower.

There is some evidence that regular exercise of self-control can build up one's willpower, like strengthening a muscle (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011; Oaten & Cheng, 2006). Even in early adulthood, one's self-control can be strengthened. Furthermore, research has shown that disadvantaged, minority children who take part in preschool programs such as Head Start (often based on the Perry program) end up doing better in life even as adults. This was thought for a while to



be due to increases in intelligence quotient (IQ), but changes in IQ from such programs are at best temporary. Instead, recent work indicates that improvement in self-control and related traits may be what produce the benefits (Heckman, Pinto, & Savelyev, in press). It's not doing math problems or learning to spell at age 3 that increases subsequent adult success—but rather the benefit comes from having some early practice at planning, getting organized, and following rules.

## Conscientiousness

**Conscientiousness** is a stable dimension of personality, which means that some people are typically higher on it than others. Being a personality trait does not mean that it is unchangeable. Most people do show some changes over time, particularly becoming higher on conscientiousness as they grow older. Some psychologists look specifically at the trait of self-control, which is understood (and measured) in personality psychology in a very specific, narrowly focused, well-defined sense. Conscientiousness, in contrast, is one of five super-traits that supposedly account for all the other traits, in various combinations. The trait self-control is one big part of conscientiousness, but there are other parts.

Two aspects of conscientiousness that have been well documented are being orderly and being industrious (Roberts, Lejuez, Krueger, Richards, & Hill, 2012). Orderliness includes being clean and neat, making and following plans, and being punctual (which is helpful with following plans!). Low conscientious means the opposite: being disorganized, messy, late, or erratic. Being industrious not only means working hard but also persevering in the face of failures and difficulties, as well as aspiring to excellence. Most of these reflect good self-control.

Conscientious people are careful, disciplined, responsible, and thorough, and they tend to plan and think things through before acting. People who are low in conscientiousness tend to be more impulsive and spontaneous, even reckless. They are easygoing and may often be late or sloppy, partly because they are not strongly focused on future goals for success and not highly concerned to obey all rules and stay on schedule. Psychologists prefer not to make a value judgment about whether it is better to be high or low in any personality trait. But when it comes specifically to self-control, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that high self-control is better, both for the person and for society at large.



One of the most important characteristics of people high in conscientiousness is orderliness. If someone could take a look at your desk or your room right now, how conscientious would they judge you to be? [Image: William Iven, CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Some aspects of conscientiousness have less apparent connection to self-control, however. People high in conscientiousness tend to be *decisive*. They are often formal, in the sense of following social norms and rules, such as dressing properly, waiting one's turn, or holding doors for others. They tend to respect traditions and traditional values.

Conscientious people behave differently from people who score low on that trait. People scoring low on conscientiousness are more likely than others to report driving without wearing seatbelts, daydreaming, swearing, telling dirty jokes, and picking up hitchhikers (Hirsh, DeYoung, & Peterson, 2009). In terms of more substantial life outcomes, people low on conscientiousness are more likely than others to get divorced, presumably because they make bad choices and misbehave during the marriage such as by saying hurtful things, getting into arguments and fights, and behaving irresponsibly (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds, & Meints, 2009). People low on conscientiousness are more likely than others to lose their jobs, to become homeless, to do time in prison, to have money problems, and to have drug problems.

Conscientious people make better spouses. They are less likely than others to get divorced, partly because they avoid many behaviors that undermine intimacy, such as abusing their partners, drinking excessively, or having extramarital affairs (Roberts et al., 2009).

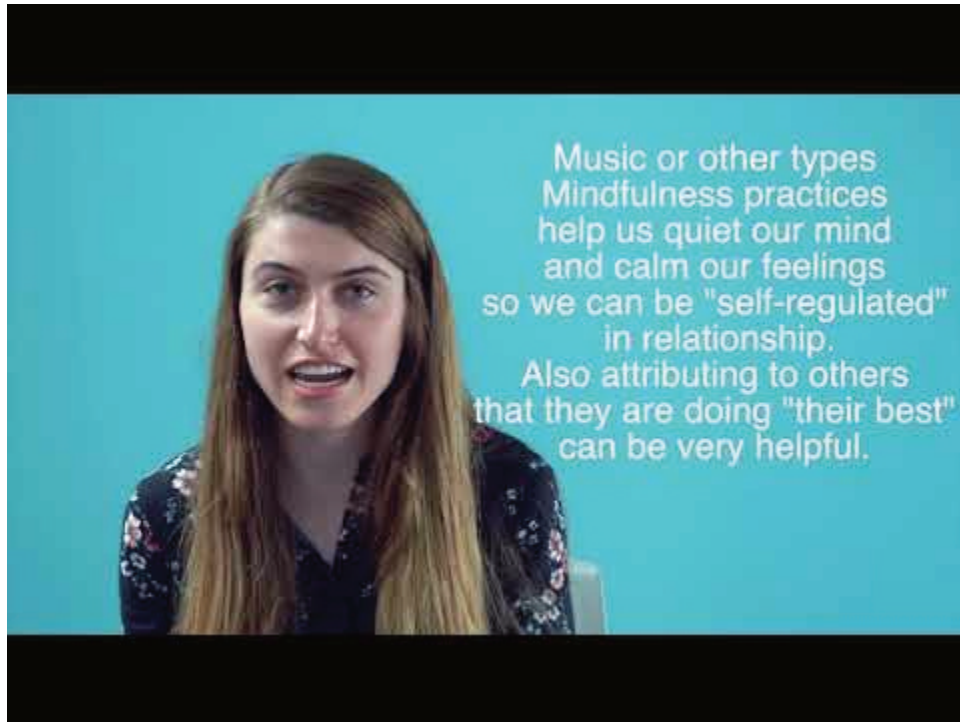
Encompassing self-control, conscientiousness is the personality trait with the strongest effect on life or death: People high on that trait live longer than others (Deary, Weiss, & Batty, 2010). Why? Among other things, they avoid many behavior patterns associated with early death, including alcohol abuse, obesity and other eating problems, drug abuse, smoking, failure to exercise, risky sex, suicide, violence, and unsafe driving (Bogg & Roberts, in press). They also visit physicians more regularly and take their prescribed medicines more reliably than people low in conscientiousness. Their good habits help avoid many life-threatening diseases.

Differentiation:

**Differentiation** as an active process “in which partners define themselves to each other.” Another way to think of differentiation in interpersonal terms, is the ability to be oneself while also maintaining an ongoing relationship. To be a “self” yet maintain a relationship requires important self-regulation skills. David Schnarch (Schnarch, 2011, 2019) has operationalized differentiation in terms of 4 balancing skills. Schnarch identifies these important points of balance as key learning for maintaining differentiation while in a relationship. Schnarch identifies the four points of balance as follows:

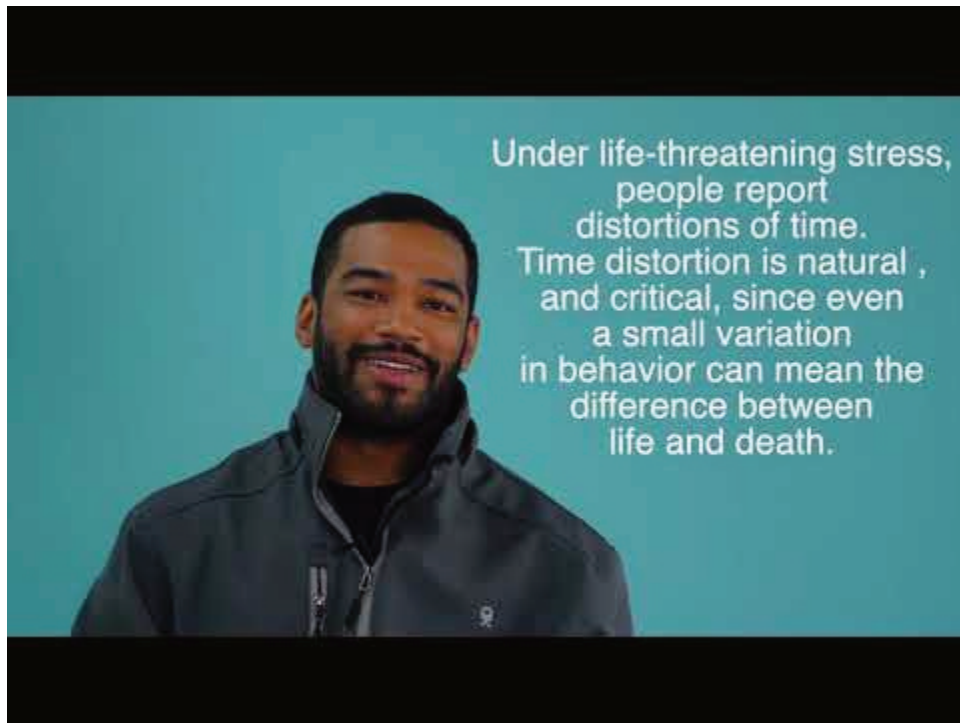
1st Point of Balance: 1) A Solid Flexible Self. A solid flexible self involves an internalized set of core values, a sense of your own self-worth, and the ability to maintain our own viewpoints and sense of direction even if others are pressuring us. Along with the ability to be flexible and maintain our balance if we are wrong about something. 2) A Quiet Mind & Calm Heart. This includes handling your feelings and emotions and the ability to self-soothe, to self-regulate your body reactions and emotions, and to stay calm but not too calm in various situations. 3) Grounded Responding. This point of balance has to do with how we respond to other people. Over-reacting is a problem, showing too much emotion or disproportionate responses can often be destructive to relationships. Under-reacting is also important to consider. Acting overly calm is not congruent or real to our inner feelings, and masquerades as a sense of calm when more active emotional responses may be called for. The fourth point of balance is Meaningful Endurance. Meaningful endurance relates to our ability to tolerate pain for growth. Mastering relationships and skills require us to hang in there and show endurance, so we can grow the skills necessary.

**Video 1: Jennifer discussing 4 points of balance in an effort to stay differentiated and live with her family.**



*A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=170>

**Video 2: Billy on Self-Regulation in extreme situations, and setting small goals.**



*A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*  
<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=170>

## Video 3: Baba Shiv: How to Make Better Decisions and Self-Regulation



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<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=170>

## Vocabulary

### Conscientiousness

A personality trait consisting of self-control, orderliness, industriousness, and traditionalism. **Ego-Depletion:** a state of depleted willpower that can come from hunger, stress, making too many decisions and other sources.

**Delayed gratification**, or deferred **gratification**, describes the process that the subject undergoes when the subject resists the temptation of an immediate reward in preference for a later reward.

### Self-regulation

The process of altering one's responses, including thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions, and task performance.

**Four ingredients of self-regulation:** (the order is not important) 1) Standards are an indispensable foundation for self-regulation. **Standards** include goals, laws, moral principles, personal rules, other people's expectations, and social norms. **Monitoring** includes tracking whether we are moving closer to our standards and what we need to track in order to move closer to those standards. **Capacity to change oneself** is used similar to willpower and refers specifically to the capacity or energy that is involved in the capacity to change oneself. Research suggests we do not have unlimited

capacity for change. **Motivation** refers to the motivation to achieve the goal or meet the standard, which in practice amounts to the overall *motivation to regulate the self*.

**Four Points of Balance for Differentiation. Solid Flexible Self:** not a Reflected Self, you can say yes, no, and be generous yet have boundaries. **Quiet Mind & Comforted Heart:** ability to quiet your mind and comfort your heart while in conflict or difficulty. **Grounded Responding:** ability to modulated responses to people, events, and situations.

### **Meaningful Endurance**

Ability to hang in there and bounce back under difficult situations.

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# 9. Personality Disorders

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The purpose of this module is to define what is meant by a personality disorder, identify the five domains of general personality (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), identify the six personality disorders proposed for retention in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (i.e., **borderline, antisocial, schizotypal, avoidant, obsessive-compulsive, and narcissistic**), summarize the etiology for antisocial and borderline personality disorder, and identify the treatment for borderline personality disorder (i.e., dialectical behavior therapy and mentalization therapy). Learning Objectives

- Define what is meant by a personality disorder.
- Identify the five domains of general personality.
- Identify the six personality disorders proposed for retention in DSM-5.
- Summarize the etiology for antisocial and borderline personality disorder.
- Identify the treatment for borderline personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder.

## Introduction

Everybody has their own unique personality; that is, their characteristic manner of thinking, feeling, behaving, and relating to others (John, Robins, & Pervin, 2008). Some people are typically introverted, quiet, and withdrawn; whereas others are more extraverted, active, and outgoing. Some individuals are invariably conscientiousness, dutiful, and efficient; whereas others might be characteristically undependable and negligent. Some individuals are consistently anxious, self-conscious, and apprehensive; whereas others are routinely relaxed, self-assured, and unconcerned. Personality traits refer to these characteristic, routine ways of thinking, feeling, and relating to others. There are signs or indicators of these traits in childhood, but they become particularly evident when the person is an adult. Personality traits are integral to each person's sense of self, as they involve what people value, how they think and feel about things, what they like to do, and, basically, what they are like most every day throughout much of their lives.

There are literally hundreds of different personality traits. All of these traits can be organized into the broad dimensions referred to as the Five-Factor Model (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). These five broad domains are inclusive; there does not appear to be any traits of personality that lie outside of the Five-Factor Model. This even applies to traits that you may use to describe yourself. Table I provides illustrative traits for both poles of the five domains of this model of personality. A number of the traits that you see in this table may describe you. If you can think of some other traits that describe yourself, you should be able to place them somewhere in this table.

<b>Neuroticism (Emotional Instability)</b> fearful, apprehensive, angry, bitter, pessimistic, glum, timid, embarrassed, tempted, urgency, helpless, fragile	VS	<b>Emotional Stability</b> relaxed, unconcerned, cool, even-tempered, optimistic, self-assured, glib, shameless, controlled, restrained, clear-thinking, fearless, unflappable
<b>Extraversion</b> cordial, affectionate, attached, sociable, outgoing, dominant, forceful, vigorous, energetic, active, reckless, daring, high-spirited, excitement-seeking	VS	<b>Introversion</b> cold, aloof, indifferent, withdrawn, isolated, unassuming, quiet, resigned, passive, lethargic, cautious, monotonous, dull, placid, anhedonic
<b>Openness (unconventionality)</b> dreamer, unrealistic, imaginative, aberrant, aesthetic, self-aware, eccentric, strange, odd, peculiar, creative, permissive, broad-minded	VS	<b>Closedness (conventionality)</b> practical, concrete, uninvolved, no aesthetic interest, constricted, unaware, alexythymic, routine, predictable, habitual, stubborn, pragmatic, rigid, traditional, inflexible, dogmatic
<b>Agreeableness</b> gullible, naive, trusting, confiding, honest, sacrificial, giving, docile, cooperative, meek, self-effacing, humble, soft, empathetic	VS	<b>Antagonism</b> skeptical, cynical, suspicious, paranoid, cunning, manipulative, deceptive, stingy, selfish, greedy, exploitative, oppositional, combative, aggressive, confident, boastful, arrogant, tough, callous, ruthless
<b>Conscientiousness</b> perfectionistic, efficient, ordered, methodical, organized, rigid, reliable, dependable, workaholic, ambitious, dogged, devoted, cautious, ruminative, reflective	VS	<b>Disinhibition</b> lax, negligent, haphazard, disorganized, sloppy, casual, undependable, unethical, aimless, desultory, hedonistic, negligent, hasty, careless, rash

Table I: Illustrative traits for both poles across Five-Factor Model personality dimensions.

## DSM-5 Personality Disorders

When personality traits result in significant distress, social impairment, and/or occupational impairment, they are considered to be a **personality disorder** (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The authoritative manual for what constitutes a personality disorder is provided by the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), the current version of which is DSM-5 (APA, 2013). The DSM provides a common language and standard criteria for the classification and diagnosis of mental disorders. This manual is used by clinicians, researchers, health insurance companies, and policymakers. DSM-5 includes 10 **personality disorders**: antisocial, avoidant, borderline, dependent, histrionic, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal. All 10 of these personality disorders will be included in the next edition of the diagnostic manual, DSM-5. This list of 10 though does not fully cover all of the different ways in which a personality can be maladaptive.

## Description

Each of the 10 DSM-5 personality disorders is a constellation of maladaptive personality traits, rather than just one particular personality trait (Lynam & Widiger, 2001). In this regard, personality disorders are "syndromes." For example, avoidant personality disorder is a pervasive pattern of social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and hypersensitivity to negative evaluation (APA, 2013), which is a combination of traits from introversion (e.g., socially withdrawn, passive, and cautious) and neuroticism (e.g., self-consciousness, apprehensiveness, anxiousness, and worrisome). Dependent personality disorder includes submissiveness, clinging behavior, and fears of separation (APA, 2013), for the most part a combination of traits of neuroticism (anxious, uncertain, pessimistic, and helpless) and maladaptive agreeableness (e.g., gullible, guileless, meek, subservient, and self-effacing). Antisocial personality disorder is, for the most part, a combination of traits from antagonism (e.g., dishonest, manipulative, exploitative, callous, and merciless) and low conscientiousness (e.g., irresponsible, immoral, lax, hedonistic, and rash). See the 1967 movie, *Bonnie and Clyde*, starring Warren Beatty, for a nice portrayal of someone with antisocial personality disorder.



A person with an obsessive compulsive personality disorder may have a hard time relaxing, always feel under pressure, and believe that there isn't enough time to accomplish important tasks. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Some of the DSM-5 personality disorders are confined largely to traits within one of the basic domains of personality. For example, **obsessive-compulsive personality disorder** is largely a disorder of maladaptive conscientiousness, including such traits as workaholism, perfectionism, punctilious, ruminative, and dogged; **schizoid personality disorder** is confined largely to traits of introversion (e.g., withdrawn, cold, isolated, placid, and anhedonic); **borderline personality disorder** is largely a disorder of neuroticism, including such traits as emotionally unstable, vulnerable, overwhelmed, rageful, depressive, and self-destructive. **Histrionic personality disorder** is largely a disorder of maladaptive extraversion, including such traits as attention-seeking, seductiveness, melodramatic emotionality, and strong attachment needs (see the 1951 film adaptation of Tennessee William's play, *Streetcar Named Desire*, starring Vivian Leigh, for a nice portrayal of this personality disorder).

It should be noted though that a complete description of each DSM-5 personality disorder would typically include at least some traits from other domains. For example, **antisocial personality disorder** (or psychopathy) also includes some traits from low neuroticism (e.g., fearlessness and glib charm) and extraversion (e.g., excitement-seeking and assertiveness); borderline includes some traits from antagonism (e.g., manipulative and oppositional) and low conscientiousness (e.g., rash); and histrionic includes some traits from antagonism (e.g., vanity) and low conscientiousness (e.g., impressionistic). **Narcissistic personality disorder** includes traits from neuroticism (e.g., reactive anger, reactive shame, and need for admiration), extraversion (e.g., exhibitionism and authoritativeness), antagonism (e.g., arrogance, entitlement, and lack of empathy), and conscientiousness (e.g., acclaim-seeking). **Schizotypal personality disorder** includes traits from neuroticism (e.g., social anxiousness and social discomfort), introversion (e.g., social withdrawal), unconventionality (e.g., odd, eccentric, peculiar, and aberrant ideas), and antagonism (e.g., suspiciousness).

The APA currently conceptualizes personality disorders as qualitatively distinct conditions; distinct from each other

and from normal personality functioning. However, included within an appendix to DSM-5 is an alternative view that personality disorders are simply extreme and/or maladaptive variants of normal personality traits, as suggested herein. Nevertheless, many leading personality disorder researchers do not hold this view (e.g., Gunderson, 2010; Hopwood, 2011; Shedler et al., 2010). They suggest that there is something qualitatively unique about persons suffering from a personality disorder, usually understood as a form of pathology in sense of self and interpersonal relatedness that is considered to be distinct from personality traits (APA, 2012; Skodol, 2012). For example, it has been suggested that antisocial personality disorder includes impairments in identity (e.g., egocentrism), self-direction, empathy, and capacity for intimacy, which are said to be different from such traits as arrogance, impulsivity, and callousness (APA, 2012).

## Treatment

Personality disorders are relatively unique because they are often “ego-syntonic;” that is, often people with personality disorders are largely comfortable with themselves, with their characteristic manner of behaving, feeling, and relating to others. As a result, people rarely seek treatment for their antisocial, narcissistic, histrionic, paranoid, and/or schizoid personality disorder. People typically lack insight into the maladaptivity of their personality, although eventually people may become aware their personality is dysfunctional through repeated problems in interpersonal interactions, including repeated relationship problems with family and at work.



Many people with personality disorders do not seek treatment. Those with borderline personality disorder and avoidant personality disorder are exceptions. High levels of neuroticism and emotional pain may motivate them to seek help. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

However, those suffering with moderate to severe diagnoses of borderline personality disorder have a tendency

to notice difficulties in psychological and interpersonal functioning. Borderline personality disorder relates to high Neuroticism. Neuroticism is the domain of general personality structure that concerns inherent feelings of emotional pain and suffering, including feelings of distress, anxiety, depression, self-consciousness, helplessness, and vulnerability. Persons who have very high elevations on neuroticism (i.e., persons with borderline personality disorder) experience life as one of pain and suffering, and they will seek treatment to alleviate this severe emotional distress. People with avoidant personality may also seek treatment for their high levels of neuroticism (anxiousness and self-consciousness) and introversion (social isolation). In contrast, narcissistic individuals will rarely seek treatment to reduce their arrogance; paranoid persons rarely seek treatment to reduce their feelings of suspiciousness; and antisocial people rarely (or at least willfully) seek treatment to reduce their disposition for criminality, aggression, and irresponsibility.

Maladaptive personality traits will be evident in many individuals seeking treatment for other mental disorders, such as anxiety, mood, or substance use. Many of the people with a substance use disorder will have antisocial personality traits; many of the people with mood disorder will have borderline personality traits. The prevalence of personality disorders within clinical settings is estimated to be well above 50% (Torgersen, 2012). As many as 60% of inpatients within some clinical settings are diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (APA, 2000). Antisocial personality disorder may be diagnosed in as many as 50% of inmates within a correctional setting (Hare et al., 2012). It is estimated that 10% to 15% of the general population meets criteria for at least one of the 10 DSM-IV-TR personality disorders (Torgersen, 2012), and quite a few more individuals are likely to have maladaptive personality traits not covered by one of the 10 DSM-5 diagnoses.

The presence of a personality disorder will often have an impact on the treatment of other mental disorders, typically inhibiting or impairing responsivity. Antisocial persons will tend to be irresponsible and negligent; borderline persons can form intensely manipulative attachments to their therapists; paranoid patients will be unduly suspicious and accusatory; narcissistic patients can be dismissive and denigrating; and dependent patients can become overly attached to and feel helpless without their therapists.

It is a misnomer, though, to suggest that personality disorders cannot themselves be treated. Personality disorders are among the most difficult of disorders to treat because they involve well-established behaviors that can be integral to a client's self-image (Millon, 2011). Nevertheless, much has been written on the treatment of personality disorder (e.g., Beck, Freeman, Davis, & Associates, 1990; Gunderson & Gabbard, 2000), and there is empirical support for clinically and socially meaningful changes in response to psychosocial and pharmacologic treatments (Perry & Bond, 2000). The development of an ideal or fully healthy personality structure is unlikely to occur through the course of treatment, but given the considerable social, public health, and personal costs associated with some of the personality disorders, such as the antisocial and borderline, even just moderate adjustments in personality functioning can represent quite significant and meaningful change.

Nevertheless, manualized and/or empirically validated treatment protocols have been developed for only one personality disorder, borderline (APA, 2001). This means that there is a well-researched protocol for how to treat issues with borderline personality disorder. There are many theories and types of treatment for other personality disorders, but treatment protocols are not as specific.

## Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder

**Dialectical behavior therapy** is a form of cognitive-behavior therapy that draws on principles from Zen Buddhism, dialectical philosophy, and behavioral science. The treatment has four components: individual therapy, group skills training, telephone coaching, and a therapist consultation team, and will typically last a full year. As such, it is a relatively expensive form of treatment, but research has indicated that its benefits far outweighs its costs, both financially and socially.

DBT was developed in the late 1980s by Dr. Marsha Linehan and colleagues when they discovered that cognitive behavioral therapy alone did not work as well as expected in patients with borderline personality disorder. Dr. Linehan and her team added techniques and developed a treatment which would meet the unique needs of these patients.

DBT is derived from a philosophical process called dialectics. Dialectics is based on the concept that everything is composed of opposites and that change occurs when one opposing force is stronger than the other, or in more academic terms—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

More specifically, dialectics makes three basic assumptions:

- All things are interconnected.
- Change is constant and inevitable.
- Opposites can be integrated to form a closer approximation of the truth.

Thus in DBT, the patient and therapist are working to resolve the seeming contradiction between self-acceptance and change in order to bring about positive changes in the patient.

Another technique offered by Linehan and her colleagues was validation. Linehan and her team found that with validation, along with the push for change, patients were more likely to cooperate and less likely to suffer distress at the idea of change. The therapist validates that the person's actions “make sense” within the context of his personal experiences without necessarily agreeing that they are the best approach to solving the problem.

People undergoing DBT are taught how to effectively change their behavior using four main strategies:

- Mindfulness—focusing on the present (“living in the moment”).
- Distress Tolerance—learning to accept oneself and the current situation. More specifically, people learn how to tolerate or survive crises using these four techniques: distraction, self-soothing, improving the movement, and thinking of pros and cons.
- Interpersonal Effectiveness—how to be assertive in a relationship (for example, expressing needs and saying “no”) but still keeping that relationship positive and healthy.
- Emotion Regulation—recognizing and coping with negative emotions (for example, anger) and reducing one's emotional vulnerability by increasing positive emotional experiences.

## Conclusions

It is evident that all individuals have a personality, as indicated by their characteristic way of thinking, feeling, behaving, and relating to others. For some people, these traits result in a considerable degree of distress and/or impairment, constituting a personality disorder. A considerable body of research has accumulated to help understand the etiology, pathology, and/or treatment for some personality disorders (i.e., antisocial, schizotypal, borderline, dependent, and narcissistic), but not so much for others (e.g., histrionic, schizoid, and paranoid). However, researchers and clinicians are now shifting toward a more dimensional understanding of personality disorders, wherein each is understood as a maladaptive variant of general personality structure, thereby bringing to bear all that is known about general personality functioning to an understanding of these maladaptive variants.

## Vocabulary

**Personality Disorder: When personality traits result in significant distress, social impairment, and/or occupational**



**impairment, they are considered to be a personality disorder**

### **Antisocial Personality Disorder**

A pervasive pattern of disregard and violation of the rights of others. These behaviors may be aggressive or destructive and may involve breaking laws or rules, deceit or theft.

### **Borderline Personality Disorder**

A pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity.

**Dialectical behavior therapy** is a form of cognitive-behavior therapy that draws on principles from Zen Buddhism, dialectical philosophy, and behavioral science. It started out as a treatment for Borderline Personality disorder but has become a general treatment for self-regulation difficulties.

### **Histrionic Personality Disorder**

A pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking.

### **Narcissistic Personality Disorder**

A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy.

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# 10. Happiness: The Science of Subjective Well-Being

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Subjective well-being (SWB) is the scientific term for happiness and life satisfaction—thinking and feeling that your life is going well, not badly. Scientists rely primarily on self-report surveys to assess the happiness of individuals, but they have validated these scales with other types of measures. People's levels of subjective well-being are influenced by both internal factors, such as personality and outlook, and external factors, such as the society in which they live. Some of the major determinants of subjective well-being are a person's inborn temperament, the quality of their social relationships, the societies they live in, and their ability to meet their basic needs. To some degree people adapt to conditions so that over time our circumstances may not influence our happiness as much as one might predict they would. Importantly, researchers have also studied the outcomes of subjective well-being and have found that “happy” people are more likely to be healthier and live longer, to have better social relationships, and to be more productive at work. In other words, people high in subjective well-being seem to be healthier and function more effectively compared to people who are chronically stressed, depressed, or angry. Thus, happiness does not just feel good, but it is good for people and for those around them.

## Learning Objectives

- Describe three major forms of happiness and a cause of each of them.
- Be able to list two internal causes of subjective well-being and two external causes of subjective well-being.
- Describe the types of societies that experience the most and least happiness, and why they do.
- Describe the typical course of adaptation to events in terms of the time course of SWB.
- Describe several of the beneficial outcomes of being a happy person.
- Describe how happiness is typically measured.

## Introduction



If you had only one gift to give your child, what would it be? Happiness? [Image: mynameisharsha, <https://goo.gl/216PFr>, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://goo.gl/eLCn2O>]

When people describe what they most want out of life, happiness is almost always on the list, and very frequently it is at the top of the list. When people describe what they want in life for their children, they frequently mention health and wealth, occasionally they mention fame or success—but they almost always mention happiness. People will claim that whether their kids are wealthy and work in some prestigious occupation or not, “I just want my kids to be happy.” Happiness appears to be one of the most important goals for people, if not the most important. But what is it, and how do people get it?

In this module I describe “**happiness**” or subjective well-being (SWB) as a process—it results from certain internal and external causes, and in turn it influences the way people behave, as well as their physiological states. Thus, high SWB is not just a pleasant outcome but is an important factor in our future success. Because scientists have developed valid ways of measuring “happiness,” they have come in the past decades to know much about its causes and consequences.

## Types of Happiness

Philosophers debated the nature of happiness for thousands of years, but scientists have recently discovered that happiness means different things. Three major types of happiness are **high life satisfaction**, **frequent positive feelings**, and **infrequent negative feelings** (Diener, 1984). “**Subjective well-being**” is the label given by scientists to the various forms of happiness taken together. Although there are additional forms of SWB, the three in the table below have been studied extensively. The table also shows that the causes of the different types of happiness can be somewhat different.

Three Types of Happiness	Examples	Causes
Life Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think my life is great</li> <li>I am satisfied with my job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A good income</li> <li>Achieving one's goals</li> <li>High self-esteem</li> </ul>
Positive Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjoying life</li> <li>Loving others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive friends</li> <li>Interesting work</li> <li>Extroverted personality</li> </ul>
Low Negative Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few chronic worries</li> <li>Rarely sad or angry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low neuroticism</li> <li>One's goals are in harmony</li> <li>A positive outlook</li> </ul>

Table 1: Three Types of Subjective Well-Being

You can see in the table that there are different causes of happiness, and that these causes are not identical for the various types of SWB. Therefore, there is no single key, no magic wand—high SWB is achieved by combining several different important elements (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Thus, people who promise to know *the* key to happiness are oversimplifying.

Some people experience all three elements of happiness—they are very satisfied, enjoy life, and have only a few worries or other unpleasant emotions. Other unfortunate people are missing all three. Most of us also know individuals who have one type of happiness but not another. For example, imagine an elderly person who is completely satisfied with her life—she has done most everything she ever wanted—but is not currently enjoying life that much because of the infirmities of age. There are others who show a different pattern, for example, who really enjoy life but also experience a lot of stress, anger, and worry. And there are those who are having fun, but who are dissatisfied and believe they are wasting their lives. Because there are several components to happiness, each with somewhat different causes, there is no magic single cure—all that creates all forms of SWB. This means that to be happy, individuals must acquire each of the different elements that cause it.

## Causes of Subjective Well-Being

There are external influences on people’s happiness—the circumstances in which they live. It is possible for some to be happy living in poverty with ill health, or with a child who has a serious disease, but this is difficult. In contrast, it is easier to be happy if one has supportive family and friends, ample resources to meet one’s needs, and good health. But even here there are exceptions—people who are depressed and unhappy while living in excellent circumstances. Thus, people can be happy or unhappy because of their personalities and the way they think about the world or because of

the external circumstances in which they live. People vary in their propensity to happiness—in their personalities and outlook—and this means that knowing their living conditions is not enough to predict happiness.

In the table below are shown internal and external circumstances that influence happiness. There are individual differences in what makes people happy, but the causes in the table are important for most people (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Lyubomirsky, 2013; Myers, 1992).

Internal Causes (Top-down influences)	Description
Inborn temperament	Studies of monozygotic (identical) twins raised apart indicate that our genes influence our happiness. Even when raised apart, identical twins tend to be similar in their levels of subjective well-being.
Personality and temperament	Personality is partly inborn and partly learned, and it influences our happiness. For example: Extroverts tend to have more positive feelings. Neurotics tend to have more negative feelings.
Outlook	People can develop habits of noticing the good things in life and interpreting ambiguous events in positive ways. Other people develop negative mental habits, leading to more unhappiness. One's culture also can influence whether we take an optimistic or pessimistic view of life.
Resilience	Happy individuals tend to bounce back more quickly after losses and negative events.
External Causes (Bottom-up influences)	Description
Sufficient material resources	People have enough money to meet their basic needs and fulfill their major goals.
Sufficient social resources	People differ in their need for social contact, but everyone needs some supportive and trusted others: family, a friend, or a partner, or sometimes all three. We need other people to lead a fulfilled life.
Desirable society	Our own efforts and circumstances influence our happiness, but so does the society in which we live. A society of hunger, war, conflict, and corruption is much less happy than one with material resources, high levels of trust and cooperation, and people who want to help each other.

Table 2: Internal and External Causes of Subjective Well-Being

## Societal Influences on Happiness

When people consider their own happiness, they tend to think of their relationships, successes and failures, and other personal factors. But a very important influence on how happy people are is the society in which they live. It is easy to forget how important societies and neighborhoods are to people's happiness or unhappiness. In Figure 1, I present life satisfaction around the world. You can see that some nations, those with the darkest shading on the map, are high in life satisfaction. Others, the lightest shaded areas, are very low. The grey areas in the map are places we could not collect happiness data—they were just too dangerous or inaccessible.

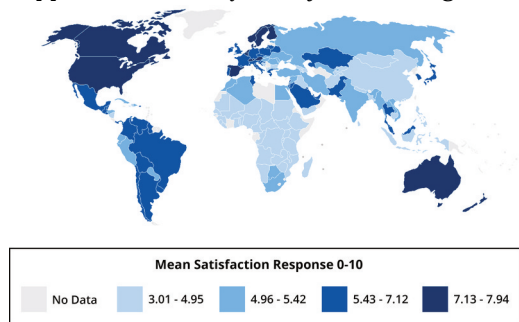


Figure 1

Can you guess what might make some societies happier than others? Much of North America and Europe have relatively high life satisfaction, and much of Africa is low in life satisfaction. For life satisfaction living in an economically developed nation is helpful because when people must struggle to obtain food, shelter, and other basic necessities, they tend to be dissatisfied with lives. However, other factors, such as trusting and being able to count on others, are also crucial to the happiness within nations. Indeed, for enjoying life our relationships with others seem more important than living in



a wealthy society. One factor that predicts unhappiness is conflict—individuals in nations with high internal conflict or conflict with neighboring nations tend to experience low SWB.

## Money and Happiness

Will money make you happy? A certain level of income is needed to meet our needs, and very poor people are frequently dissatisfied with life (Diener & Seligman, 2004). However, having more and more money has diminishing returns—higher and higher incomes make less and less difference to happiness. Wealthy nations tend to have higher average life satisfaction than poor nations, but the United States has not experienced a rise in life satisfaction over the past decades, even as income has doubled. The goal is to find a level of income that you can live with and earn. Don't let your aspirations continue to rise so that you always feel poor, no matter how much money you have. Research shows that materialistic people often tend to be less happy, and putting your emphasis on relationships and other areas of life besides just money is a wise strategy. Money can help life satisfaction, but when too many other valuable things are sacrificed to earn a lot of money—such as relationships or taking a less enjoyable job—the pursuit of money can harm happiness.

There are stories of wealthy people who are unhappy and of janitors who are very happy. For instance, a number of extremely wealthy people in South Korea have committed suicide recently, apparently brought down by stress and other negative feelings. On the other hand, there is the hospital janitor who loved her life because she felt that her work in keeping the hospital clean was so important for the patients and nurses. Some millionaires are dissatisfied because they want to be billionaires. Conversely, some people with ordinary incomes are quite happy because they have learned to live within their means and enjoy the less expensive things in life.

It is important to always keep in mind that high materialism seems to lower life satisfaction—valuing money over other things such as relationships can make us dissatisfied. When people think money is more important than everything else, they seem to have a harder time being happy. And unless they make a great deal of money, they are not on average as happy as others. Perhaps in seeking money they sacrifice other important things too much, such as relationships, spirituality, or following their interests. Or it may be that materialists just can never get enough money to fulfill their dreams—they always want more.

To sum up what makes for a happy life, let's take the example of Monoj, a rickshaw driver in Calcutta. He enjoys life, despite the hardships, and is reasonably satisfied with life. How could he be relatively happy despite his very low income, sometimes even insufficient to buy enough food for his family? The things that make Monoj happy are his family and friends, his religion, and his work, which he finds meaningful. His low income does lower his life satisfaction to some degree, but he finds his children to be very rewarding, and he gets along well with his neighbors. I also suspect that Monoj's positive temperament and his enjoyment of social relationships help to some degree to overcome his poverty and earn him a place among the happy. However, Monoj would also likely be even more satisfied with life if he had a higher income that allowed more food, better housing, and better medical care for his family.





Manoj, a happy rickshaw driver in Calcutta.

Besides the internal and external factors that influence happiness, there are psychological influences as well—such as our aspirations, social comparisons, and adaptation. People’s aspirations are what they want in life, including income, occupation, marriage, and so forth. If people’s aspirations are high, they will often strive harder, but there is also a risk of them falling short of their aspirations and being dissatisfied. The goal is to have challenging aspirations but also to be able to adapt to what actually happens in life.

One’s outlook and resilience are also always very important to happiness. Every person will have disappointments in life, fail at times, and have problems. Thus, happiness comes not to people who never have problems—there are no such individuals—but to people who are able to bounce back from failures and adapt to disappointments. This is why happiness is never caused just by what happens to us but always includes our outlook on life.

## Adaptation to Circumstances

The process of adaptation is important in understanding happiness. When good and bad events occur, people often react strongly at first, but then their reactions adapt over time and they return to their former levels of happiness. For instance, many people are euphoric when they first marry, but over time they grow accustomed to the marriage and are no longer ecstatic. The marriage becomes commonplace and they return to their former level of happiness. Few of us think this will happen to us, but the truth is that it usually does. Some people will be a bit happier even years after marriage, but nobody carries that initial “high” through the years.

People also adapt over time to bad events. However, people take a long time to adapt to certain negative events such as unemployment. People become unhappy when they lose their work, but over time they recover to some extent. But even after a number of years, unemployed individuals sometimes have lower life satisfaction, indicating that they have not completely habituated to the experience. However, there are strong individual differences in adaptation, too. Some people are resilient and bounce back quickly after a bad event, and others are fragile and do not ever fully adapt to the bad event. Do you adapt quickly to bad events and bounce back, or do you continue to dwell on a bad event and let it keep you down?

An example of adaptation to circumstances is shown in Figure 3, which shows the daily moods of “Harry,” a college

student who had Hodgkin's lymphoma (a form of cancer). As can be seen, over the 6-week period when I studied Harry's moods, they went up and down. A few times his moods dropped into the negative zone below the horizontal blue line. Most of the time Harry's moods were in the positive zone above the line. But about halfway through the study Harry was told that his cancer was in remission—effectively cured—and his moods on that day spiked way up. But notice that he quickly adapted—the effects of the good news wore off, and Harry adapted back toward where he was before. So even the very best news one can imagine—recovering from cancer—was not enough to give Harry a permanent “high.” Notice too, however, that Harry's moods averaged a bit higher after cancer remission. Thus, the typical pattern is a strong response to the event, and then a dampening of this joy over time. However, even in the long run, the person might be a bit happier or unhappier than before.

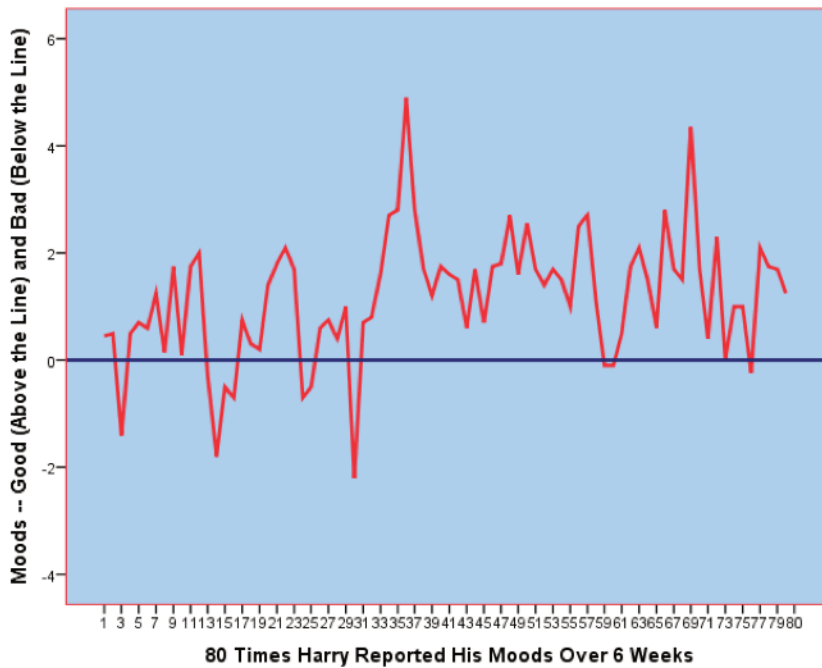


Figure 3. Harry's Daily Moods

## Outcomes of High Subjective Well-Being

Is the state of happiness truly a good thing? Is happiness simply a feel-good state that leaves us unmotivated and ignorant of the world's problems? Should people strive to be happy, or are they better off to be grumpy but “realistic”? Some have argued that happiness is actually a bad thing, leaving us superficial and uncaring. Most of the evidence so far suggests that happy people are healthier, more sociable, more productive, and better citizens (Diener & Tay, 2012; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Research shows that the happiest individuals are usually very sociable. The table below summarizes some of the major findings.

Positive Outcomes	Description of Some of the Benefits
Health and Longevity	Happy and optimistic people have stronger immune systems and fewer cardiovascular diseases. Happy people are more likely to perform healthy behaviors, such as wearing seat belts and adhere to medical regimens. They also seem on average to live longer.
Social Relationships	Happy people are more popular, and their relationships are more stable and rewarding. For example, they get divorced less and are fired from work less. They support others more, and receive more support from others in return.
Productivity	Organizations in which people are positive and satisfied seem to be more successful. Work units with greater subjective well-being are more productive, and companies with happy workers tend to earn more money and develop higher stock prices.
Citizenship	Happy people are more likely to donate their time and money to charitable causes and to help others at work.

Table 3: Benefits of Happiness

Although it is beneficial generally to be happy, this does not mean that people should be constantly euphoric. In fact, it is appropriate and helpful sometimes to be sad or to worry. At times a bit of worry mixed with positive feelings makes people more creative. Most successful people in the workplace seem to be those who are mostly positive but sometimes a bit negative. Thus, people need not be a superstar in happiness to be a superstar in life. What is not helpful is to be chronically unhappy. The important question is whether people are satisfied with how happy they are. If you feel mostly positive and satisfied, and yet occasionally worry and feel stressed, this is probably fine as long as you feel comfortable with this level of happiness. If you are a person who is chronically unhappy much of the time, changes are needed, and perhaps professional intervention would help as well.

## Measuring Happiness

SWB researchers have relied primarily on self-report scales to assess happiness—how people rate their own happiness levels on self-report surveys. People respond to numbered scales to indicate their levels of satisfaction, positive feelings, and lack of negative feelings. You can see where you stand on these scales by going to <http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/scales.html> or by filling out the Flourishing Scale below. These measures will give you an idea of what popular scales of happiness are like.

Below are eight statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 7-point scale, indicate your agreement with each item by picking the appropriate response for each statement.

7 - Strongly agree  
6 - Agree  
5 - Slightly agree  
4 - Neither agree nor disagree  
3 - Slightly disagree  
2 - Disagree  
1 - Strongly disagree

... I lead a purposeful and meaningful life  
... My social relationships are supportive and rewarding  
... I am engaged and interested in my daily activities  
... I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others  
... I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me  
... I am a good person and live a good life  
... I am optimistic about my future  
... People respect me

**Scoring:**  
Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

### The Flourishing Scale

The self-report scales have proved to be relatively valid (Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2012), although people can lie, or fool themselves, or be influenced by their current moods or situational factors. Because the scales are imperfect, well-being scientists also sometimes use biological measures of happiness (e.g., the strength of a person's immune system, or measuring various brain areas that are associated with greater happiness). Scientists also use reports by family, coworkers, and friends—these people reporting how happy they believe the target person is. Other measures are used as well to help overcome some of the shortcomings of the self-report scales, but most of the field is based on people telling us how happy they are using numbered scales.

There are scales to measure life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008), positive and negative feelings, and whether a person is psychologically flourishing (Diener et al., 2009). Flourishing has to do with whether a person feels meaning in

life, has close relationships, and feels a sense of mastery over important life activities. You can take the well-being scales created in the Diener laboratory, and let others take them too, because they are free and open for use.

## Some Ways to Be Happier

Most people are fairly happy, but many of them also wish they could be a bit more satisfied and enjoy life more. Prescriptions about how to achieve more happiness are often oversimplified because happiness has different components and prescriptions need to be aimed at where each individual needs improvement—one size does not fit all. A person might be strong in one area and deficient in other areas. People with prolonged serious unhappiness might need help from a professional. Thus, recommendations for how to achieve happiness are often appropriate for one person but not for others. With this in mind, I list in Table 4 below some general recommendations for you to be happier (see also Lyubomirsky, 2013):

<b>Self-Questions for Becoming Happier</b>
Are there controllable things in your life that could be changed to make your life more meaningful and happy? What are the avenues to change and why haven't you taken them?
Do you generally see the bright side of things - the part of the glass that is half full, or do you always see the dark side of things? Can you change this outlook on life by working to break the empty-glass view of life? Can you develop more positive mental habits, such as being grateful to others for all of the things they do for you?
Are there people around you who make you feel good about yourself and who make your life more enjoyable? How can you reduce the number of "downers" who might surround you?
In your relationships, seek to make others happy and help others, not just receive support from others. The happiest and healthiest people are often those who help others and the world. Beyond actually helping others, express gratefulness to them and be a person who gives lots of compliments.
Find work that you will love and be good at, while being realistic about your chances of finding certain jobs. Don't over-weigh the importance of money or status in selecting an occupation. Find a job that interests you and plays to your strengths. If you find a job you love, this can be a big boost to happiness.

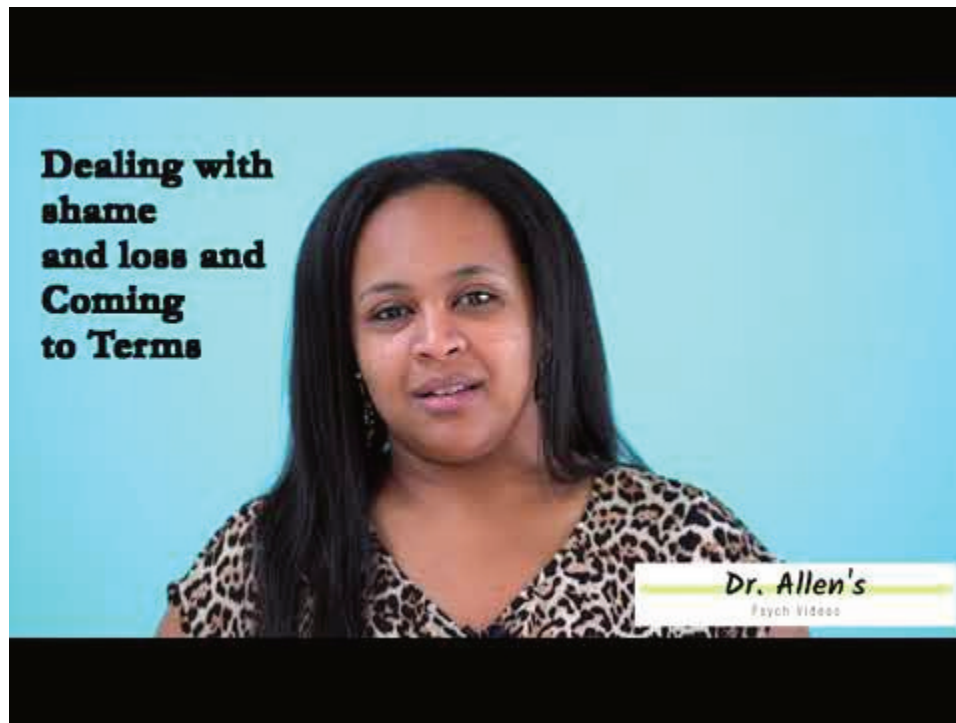
Table 4: Self-Examination

### Video 1: Dispositional Optimism



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<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=196>*

## Synthesized Happiness: Selam on Synthesized Happiness and the Psychological Immune System



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<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/thebalanceofpersonality/?p=196>

### Outsides Resources

**Web: Ed Diener's website**

<http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/>

**Web: Positive Acorn Positive Psychology website**

<http://positiveacorn.com/>

**Web: Sonja Lyubomirsky's website on happiness**

<http://sonjalyubomirsky.com/>

**Web: University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center website**

<http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>

**Web: World Database on Happiness**

<http://www1.eur.nl/fsw/happiness/>

## Discussion Questions

1. Which do you think is more important, the “top-down” personality influences on happiness or the “bottom-up” situational circumstances that influence it? In other words, discuss whether internal sources such as personality and outlook or external factors such situations, circumstances, and events are more important to happiness. Can you make an argument that both are very important?
2. Do you know people who are happy in one way but not in others? People who are high in life satisfaction, for example, but low in enjoying life or high in negative feelings? What should they do to increase their happiness across all three types of subjective well-being?
3. Certain sources of happiness have been emphasized in this book, but there are others. Can you think of other important sources of happiness and unhappiness? Do you think religion, for example, is a positive source of happiness for most people? What about age or ethnicity? What about health and physical handicaps? If you were a researcher, what question might you tackle on the influences on happiness?
4. Are you satisfied with your level of happiness? If not, are there things you might do to change it? Would you function better if you were happier?
5. How much happiness is helpful to make a society thrive? Do people need some worry and sadness in life to help us avoid bad things? When is satisfaction a good thing, and when is some dissatisfaction a good thing?
6. How do you think money can help happiness? Interfere with happiness? What level of income will you need to be satisfied?

## Vocabulary

### **Adaptation**

The fact that after people first react to good or bad events, sometimes in a strong way, their feelings and reactions tend to dampen down over time and they return toward their original level of subjective well-being.

### **“Bottom-up” or external causes of happiness**

Situational factors outside the person that influence his or her subjective well-being, such as good and bad events and circumstances such as health and wealth.

### **Happiness**

The popular word for subjective well-being. Scientists sometimes avoid using this term because it can refer to different things, such as feeling good, being satisfied, or even the causes of high subjective well-being.

### **Negative feelings**

Undesirable and unpleasant feelings that people tend to avoid if they can. Moods and emotions such as depression, anger, and worry are examples.

### **Positive feelings**

Desirable and pleasant feelings. Moods and emotions such as enjoyment and love are examples.

### **Subjective well-being**

The name that scientists give to happiness—thinking and feeling that our lives are going very well.

### **“Top-down” or internal causes of happiness**

The person’s outlook and habitual response tendencies that influence their happiness—for example, their temperament or optimistic outlook on life.



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## II. Yoga, Buddhism, Personality and Non-Personality

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Yoga and Buddhism are vast subjects, spanning many thousands of years, and they are amazing philosophies. But, are they philosophy or religion? They both certainly have significant religious overtones, and are considered to be religions by many people. Actually, however, they are styles of life that developed in order to help people be more in tune with their religion and with God. Yoga, which means unity, was a practice that developed within the Hindu religion to help Hindus achieve unity with God. So it developed as a practice in one's daily life that led to religious fulfillment. The **Buddha** was a Yogi, and did not consider himself to be different than other people. His followers, however, have so fervently held to his teachings that the practice of Buddhism is often viewed as a religion, and over time it became mixed with religious stories and myths, as people tried to fit Buddhism into their traditional culture.

### *Placing Yoga in Context: An Ancient Plan for Self Development*

#### **The Concept of Self from a Yogic Perspective**

##### *Spirit, Nature, and Consciousness*

In the metaphysics of Yoga our true self, the transcendental self, is a temporary manifestation of Spirit in essence. The great mistake in our lives is to confuse our body and mind with who we really are, to believe that this body and this mind are our self. The practice of Yoga, however, teaches us to still our minds, to eliminate all thought and sensation, so that we might be in union with our transcendental self and the universal spirit. Once we have accomplished this task, by subjugating our natural tendency to think and restraining our mind itself, we will know who and what we really are (*Yoga Sutras* I:2,3 [Bailey, 1927]). This is not an easy task, but it has a great reward. As Sri Yukteswar told Yogananda:

The soul expanded into Spirit remains alone in the region of lightless light, darkless dark, thoughtless thought, intoxicated with its ecstasy of joy in God's dream of cosmic creation (Yogananda, 1946; pgs. 489-490).

William James, America's foremost psychologist, is best known for his theory on the stream of consciousness. According to James, it is the continuity of consciousness that defines our self. This is in direct contradiction to Eastern philosophies, which consider the conscious mind to be derived from the natural world, and therefore only an illusion. Eastern philosophies consider the transcendental self to be real, but obscured from us by the distraction of the so-called conscious mind.

**Discussion Question:** Do you believe in a transcendental self (whether you call it self, spirit, soul...whatever)? What does this make you feel about your physical body? As for all of nature can you really believe it is just an illusion?

##### *Karma*

**Karma** is a difficult concept to grasp. We generally think of karma as the consequences of things we have done wrong, but karma does not apply simply to our misbehavior, it applies to all of our actions. An easy to understand discussion of karma has been written by Goldstein and Kornfield (2001). The law of karma can be understood on two levels. First, karma refers to cause and effect. Whenever we perform an action, we experience some consequence at a later time. The second level of karma may be more important, as it refers to our state of mind at the time when we performed the action in question. *Our intentions, or the motives behind an action, determine the nature of the consequences we experience.* The importance of this point is that we control the nature of our karma. This, of course, has important implications for personality development. Once we understand the karmic law, it is only natural that we should begin to plant the seeds of healthy karma. In other words, we should be inclined to act only in ways that are healthy and socially beneficial, so that the consequences we then experience will lead to greater well-being for ourselves.

The second level of karma, that it is our intentions and motivation that affect the outcome of our lives, seems quite

similar to cognitive theories in psychology. Cognitive psychology focuses on the nature of our thought, and problems often arise when we are trapped in a series of automatic thoughts that create problems for us. In other words, when we view the world negatively, we react in negative and maladaptive ways. Similarly, our past karma influences the karma we create for the future. **If we think and act in negative ways, we create negative karma, but it is also true that if we think and act in positive ways we create positive karma.** Cognitive therapy resembles much of what is written in the East about recognizing the *cause-and-effect pattern* that our karma traps us within. Successful cognitive therapy is something like enlightenment: when we realize the truth of what we are doing we have a chance to break that pattern and move in a healthy direction.

**Discussion Question:** Karma refers to the cosmic law of cause and effect, the idea that our past actions will someday affect our current and future lives. Do you believe this, and can you provide any examples of this happening to you?

## Historical Description of Buddhism

### *Siddhattha Gotama*

Siddhattha Gotama is recognized as the Buddha, but this is technically incorrect. Anyone can be a Buddha, there were many before Gotama Buddha, many after, and more to come. Indeed, Siddhattha Gotama had lived many lives before he was born into that earthly identity (if, of course, you believe in such things), and this had an important impact on his life. According to legend, Dipankara Buddha foretold that Siddhattha Gotama would be born as a prince in the kingdom of the Shakyas (so he is also referred to as Prince Shakyamuni and as Shakyamuni Buddha), and that in that lifetime he would become a Buddha. Sometime around the fifth or sixth century B.C., Prince Shakyamuni was born. Not wanting his son to leave the kingdom, the king indulged his son with every sensual pleasure known to man. The king also protected his son from knowing the unpleasant realities of life (disease, death, etc.). However, the prince's destiny was set. Prince Shakyamuni decided he wanted to see the kingdom. In order to prevent the prince from seeing the reality of life, the king ordered that everything in the city should be cleaned and decorated and everyone should be on their best behavior. However, four heavenly beings appeared to Prince Shakyamuni: the first as someone suffering the ravages of old age, the second as someone stricken with disease, the third as a corpse, and the fourth as a wandering monk. These visitors made a profound impression on the young prince, who left his wife, child, and home to seek enlightenment.

Living in India, the path to spiritual enlightenment that he followed was to become a yogi. He studied meditation, he became an accomplished ascetic (it is said he lived for a time on one grain of rice a day), but he failed to achieve anything satisfying. So finally he had a nice lunch and sat down under a Bodhi tree, vowing to remain seated until he achieved enlightenment. Finally, he was "awakened," which is the meaning of the word Buddha. In his first sermon, Gotama Buddha revealed the **Four Noble Truths** and the **Middle Way**, among other teachings. **The middle way is a path of moderation, between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification.** The middle way also refers to a proposal by the Dalai Lama for a compromise with China, allowing Tibet to have independent culture and religion but remain a part of China. China has not accepted the middle way proposal.

Those who have followed the teachings of Buddha have come to be known as Buddhists. For more on the life of the Buddha, an excellent chapter has been written by Goldstein and Kornfield (2001). The sayings of the Buddha have also been collected, and are readily available (e.g., see Byrom, 1993). In his own words, we can see the relationship between Buddhism and psychology, and how these teachings were meant to guide people toward a healthy and happy life. In the teaching entitled "Choices," the Buddha says:

We are what we think.

All that we are arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts we make the world.

Speak or act with a pure mind

And happiness will follow you

As your shadow, unshakable. (pgs. 1-2)  
*Bodhidharma*

### *His Holiness the Dalai Lama*

Unlike the historical figures Gotama Buddha, the **Dalai Lama** is alive today. Although his home is Tibet, where he was born in 1935, he lives in exile in India. He is believed to be the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, a *reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lamas*, the first of whom is believed to have been the reincarnation of a boy who lived during the time of Gotama Buddha. That boy was an incarnation of Chenrezig (also known as Avalokiteshvara), the Bodhisattva of Compassion (a Bodhisattva is like a Buddha – see below), and the Dalai Lamas have served for over 650 years as the religious leader of the Tibetan people. Due to political circumstances in Tibet today, it is unclear what may happen to Tibetan culture. The Dalai Lama himself does not know whether he will be the last of the Dalai Lamas, but he hopes that choice will someday be made by a free and democratic Tibetan society (Dalai Lama, 2002).

### **Characteristics of Existence**

#### *Impermanence*

The Buddha said that “everything arises and passes away...existence is illusion” (in Byrom, 1993). The idea of **impermanence** or that nothing is permanent is a central belief in Buddhism. People are born, grow up, grow old, and die. Buildings wear down, cars break down, and enormous trees wither away. Even mountains are eventually worn down by erosion. However, children are born, new cars and buildings are built, new plants grow, and life goes on. The implications for Buddhism are quite interesting. If everything, and everyone, changes, then even someone who is enlightened will change! One cannot *be* a Buddha, for they will change. We must always continue to grow. Likewise, Buddhism itself will change, so most of their doctrines are not seen as static. They anticipate change over time.

For psychology, this has both good and not so good implications. For people who are depressed or anxious, they might take heart in impermanence, since things should eventually get better. Indeed, studies on the effects of psychotherapy often show that some people get better over time without treatment. However, if things seem to be going great, if you are happy and having lots of fun, those things will change too. But knowing this, we can prepare ourselves for it. An important aspect of coping with life’s challenges is a sense of being in control. Although there are a wide variety of variables that contribute to individual resilience, maintaining a positive state of mind can help, and knowledge can help to maintain that positive state of mind (Bonnano, 2004, 2005; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000; Ray, 2004).

Buddhism also brings to question whether personality really exists. It is clear people have individual differences. But depending on the school of Buddhism, some would suggest that all that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body). In this sense Buddhism has a more open attitude toward personality, seeing it as impermanent and it will change from lifetime to lifetime.

If we practice mindfulness and meditation, we can begin to see the impermanence of our lives. **Mindfulness** is a technique extracted from Buddhism where one tries to notice present thoughts, feeling and sensations without judgement. As we let go of our attachments to our self-image, our life will flow by like the pictures of a movie, each one a separate image, which only appears to flow smoothly when viewed at high speed. As we observe these fleeting images, we see how our sensations, thoughts, feelings, every aspect of our lives, change so quickly. We might then embrace the change that is truly our life. This process of letting go can be very difficult, but also very liberating (Goldstein and Kornfield, 2001).

“Do not seek perfection in a changing world.  
Instead, perfect your love.” – Kornfield, 1994

### *Suffering*

As we learned with the first of the Four Noble Truths, suffering is an integral part of the human experience. It is easy for us to think of suffering in terms of big pictures: war, famine, natural disasters, and the like. But how often do we

think of suffering as an inherent part of our daily lives? Life is difficult, it is a struggle, especially the way most of us live it. A struggle can only lead to suffering. The ultimate outcome of life's struggle, should we lose the battle, is death. If we could defeat death we would end up alone, and that loneliness might be even worse than the original suffering itself (Suzuki, 1962). Still, we do not even need to look at suffering in terms of a lifetime battle against aging and death, we can see suffering in every moment of the day. Goldstein and Kornfield offer a marvelous description of the daily challenge to be satisfied (2001). It goes something like this. Suppose we woke up on a day when we had no obligations at all. It might be tempting to stay in bed all day, but eventually we become uncomfortable because we have to go to the bathroom. Finally we go, and then crawl back into bed to get warm. But then we get hungry, so finally we get up to get something to eat. Then we get bored, so maybe we watch TV. Then we get uncomfortable, and have to change positions. Even each pleasurable moment is brief, and fails to bring lasting satisfaction. So on, and so forth. We just keep suffering!

The **source of this suffering is attachment**. Gotama Buddha taught that suffering is the result of craving or desire. This was a problem of "attachment" to things in life such as money or love or anything that we get too attached to. Learning detachment or non-attachment to things is an important practice in Buddhism, and decreases suffering. We are attached to pleasurable things because we crave them. We are also attached to things that are not pleasant, because they occupy our mind and we cannot be free. The Buddha says, "Free yourself from pleasure and pain. For in craving pleasure or in nursing pain, there is only sorrow" (in Byrom, 1993). It may seem strange that we would be attached to our pain, but the word is used differently here than in most of Western psychology. Traditionally, psychologists think of attachment in a positive way, such as the attachment a child feels toward his or her parents. And yet, some cognitive psychologists do talk about individuals whose automatic thoughts lead them into consistently negative states of mind by disqualifying positive events, catastrophizing events, taking everything too personally, etc. (Pretzer and Beck, 2005). In Buddhism, attachment is neither positive nor negative, it is simply anything that reflects our illusion that the natural world is real. Only when we let go of our attachments to this world can we be one with the universal spirit, and only then can we end our suffering. There is also something hopeful in suffering. Bodhidharma taught that every suffering is a Buddha-seed, because suffering leads us to seek wisdom (in Red Pine, 1987). In this analogy, he describes the body and mind as a field. Suffering is the seed, wisdom the sprout, and Buddhahood the grain.

**Discussion Question:** Gotama Buddha taught that suffering is the result of craving or desire. Many of us have heard the saying that money is the root of all evil. Is our society excessively focused on buying more and bigger things? Do you ever find yourself obsessed with some material purchase? What problems, if any, have you experienced because people were more concerned with getting things than caring about the people around them?

### **Selflessness**

In keeping with its origins in Yoga, Buddhism teaches that there is no immortal, unchanging soul. All that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body). It is because we confuse our true self (the transcendental self) with this temporary collection of illusory things that we crave satisfaction, and ultimately suffer as a result. Now it may seem illogical to reject everything we are familiar with, including our own physical body, as an illusion, but Buddhists would suggest that there is a danger in choosing intellectual logic over faith. According to D.T. Suzuki (1962), "Faith lives and the intellect kills." Try the following exercise. Consider your body. Is it real? How much food have you eaten in your life, and where is it now? How many times have you gone to the bathroom, and where did all of that come from? It certainly isn't the same as when you ate it! Your body has been replaced many, many times. It is being replaced right now. It isn't real, it is only temporary, ever changing. The same is true with your mind. Even when William James discussed the stream of consciousness, he described a constantly changing awareness, one in which you cannot have the same thought twice. It just isn't possible. James (1892) realized that we cannot establish a *substantial* identity continuing from day to day, but concluded that our sense of continuity must reveal a *functional* identity. Arriving at a very different conclusion, Buddhists consider this to be *maya*, our inability to see things as they truly are (Suzuki, 1960).

These three characteristics of existence (impermanence, suffering, and selflessness) can be somewhat unsettling. It is not very appealing to believe that we don't really exist, that we will suffer as long as we believe we do exist, and all of it will just eventually pass away anyway. So, how does one continue in this practice? It is important to keep as our

goal a true understanding of the way things are, and the practice of meditation and other aspects of Yoga and Buddhism will help to deepen our realization of these basic truths (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001). The practice remains challenging, however, because as we deepen our understanding the characteristic most often occupying the center of our greatest realization is that of suffering (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Suzuki, 1962). We must then put aside our intellectualizing, we must slay it and throw it to the dogs, experiencing what Buddhists call the “Great Death” (Suzuki, 1962). Only then will we know the greatest wisdom and compassion. This is the beginning of our transcendence. It is not a separation from others, but a realization that we are all one. In other words, we are all in this together.

### **Interbeing – A Connection Between All People and All Things**

Many people are familiar with the golden rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you! This Christian saying also has great implications when considered from a Buddhist perspective. Based on the same philosophical/cosmological perspective as Yoga, Buddhists believe that there is one universal spirit. Therefore, we are really all the same, indeed the entire universe of living creatures and even inanimate objects in the physical world come from and return to the same, single source of creation. Thus, we could alter the golden rule to something like: as you do unto others you are doing unto yourself! This concept is not simply about being nice to other people for your own good, however. Much more importantly, it is about appreciating the relationships between all things. For example, when you drink a refreshing glass of milk, maybe after eating a few chocolate chip cookies, can you taste the grass and feel the falling rain? After all, the cow could not have grown up to give milk if it hadn't eaten grass, and the grass would not have grown if there hadn't been any rain. When you enjoy that milk do you remember to thank the farmer who milked the cow, or the grocer who sold the milk to you? And what about the worms that helped to create and aerate the soil in which the grass grew? Appreciating the concept of interbeing helps us to understand the importance of everyone and everything.

The value of this concept of interbeing is that it can be much more than simply a curious academic topic. The Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes very eloquently about interbeing and its potential for promoting healthy relationships, both between people and between societies (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995):

“Looking deeply” means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears. The result is insight into the true nature of the object. When we look into the heart of a flower, we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, the earth, and everything else in the cosmos in it. Without clouds, there could be no rain, and there would be no flower. Without time, the flower could not bloom. In fact, the flower is made entirely of non-flower elements; it has no independent, individual existence. It “inter-is” with everything else in the universe. ... When we see the nature of interbeing, barriers between ourselves and others are dissolved, and peace, love, and understanding are possible. Whenever there is understanding, compassion is born. (pg. 10)

Having understood this concept, how might it apply to personality? One of the best known cross-cultural topics in psychology today is the distinction between collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Triandis et al., 1988). It is generally accepted that Western cultures focus on the individual, whereas Eastern cultures focus on society as a collective group. One can easily imagine how people whose religious and cultural philosophy focus on a single, universal spirit (the basis of interbeing) would focus more on their family and societal groups than on the individual. Both individualistic and collectivistic cultures seem to have advantages. People living in **individualistic cultures report higher levels of subjective well-being and self-esteem**, whereas people in **collectivistic cultures have tend to have lower levels of stress and correspondingly lower levels of cardiovascular disease** (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Triandis et al., 1988). In collectivistic cultures people tend to view the environment as relatively fixed, and themselves as more flexible, more ready to fit in (Triandis & Suh, 2002). The collectivistic perspective supports the value of social cooperation and social interest (something Alfred Adler would likely appreciate). Still, even within cultures there are individual differences. There are idiocentric persons (those who favor individuality) living in collectivistic cultures, and allocentric persons (those who favor ingroups) living in individualistic cultures. The best relationship between personality and

culture may be the “culture fit” model, which suggests that it is best to live in the culture that matches your personal inclinations.

**Discussion Question:** The concept of interbeing suggests that all things are ultimately connected. Have you ever taken the time to think about all the things that had to happen, and all the people who were involved, in producing anything you hold in your hand? What about all the things that had to happen, and all the people who were involved, in your creation? And if we are all connected in some way, if we are all interbeing, what have you done to value those relationships?

**Connections Across Cultures: The Non-Violent Struggles of Mahatma Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the 14th Dalai Lama**

The four men listed above are famous in a variety of ways, but they are probably best known for their commitment to nonviolence as a way to achieve political and social justice. Most importantly, they vowed non-violence while those around them were committed to terrible violence in order to deny justice to others. The two who are not alive today were both assassinated, and the other two were forced to live in exile. Gandhi was a Hindu who practiced Yoga, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama are Buddhists, and M. L. King, Jr. was a Christian, and it was their spiritual beliefs that so profoundly determined those aspects of their personalities that demanded peace.

Gandhi (1869-1948) is considered the father of modern India. He was born when the British ruled India, and spent much of his life fighting for the independence of his homeland. Twice he was imprisoned by the government, even though he insisted that all protests should be nonviolent. Indeed, he had established a movement of nonviolence known as **Satyagraha**. Ultimately this movement was successful, and India achieved its independence. Gandhi, however, was assassinated less than a year later. As he died, he spoke the name of God: Rama (Easwaran, 1972; Wilkinson, 2005).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-present) was born in Vietnam, and saw his country dominated first by the French and then by communists. During those difficult times he helped to develop what he and his friends called “**engaged Buddhism**.” Rather than sitting in the temple meditating, they went out into the villages and tried to help the poor people of Vietnam. When confronted by soldiers they did their best to remain mindful, and to feel compassion for the soldiers who threatened them. After all, it was clear to Thich Nhat Hanh that many of those young soldiers were frightened themselves, and so their behavior was very hard to predict. Thus, the calm and peace that accompany mindfulness was often essential for protecting everyone in those terrifying encounters. After being exiled from Vietnam in 1966, he established a community called Plum Village in France, where he still resides today (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1966, 2003).

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was a major figure in America’s civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. The King children learned at an early age about the realities of racism in America. Coming from an educated and socially active family, both his father and grandfather were ministers, he vowed at an early age to work against racial injustice. According to his sister, he said he would turn the world upside down (Farris, 2003). However, he always insisted on doing so in a nonviolent fashion. For this commitment to nonviolence, in 1964 he became the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Despite the peace prize and the passage of both the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, discrimination continued in America. So did the nonviolent protests led by Dr. King. Then, in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated (Burns, 2004; Hansen, 2003; Patrick, 1990).

The Dalai Lama (1935-present) lives in exile in India, though he also spends a great deal of time in America. When China invaded Tibet in 1950, he appealed to the United Nations, other countries, and even tried to reach an agreement with the Chinese leadership. Eventually, however, he was forced to leave Tibet in 1959. Today, nearly 50 years later, he continues to seek a peaceful resolution resulting in freedom for Tibet. He also works to deliberately cultivate feelings of compassion for the Chinese, believing that someday those who have harmed the people of Tibet will have to face the consequences of their actions (Dalai Lama, 2002). The Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

These men have more in common than simply their shared belief in nonviolence. In addition to M. L. King, Jr. and the Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, as Nobel Laureates are entitled to do, Dr. King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the same award. Dr. King had received a letter from Thich Nhat Hanh asking for help in protesting the Vietnam war, which by the 1960s involved the United States. Dr. King was impressed by the Buddhist monk, and once appeared with him at a press conference in Chicago (Burns, 2004). Dr. King was also familiar with and impressed by the teachings of Gandhi. In 1959 he traveled to India to learn firsthand about Gandhi’s Satyagraha, the basis for Gandhi’s nonviolent



independence movement (King, 2000). In 1966, Dr. King delivered the Gandhi Memorial Lecture at Howard University (Hansen, 2003). Since both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are alive today, they have met one another and the Dalai Lama has written several forewords for books by Thich Nhat Hanh. If these men from different countries and different cultures can share so much through the simple (though not easy) practice of nonviolence, perhaps there is something special here for everyone to learn more about.

## **Meditation**

### *Meditation Techniques*

Meditation is the means by which we control our mind and guide it in a more virtuous direction (Dalai Lama, 2001). Modern brain imaging techniques have even begun to identify the brain regions involved in these processes (Barinaga, 2003). There are many different meditation techniques in Yoga and Buddhism, and no one technique is necessarily better than another. What is most important is to pick one type of meditation and stick with it. Meditation takes practice. Most of us find it very difficult to relax and clear our mind. Even when we do, it is difficult to stay relaxed and keep our mind clear. We are distracted by constant thoughts, getting uncomfortable, we have itches and sneezes and whatever... But over time we can get better at relaxing. It helps to have a well-described procedure, and it can be very helpful to meditate in a group (especially if they offer classes or lessons on how to meditate). If you try meditation, don't get discouraged the first few times. Keep it up. As with all paths toward self-improvement, it takes time to progress in your ability to meditate.

Some of the writings of Master Dogen (1200-1253), the monk who founded Japanese Soto Zen, have survived during the 800 years since he lived (in Cook, 2002). Master Dogen recommends a very traditional form of seated meditation. Basically, sit straight up on a comfortable cushion with your legs crossed. Place your right hand in your lap, palm up, and your left hand on your right hand in the same manner, so that your thumbs touch slightly. Keep the eyes slightly open, the mouth closed, and breathe softly. Next comes the hard part: "Think about the unthinkable. How do you think about the unthinkable? Non-thinking."

Non-thinking may sound strange, but it is a fascinating experience for those who achieve it. It can actually make a 3- or 6-hour meditation seem to go by more quickly than a shorter meditation in which you never quite clear your mind. If it sounds a little too strange, don't worry, it isn't the goal of every form of meditation. Some forms of meditation focus on a mantra, or in Christian meditation a short prayer. Trying to focus on God through the celestial eye (in the middle of the forehead) is also a common technique. The Dalai Lama describes several different approaches in one of his books (Dalai Lama, 2001), and Thich Nhat Hanh discusses being reasonable in one's approach to longer meditations (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991). Once again, there is not a right or wrong method of meditation. Whatever technique you try, whether from a book, a guru, a teacher, or a group, it is whatever works for you on your path to personal development.

### *Mindfulness*

*Mindfulness is a form of meditation that occurs throughout every moment of the day. Indeed, it is very important to live fully in every moment, and to look deeply into each experience (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). By being mindful, we can enter into awareness of our body and our emotions. Thich Nhat Hanh relates a story in which the Buddha was asked when he and his monks practiced. The Buddha replied that they practiced when they sat, when they walked, and when they ate. When the person questioning the Buddha replied that everyone sits, walks, and eats, the Buddha replied that he and his monks *knew* they were sitting, *knew* they were walking, and *knew* they were eating (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Mindfulness can also be applied to acts as simple as breathing. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, conscious breathing is the most basic Buddhist technique for touching peace (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). He suggests silently reciting the following lines while breathing mindfully:*

Breathing in, I calm my body.  
Breathing out, I smile.  
Dwelling in the present moment,  
I know this is a wonderful moment!

The concept of mindfulness, viewed in its traditional way, is also being used today in psychotherapy. Two recent books

address the use of mindfulness either in combination with cognitive behavioral therapy to treat depression (McQuaid and Carmona, 2004) or as its own approach to the treatment of anxiety (Brantley, 2003). McQuaid and Carmona (2004) discuss how combining cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness together can provide a much stronger approach to treatment than either technique alone. Since the approaches have much in common, they amplify the effectiveness of each, and given their differences, they offer a complete path to moving beyond simple recovery toward more positive self development. Dr. Brantley (2003) moves more completely into the practice of mindfulness, emphasizing that it must become a way of life. It is not simply a clever therapeutic technique or gimmick.

**Discussion Question:** Mindfulness refers to maintaining a meditative state throughout the day. A similar approach is essential to cognitive/behavioral therapy. Are you aware of what you do during the day, or are you overwhelmed with being too busy? Could you see the practice of mindfulness as a helpful way to deal with your hectic life, and perhaps reduce stress at the same time?

#### *Compassion and Loving-Kindness*

“Just as compassion is the wish that all sentient beings be free of suffering, loving-kindness is the wish that all may enjoy happiness” (Dalai Lama, 2001). With these simple words about Buddhism, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has captured the history of psychology briefly presented in the introductory chapter: that psychology focused for many years on helping to identify and treat mental illness (hopefully freeing people from suffering), whereas now there is a strong movement toward positive psychology (hoping to improve well-being for all). This recognition of compassion as the strong feeling or wish that others be freed from suffering comes from mindfulness. As one becomes truly aware of the suffering involved in human life, and if one is able to feel genuine empathy for others, then compassion naturally arises (Chappell, 2003; Dalai Lama, 2001; Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Compassion has been described as the ideal emotional state (Bankart et al., 2003; Cook, 2002; Dockett & North-Schulte, 2003; Ragsdale, 2003), and Carl Rogers considered genuine empathy to be essential for client-centered therapy to be successful. Aside from Rogers, however, have other psychologists begun to examine the value of compassion and loving-kindness? The answer is an unequivocal “Yes” (Bankart et al., 2003; Batson et al., 2005; Cassell, 2005; Dockett & North-Schulte, 2003; Keyes & Lopez, 2005; Khong, 2003; Ragsdale, 2003; Schulman, 2005; Young-Eisendrath, 2003)!

*“Life is so hard, how can we be anything but kind?”*

*– Kornfield, 1994*

## Obstacles to Personal Growth: The Three Poisons of Buddhism

Buddhists believe in **three poisons**, the great obstacles to personal development. They are greed, anger, and delusion. These poisons, or realms as they are often called, have no nature of their own, they are created by us and they depend on us. Greed flows from attachment, anger flows from our emotions, and delusion flows from maya. By following the practices of Buddhism, we can free ourselves from these poisons as did the Buddha. According to Bodhidharma, the Buddha made three vows. He vowed to put an end to all evil, by practicing moral prohibitions to counter the poison of greed. He vowed to cultivate virtue by practicing meditation to counter the poison of anger. And he vowed to liberate all beings by practicing wisdom to counter the poison of delusion (in Red Pine, 1987). Likewise, we can devote ourselves to the three pure practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom.

It is interesting to note how well this philosophy fits with the growing field of positive psychology (e.g., see Compton, 2005; Peterson, 2006). Indeed, whole books have been written on the study of virtue in psychology (Fowers, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Note, however, that these books are quite recent. Although the seeds of positive psychology, studies on virtue and similar topics have been around since the earliest days of psychology in the Western world, we seem to be just starting to “discover” concepts that have been well established in Eastern philosophy/psychology for thousands of years. As we recognize more similarities between traditional Eastern perspectives and current Western perspectives, it may help to guide these developing areas of psychological research in the Western world.

## A Final Note

### Personality Theory in Real Life: Are You Really You?

We ended the first chapter in this book by asking an interesting question: Who are you? In this chapter, we have addressed the possibility that everything you know about yourself is an illusion, and that even knowing is an illusion. How can this be? The answer may be found, or perhaps not found, in the mystery that is God. The Christian Bible teaches that God's ways are not Man's ways. Paramahansa Yogananda provides a marvelous image of the mystery of the Godhead being so far beyond our comprehension that it defies description (Yogananda, 1946); and Dante's awesome description of the appearance of the divine essence in *Paradiso* is difficult to envision, even as one reads Dante's words (in Milano, 1947). Perhaps some things are beyond our comprehension.

How then, should we proceed to live our life? Based on the concept of Karma, our past actions will influence our future experiences. Consider things you have done in your life. Have you regretted some of them? Did they seem out of character for you? Try to determine if unfortunate events followed those actions you regret. On the positive side, are there things you have done that make you proud or happy? Have those things involved other people, or were they done for other people? Try to determine whether those good things you have done resulted in favorable consequences for you and for others.

Now, here comes the tricky part. When you have done good things, do they feel more like you than the bad things did? If the answer is yes, it may be that you have begun to touch something special within yourself. You are responsible for both the good things and the bad things you have done in this life. But perhaps the good things feel better, feel more like you, because they begin to connect you with your transcendental self, that spark of the divine within you, which may be called spirit or soul. Thinking this way is a deep and powerful challenge, which requires you to have some faith in yourself. Meditate on this, and see what happens!

## Review of Key Points

- Although Yoga and Buddhism have significant religious overtones, they are actually lifestyle guidelines that promote psychological well-being.
- In Yoga there is a dichotomy between spirit and nature, with spirit being pure consciousness. Our belief that we are actually our physical selves (our natural self) is an illusion.
- Karma refers to the cosmic law of cause and effect. Our past actions, both good and bad, affect our future.
- Everything in the natural world is composed of three gunas: rajas (craving and action), tamas (ignorance and dullness), and sattva (light and joy).
- Buddhism is based on the 2,500 year-old teachings of Siddhattha Gotama, who is also known as Gotama Buddha. Bodhidharma brought Zen Buddhism to China some 1,500 years ago, and the Dalai Lama is a very famous Tibetan Buddhist leader alive today.
- The Buddha taught that there are four noble truths: suffering is a reality in human life, suffering comes from craving, the craving that leads to suffering can be destroyed, the path to destroy craving is the Middle Way (aka, the Eightfold Path).
- Buddhists believe in three basic characteristics of existence: nothing is permanent, suffering is an integral part of human life, and we have no immortal, unchanging soul.
- The Buddhist concept of interbeing emphasizes the connection between all living things, and even inanimate objects, because there is only one single source of all creation.
- Meditation, the common element in all forms of Yoga and Buddhism, is a means for controlling our mind and moving it in a more virtuous direction. Soto Zen emphasizes sitting meditation alone, whereas Rinzi Zen adds to seated meditation the practice of meditating on a koan, an unsolvable riddle.
- Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining a meditative state throughout our daily routine.
- The ideal emotional state for Buddhists is compassion. Both compassion and loving-kindness flow naturally from

mindfulness, since mindful individuals recognize the reality of our existence.

- Buddhists believe in three poisons, or obstacles to personal growth: greed, anger, and delusion.
- Zen Buddhism has been taught in the United States for over 100 years. It has found its way into popular literature and has had a clear influence on psychology.

## Vocabulary:

**Karma:** refers to cause and effect. Whenever we perform an action, we experience some consequence at a later time. The second level of karma may be more important, as it refers to our state of mind at the time when we performed the action in question. *Our intentions, or the motives behind an action, determine the nature of the consequences we experience.*

**Buddha:** Buddha's name was Siddhattha Gotama, who is also known as Gotama Buddha. He created teachings and a path of awareness and enlightenment. Buddhism is the philosophy of following the teaching of Buddha.

**Dalai Lama:** The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibet, a country on the Northern side of the Himalaya mountains. The Chinese government requires the Dalai Lama to be in exile because China has colonized Tibet yet Tibet wants to be a free and independent country and practice their religion and customs independent of Chinese rule. The Dalai Lama is an incarnation of previous Dalai Lama's and is an important figure in Tibetan Buddhism and as a world spiritual leader.

**Impermanence:** Buddha said that "everything arises and passes away...existence is illusion". The idea of impermanence or that nothing is permanent is a central belief in Buddhism. Impermanence also influences the study of personality issues, as in a sense there is not really a personality within a person, since everything will fade and change. All that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body).

**Interbeing:** the idea in Buddhism that all things are related, which when one is aware of this it creates additional compassion toward all things.

**Mindfulness** is a technique extracted from Buddhism where one tries to notice present thoughts, feeling and sensations without judgement. It can take many forms including focusing on one thing and being present, or non-thinking and empty mind, or yoga poses or walks in the forest.

**Attachment and Detachment:** Gotama Buddha taught that suffering is the result of craving or desire. This was a problem of "attachment" to things in life such as money or love. Learning detachment or non-attachment to things is an important practice in Buddhism, and decreases suffering.

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