

Chapter 13 Personality

How have psychologists studied personality?

**personality:** the characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviours that are relatively stable in an individual over time and across circumstances.  
**personality trait:** a characteristic; a dispositional tendency to act in a certain way over time and across circumstances.

psychodynamic theories emphasize unconscious and dynamic processes

Freud's **psychodynamic theory** of personality is that unconscious forces (wishes/motives) influence behaviour: *instincts*, the energy that drives the pleasure principle is the *libido*.

a **topographical model of mind:** three zones -- conscious (on top), preconscious and unconscious

according to Freud, the unconscious mind contains wishes, desires and motives, they are associated with conflict, anxiety or pain; to protect the person from distress, they are not accessible. (sometimes it leaks into consciousness, *Freudian slip*)

**development of sexual instincts:** at each **psychosexual stage**, libido is focused on one of the *erogenous zones*: the mouth, the anus, or the genitals.

**structural model of personality**

**id** -> in psychodynamic theory, the component of personality that is completely submerged in the unconscious and operates according to the pleasure principle.

**superego** -> in psychodynamic theory, the internalization of societal and parental standards of conduct

**ego** -> in... the component of personality that tries to satisfy the wishes of the id while being responsive to the dictates of the superego

**defence mechanisms:** unconscious mental strategies the mind uses to protect itself from conflict and distress

Anna Freud: e.g. *reaction formation* occurs when a person wards off an uncomfortable thought about the self by embracing the opposite thought.

**psychodynamic theory since Freud:** focus on *object relations theory*

humanistic approaches emphasize integrated personal experience

referred as *self-actualization*

Maslow's theory of motivation is an example: believed that the desire to become self-actualized is the ultimate and most important human motive.

**Carl Rogers:** *person-centred* approach to personality emphasizes people's personal understandings, or phenomenology

**personality type:** discrete categories based on global personality characteristics

**trait approach:** an approach to studying personality that focuses on the extent to which individuals differ in personality dispositions.

**Eysenck's hierarchical model**

the basic structure of this model begins at the *specific response level*, which consists of observed behaviours.

*habitual response level* (above specific response level)

then, *trait level*

on top, we have *superordinate level*

introversion/extroversion

shy/outgoing

emotional stability

refers to the extent to which people's moods and emotions change: low -> *neurotic people* experience frequent and dramatic mood swings

psychoticism

high -> more aggressive, impulsive, and self-centred

type and trait approaches describe behavioural dispositions

**The BIG FIVE theory**

**openness to experience**

*imaginative vs. down to earth*

*likes variety vs. likes routine*

*independent vs. conforming*

**conscientiousness**

*organized vs. disorganized*

*careful vs. careless*

*self-disciplined vs. weak-willed*

**extroversion**

*social vs. retiring*

*fun-loving vs. sober*

*affectionate vs. reserved*

**agreeableness**

*softhearted vs. ruthless*

*trusting vs. suspicious*

*helpful vs. unco-operative*

**neuroticism**

*worried vs. calm*

*insecure vs. secure*

*self-pitying vs. self-satisfied*

what are the biological bases of personality?

personality is rooted in genetics

identical twins become more alike as they grow older...

**adoption studies:** not alike

are there specific genes for personality?

genes can be linked with some specificity to personality traits.

temperaments are evident in infancy

**temperaments:** biologically based tendencies to feel or act in certain ways

**activity level:** overall amount of energy and of behaviour a person exhibits

**emotionality:** intensity of emotional reactions

**sociability:** general tendency to affiliate with others

personality is linked to specific neurophysiological mechanisms

personality is adaptive

critical thinking skill: avoiding single-cause explanations

personality traits are stable over time

how do we know our own personalities?

our self-concepts consist of self-knowledge

perceived social regard influences self-esteem

critical thinking skill: resisting appeals to snobbery

we use mental strategies to maintain our views of self

there are cultural differences in the self