

PERSONALITY RESEARCH METHODS

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Class Hours: Mon 01:30-04:15 PM



OUTLINE

- Defining Personality and Goal of Personality Psychology
- Types of Data
 - SILB: Self-report (S), Informant (I), Life outcome (L), Behavioral observation (B)
 - Advantages and disadvantages
- Quality of data and measures
 - Reliability, validity, and generalizability
- Research Designs
 - Case method, experiments, correlational method

DEFINING PERSONALITY: POPULAR USAGE

- Sometimes it is equated with social skill and effectiveness
 - “a lot of personality,” “popular personality,” “good personality,” “bad personality”
- Or an individual’s most dominant feature/trait
 - “neurotic,” “outgoing,” “shy” personality

DEFINING PERSONALITY: ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Personality is the entire mental organization of a human being at any stage of his development. It embraces every phase of human character: intellect, temperament, skill, morality, and every attitude that has been built up in the course of one's life (Warren & Carmichael, 1930, p. 333).
- Personality is the essence of a human being (Hall & Lindzey, 1957, p. 9).

DEFINING PERSONALITY: ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaviors (Cervone & Pervin, 2008, p. 8)

DEFINING PERSONALITY: ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's **enduring** and distinctive patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaviors (Cervone & Pervin, 2008, p. 8)
 - Enduring:
 - Qualities that are at least somewhat consistent over time (e.g., a talkative person)

DEFINING PERSONALITY: ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and **distinctive** patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaviors (Cervone & Pervin, 2008, p. 8)
 - Distinctive:
 - Features that differentiate people from one another (e.g., being more/less talkative than most people)
 - Individual differences

DEFINING PERSONALITY: ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Psychological qualities that **contribute to** an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaviors (Cervone & Pervin, 2008, p. 8)
 - Contribute to:
 - Factors that causally influence an individual's distinctive and enduring tendencies (e.g., (to some extent) they determine how the person feels, thinks, and behaves)

GOALS OF PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

How People
Think

How People
Feel

How People
Behave

*Address all 3 of these psychological
features in combination!*

The study of the whole person.

GOALS OF PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

- Kluckhohn and Murray (1953)
 - A complete theory of personality should be able to address the facts that every human being is:
 - like all other human beings
 - like some other human beings
 - like no other human being
- Our textbook includes another element
 - Personality is about what makes us who we are. The study of individual differences is to identify ways in which people are both similar and different, and **explaining how they became that way**.

LIKE ALL OTHER HUMAN BEINGS

- The Human Nature level
- Describes people in general
 - “need to belong”
 - “fight or flight”

LIKE SOME OTHER HUMAN BEINGS

- Individual differences
- Differences between people
 - Some people are more concerned about “belonging”
 - Some people are more talkative than others
- Differences between groups
 - e.g., gender differences, cultural differences

LIKE NO OTHER HUMAN BEING

- People are never exactly the same
- Individuals are unique in many ways
- Examples:
 - Different life story, interpretation of reality

...AND HOW THEY BECAME THAT WAY

- What factors influence the development of personality and the person as a whole?
 - Life experiences
 - Genetics
 - Unconscious motivations
 - Etc.

RESEARCH METHODS

- How do we go about investigating individual differences scientifically?
 - Types of data
 - Research designs

HOW CAN WE STUDY PERSONALITY?

- Personality is an abstract psychological concept:
 - Psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaviors
- We can't directly observe personality
 - Unlike natural science

HOW CAN WE STUDY PERSONALITY?

- However, we can make inferences based on different indicators
- You can think of these potential indicators of personality as “clues.”

SELF-REPORT DATA (S DATA)

- Ask the person for their own opinion
 - Typical personality questionnaire
 - Interviews
 - Life stories

ADVANTAGES OF S DATA

- You are the best expert on your self
 - Privileged knowledge
- Lots of information
- Sometimes only way
 - <http://www.michaelfsteger.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/MLQ.pdf>
- Simple and Easy
 - Most of studies from S-data

DISADVANTAGES OF S DATA

- Maybe they won't tell you the truth
 - Self-presentation concerns
 - People want to be seen in a favorable light
 - Studying dark personality?
 - <https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/narcissistic.htm>
- Error (they can't tell you the truth)
 - Memory is susceptible to biases and shortcomings
 - People think they are “better than average”

INFORMANT DATA (I DATA)

- You or someone else observes the person in the laboratory or in daily life
 - Can ask someone who knows the person about them
 - Can code behavior from photos or videos
- Friends, family, co-workers, or trained psychologists can all provide I data

ADVANTAGES OF EXAMINING I DATA

- Large amount of information available
 - Informants have often seen how you behave in many different types of situations
 - Think about your parents
- Common sense
 - Able to extract the “person” out of the situation
- Can be less biased than S data (in some ways)
 - e.g., You usually don’t have a need to rate a friend as “better than average”

DISADVANTAGES OF EXAMINING I DATA

- Limited amount of information available
 - Informants don't know everything about the person
 - People are sometimes different in different situations
 - Do your parents know how you are like when you're with your best friends?
 - People keep some things hidden from even their closest friends

DISADVANTAGES OF EXAMINING I DATA

- Error
 - No informant can remember everything
 - Behaviors that are easiest to think of are judged to be most accurate – although this is not always true
 - Availability heuristic
- Bias
 - People may inaccurately use pre-existing beliefs as information (e.g., stereotypes)
 - Use of multiple raters helps address some of these concerns

LIFE OUTCOME DATA (L DATA)

- Actual life outcomes
 - e.g., Income, marriage status, arrest record, highest degree, clothing
- Usually taken from archival data but can also simply ask the participant
- Can think of as being the “result” of personality

ADVANTAGES OF EXAMINING L DATA

- Intrinsic Importance
 - From an applied perspective, what could be more important than predicting “real” outcomes?
 - They are things psychologists really want to know about
 - GPA for educational psychologists
 - Crime rates for forensic psychologists
- Psychological Relevance
 - Can be strongly influenced by personality
 - Provides a lot of meaningful information about one’s personality

DISADVANTAGES OF EXAMINING L DATA

- Multi-determination
 - Many factors influence life outcomes
 - Cultural, societal, situational, etc.

TEST OR BEHAVIORAL DATA (B DATA)

- What the person does in a testing situation
- Comes from experimental procedures or standardized measures with objective rules for scoring performance
 - Intelligence tests
 - Task persistence
 - Reaction times
 - Physiological responses
 - Projective tests – TAT, Rorschach Inkblots
 - Coded behaviors (e.g., social interactions)
- Can be collected in a natural or artificial setting
 - Field studies vs. experimental studies in the lab

ADVANTAGES OF B DATA

- Objective
 - The data are not distorted by biases to the same degree as other methods
 - Reaction times
 - Physiological measures
 - “Real” behavior

DISADVANTAGES OF B DATA

- Can be more difficult to collect
- Need to figure out what behaviors relate to the aspect of personality you are studying
- Can be sometimes difficult to interpret
 - What does it mean for someone's personality that they were faster at a reaction time task?
 - Does behavior in a testing situation reflect how people typically behave?

WHAT IS THE BEST DATA?

- Sometimes it depends on what you want to measure.
- However, multiple types of data that converge to suggest the same thing are usually best.
 - Different methods compensate for the weaknesses of others
 - Helps more fully understand the topic being studied

NEXT CLASS

- Will continue
- Read Chapters 2 & 3 of the textbook