



# HENDRIX

COLLEGE

---

## Personality Notes

---

### PSYC 370

*Start*

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

*Author*

Paul Beggs

[BeggsPA@Hendrix.edu](mailto:BeggsPA@Hendrix.edu)

*Instructor*

Prof. Sarah Root, Ph.D.

*End*

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>What is Personality?</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Defining Personality . . . . .	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	The Hypothesis-Testing Approach . . . . .	4
2.1.1	Types of Experimental Variables . . . . .	4
2.1.2	Predictions . . . . .	5
2.1.3	Replication . . . . .	5
2.2	The Case Study Method . . . . .	6
2.2.1	Limitations of Case Study Method . . . . .	6
2.2.2	Strengths of Case Study Method . . . . .	6
2.3	Statistical Analysis of Data . . . . .	6
2.4	Reliability . . . . .	6
2.5	Validity . . . . .	7
<b>4</b>	<b>The Freudian Approach (R. Research)</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1	Research on Dreams . . . . .	8
4.2	Research on Defense Mechanisms . . . . .	8
4.3	Research on Humor . . . . .	9
4.4	Research on Hypnosis . . . . .	9
<b>5</b>	<b>The Neo-Freudian Approach</b>	<b>10</b>
5.1	Research on Dreams . . . . .	10
5.2	Research on Defense Mechanisms . . . . .	10
5.3	Research on Humor . . . . .	11
5.4	Research on Hypnosis . . . . .	11
<b>7</b>	<b>The Trait Approach</b>	<b>12</b>
7.1	Gordon Allport . . . . .	12
7.1.1	Nomothetic vs. Idiographic Approaches . . . . .	12
7.2	Henry Murray . . . . .	13
7.3	Raymond Cattell . . . . .	13
7.4	The Big Five . . . . .	13
7.5	Strengths and Weaknesses . . . . .	14
7.6	Summary . . . . .	15
<b>8</b>	<b>The Trait Approach (Relevant Research)</b>	<b>16</b>
8.1	Type A Personality . . . . .	16
8.1.1	How the Researchers Define the Topic . . . . .	16
8.1.2	Study on Hostility and High Blood Pressure . . . . .	16



8.1.3	Additional Insights . . . . .	16
8.2	Social Anxiety . . . . .	17
8.2.1	How Researchers Define Social Anxiety . . . . .	17
8.2.2	Study on Social Anxiety and Conversation Length (1987) . . . . .	17
8.2.3	Additional Insights . . . . .	17
8.2.4	Cultural Considerations in Social Anxiety (Morrison & Heimberg, 2013) . . . . .	18
8.3	Emotions . . . . .	18
8.3.1	How Researchers Define Emotions . . . . .	18
8.3.2	Study on Negative Affect and Health (Smith, Wallston, & Dwyer, 1995) . . . . .	18
8.3.3	Additional Insights . . . . .	18
8.3.4	Discussion Questions . . . . .	18
8.4	Optimism and Pessimism . . . . .	18
8.4.1	Definitions . . . . .	18
8.4.2	Study on Optimism in Marital Well-Being (Neff & Geers, 2013) . . . . .	19
8.4.3	Additional Studies . . . . .	19
8.4.4	General Insights . . . . .	19
8.4.5	Discussion Questions . . . . .	19

## 1.1 Defining Personality

- *Personality*: consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originating within the individual.

**Chapter Outline:**

- The Hypothesis-Testing Approach
- The Case Study Method
- Statistical Analysis of Data
- Personality assessment
- Summary

## 2.1 The Hypothesis-Testing Approach

- **Theory:** General statement about the relationship between constructs or events.
  - Differ in the range of events or phenomena they cover.
- Characteristics of a good theory:
  - Parsimonious – Explains the phenomenon in simple terms.
  - Useful – Generates testable hypotheses.
- **Hypothesis:** Formal prediction about the relationship between or more variables that is logically derived from a theory.
- A theory is not accepted if empirical investigations consistently fail to confirm predictions.

### 2.1.1 Types of Experimental Variables

- **Independent variable:** Manipulated by the experimenter.
- **Dependent variable:** Measured by the experimenter.
- **Non-Manipulated independent variable:**
  - Exists without the researcher's intervention.
  - Investigator does not randomly assign participants to a conditions
  - Research cannot assume the participants in the two groups are identical.
  - Difficult to find cause-and-effect relationships.
- **Manipulated independent variable:**



- Begins with numerous participants.
- Randomly assigns participants to experimental groups.
- Researcher can assume that all the differences will be evened out.
- Random assignment increases confidence in causation relationships.

### Interaction of Experimental Variables

- Research often has more than one independent variable.
- Interaction:
  - How one independent variable affects the dependent variable depends on the other independent variable.

#### 2.1.2 Predictions

- Accurate predictions can be made if a scientist has a legitimate theory.
- Purpose of research is to provide support for a hypothesis.
- Researchers:
  - Generate a theory
  - Make a hypothesis
  - Collect data that supports or opposes the hypothesis

Unpredicted findings by the researchers are the basis for future hypotheses and further research.

#### 2.1.3 Replication

- Repetition of the research.
  - Example: Pharmaceutical company finds their new medication treats depression in adult men.
- Examines participant populations different from those used in the original research,
- Helps to determine whether the effect applies to larger number of people or is limited to the kind of individuals used in the original sample.
- Determining the strength of an effect by how often it is replicated is difficult because of the ***File Drawer Problem***.
  - Harder to get published when you didn't find significant results.
  - Researchers publish and report research only when they find significant effects.



## 2.2 The Case Study Method

- **Case study:** In-depth analysis of an individual, group, or event.
- **Case study method:**
  - Involves the collection of data from a single individual.
  - Can be used to study a single individual or a group.

### 2.2.1 Limitations of Case Study Method

- Determining cause-and-effect relationships.
- **Generalizability:**
  - Difficulty in generalizing from a single case to a larger population.

### 2.2.2 Strengths of Case Study Method

- Offers insight into the richness of a person's life.
- Valuable for generating hypotheses about the nature of human personality.
- Acts as a useful research tool. Appropriate in examining a rare case.

## 2.3 Statistical Analysis of Data

- Types of statistical tests appropriate for different types of data and research designs.
  - Analysis of variance (ANOVA).
  - $\chi^2$  test.
  - Correlational coefficients.

## 2.4 Reliability

- Extent to which a test measures consistently.
  - Determined by calculating test-retest reliability coefficient.
- Internal consistency
  - All items on the test measure the same thing.
  - **Internal consistency reliability coefficient:**
    - High coefficient indicates that all items on the test measure the same thing.
    - Low coefficient suggests items are measuring more than one concept.



## 2.5 Validity

- Extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure.
- Easy to determine for some kinds of tests.
- Face validity:
  - Way to decide whether a test measures what it is says it measures.
- Congruent validity:
  - Extent to which scores from the test correlate with other measures of the same construct.
  - Otherwise, known as convergent validity.
- Discriminant validity:
  - Extent to which a test score does not correlate with the scores of theoretically unrelated measures.
- Behavioral validation:
  - Step in determining the construct validity of a test.
  - Test scores predicting relevant behavior is important.
  - Usefulness of the test must be questioned if the test scores cannot predict behavior.



# THE FREUDIAN APPROACH (R. RESEARCH)

- When the ego is struggling to meet the demands of the Id and Superego, a person often resorts to using defense mechanisms to cope.
- Examples: Repression, denial, sublimation (pg 40 in text).

## 4.1 Research on Dreams

- Freud stated unconscious impulses can't be suppressed forever, and one way they can come out is in our dreams.
- Research shows that participants deprived of sleep experience show anxiety when distressing events occur.
- Trauma survivors who suppress thoughts about trauma in the day have more trauma related dreams.
- In a study about dreams, participants were recruited to a study and were asked to either
  1. Journal about a person they were fond of or
  2. repress it and write something else.
- Results show that participants who repressed their thoughts had more dreams about their 'target person' than participants who journaled about them.

## 4.2 Research on Defense Mechanisms

- Research shows that the defense mechanisms that we use change as we age.
- Young children are more likely to use denial.
- Projection increases in older childhood while denial decreases.
- More sophisticated defense mechanisms develop as we age, such as sublimation.
- Adults who continue to rely on denial and projection tend to have problems such as increased hostility and alcohol abuse.



## 4.3 Research on Humor

- Why do we laugh at acts of aggression, injuries, or another person's embarrassment?
- Freud thought:
  - Aggressive humor allows an outlet for expressing or experiencing subconscious aggressive urges.
  - Believed aggressive humor allowed for catharsis (reduction in tension).
- In a research study, participants reported that sexual and aggressive jokes were funnier than others jokes.
- People find jokes funnier if they poke at a group or person they don't like.
- A study in the 80s showed that women found jokes insulting men funnier and vice versa.

## 4.4 Research on Hypnosis

- Freud believed that hypnosis could be used to access the unconscious mind.
- People who view hypnosis with distrust are harder to hypnotize.
- Those who become more absorbed in activities and who are prone to daydream are more responsive to hypnosis.
- When participants were told that they will forget being hypnotized, participants often cannot remember their experience.
- Why don't people remember being hypnotized after it happens?

- When the ego is struggling to meet the demands of the Id and Superego, a person often resorts to using defense mechanisms to cope.
- Examples: Repression, denial, sublimation (pg 40 in text).

## 5.1 Research on Dreams

- Freud stated unconscious impulses can't be suppressed forever, and one way they can come out is in our dreams.
- Research shows that participants deprived of sleep experience show anxiety when distressing events occur.
- Trauma survivors who suppress thoughts about trauma in the day have more trauma related dreams.
- In a study about dreams, participants were recruited to a study and were asked to either
  1. Journal about a person they were fond of or
  2. repress it and write something else.
- Results show that participants who repressed their thoughts had more dreams about their 'target person' than participants who journaled about them.

## 5.2 Research on Defense Mechanisms

- Research shows that the defense mechanisms that we use change as we age.
- Young children are more likely to use denial.
- Projection increases in older childhood while denial decreases.
- More sophisticated defense mechanisms develop as we age, such as sublimation.
- Adults who continue to rely on denial and projection tend to have problems such as increased hostility and alcohol abuse.



## 5.3 Research on Humor

- Why do we laugh at acts of aggression, injuries, or another person's embarrassment?
- Freud thought:
  - Aggressive humor allows an outlet for expressing or experiencing subconscious aggressive urges.
  - Believed aggressive humor allowed for catharsis (reduction in tension).
- In a research study, participants reported that sexual and aggressive jokes were funnier than others jokes.
- People find jokes funnier if they poke at a group or person they don't like.
- A study in the 80s showed that women found jokes insulting men funnier and vice versa.

## 5.4 Research on Hypnosis

- Freud believed that hypnosis could be used to access the unconscious mind.
- People who view hypnosis with distrust are harder to hypnotize.
- Those who become more absorbed in activities and who are prone to daydream are more responsive to hypnosis.
- When participants were told that they will forget being hypnotized, participants often cannot remember their experience.
- Why don't people remember being hypnotized after it happens?

Somatotype	Character	Shape
Endomorph [viscerotonic]	Relaxed, sociable, tolerant, comfort-loving, peaceful	Plump, buxom, developed visceral structure
Mesomorph [somatotonic]	Adventurous, assertive, aggressive, vigorous, dominant	Muscular, large-boned, hard, rectangular, strong
Ectomorph [cerebrotonic]	Quiet, sensitive, restrained, introverted, fragile	Thin, fragile, delicate, fine-boned

Table 7.1: Sheldon's Somatotypes

**Trait:** Categorizes people according to degree to which they manifest a particular characteristic.

**Trait theory assumptions:**

1. Characteristics are relatively stable over time.
2. Characteristics are relatively stable across situations.

## 7.1 Gordon Allport

### 7.1.1 Nomothetic vs. Idiographic Approaches

- *Nomothetic:*
  - All people can be described along a single dimension according to their level of, for example, assertiveness or anxiety.
  - Each person in a study using the nomothetic approach is tested to see how his or her score for the given trait compares with the scores of other participants.
  - These traits are called *common traits* because they are shared by everyone.
- *Idiographic:*
  - Focuses on the unique characteristics of an individual.
  - If you ask most people to list the traits that describe them, they will list a number of traits that are unique to them. These traits are called *central traits*.
- Allport says the best way to know someone is by identifying their central traits.



- He proposed that occasionally, a single trait will dominate a person's life and shape almost everything they do. This trait is called a *cardinal trait*.
  - For example, consider someone who is Machiavellian.

## 7.2 Henry Murray

- Greatly influenced by Carl Jung.
- Theory includes a blend of psychoanalytic and trait approaches.
- *Personology*: The study of the whole person.
  - Basic elements of personality are driven by psychogenic needs.
  - Identified 27 needs.
    - Behavior is influenced by the level of importance of each need.
    - Example: Achievement and affiliation needs.

## 7.3 Raymond Cattell

- Devoted time to identifying personality traits through statistical analysis. That is, factor analysis.
- *Factor analysis*: A statistical technique that identifies clusters of related items on a test.
- Consists of 16 personality traits:

1. Warm	9. Suspicious
2. Abstract thinker	10. Imaginative
3. Emotionally stable	11. Shrewd
4. Dominant	12. Apprehensive
5. Enthusiastic	13. Experimenting
6. Conscientious	14. Self-sufficient
7. Bold	15. Controlled
8. Tender-minded	16. Tense

## 7.4 The Big Five

- *Neuroticism*: Degree of emotional instability or stability.
- *Extraversion*: Degree of sociability or social introversion.



- *Openness*: Degree of intellectual curiosity or creativity.
- *Agreeableness*: Degree of friendliness or hostility.
- *Conscientiousness*: Degree of organization or impulsiveness.

Factor	Characteristics
Openness	Imaginative vs. practical; preference for variety vs. routine; independent vs. conforming
Conscientiousness	Organized vs. disorganized; careful vs. careless; disciplined vs. impulsive
Extraversion	Sociable vs. retiring; fun-loving vs. sober; affectionate vs. reserved
Agreeableness	Softhearted vs. ruthless; trusting vs. suspicious; helpful vs. uncooperative
Neuroticism	Worried vs. calm; insecure vs. secure; self-pitying vs. self-satisfied

Table 7.2: The Big Five Personality Factors

## 7.5 Strengths and Weaknesses

- *Strengths*:
  - Provides a comprehensive framework for understanding personality.
  - Has been supported by a large body of research.
  - Has been used to predict a wide range of behaviors.
- *Weaknesses*:
  - Does not explain:
    - **How** or **why** traits develop.
    - **How** traits interact with each other.
    - **How** traits are influenced by the environment.
  - Has the chance for people to fake being good or bad. This is called *social desirability*.



## 7.6 Summary

1. The trait approach assumes we can identify individual differences in behaviors that are relatively stable across situations and over time. Trait theorists are usually not concerned with any one person's behavior but rather with describing behavior typical of people at certain points along a trait continuum.
2. Gordon Allport was the first acknowledged trait theorist. Among his contributions were the notions of central and secondary traits, nomothetic versus idiographic research, and descriptions of the self. Henry Murray identified psychogenic needs as the basic elements of personality. According to Murray, a need will affect behavior depending on where it lies on a person's need hierarchy and the kind of situation the person is in.
3. Raymond Cattell was interested in identifying the basic structure of personality. He used a statistical procedure called factor analysis to determine how many basic traits make up human personality. More recent research provides consistent evidence that personality is structured along five basic dimensions. Although questions remain, the evidence to date tends to support the five-factor model.
4. An enduring controversy in personality concerns the relative importance of traits compared to situational determinants of behavior. Critics have charged that traits do not predict behavior well and that there is little evidence for cross-situational consistency. Trait advocates have answered that if traits and behaviors are measured correctly, a significant relationship can be found. In addition, they maintain that the amount of behavior variance explained by traits is considerable and important.
5. The development of the five-factor model renewed interest in the relationship between personality and job performance. Although several of the Big Five dimensions are related to performance in the business world, many studies indicate that Conscientiousness may be the best predictor of performance.
6. Trait researchers typically rely on self-report assessment procedures in their work. One of the most commonly used self-report inventories is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Test users need to be aware of problems inherent in self-report inventories. These include faking, carelessness and sabotage, and response tendencies.



## THE TRAIT APPROACH (RELEVANT RESEARCH)

### 8.1 Type A Personality

#### 8.1.1 How the Researchers Define the Topic

- Type A personality is characterized by competitiveness, high drive, strong sense of urgency, and strong desire to achieve goals. Also tends to be highly organized, proactive, and strongly motivated by their goals.
- Health research has shown that Type A individuals may be at higher risk for stress-related illnesses due to their high drive and competitiveness. This can also lead to conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, and other stress-related health issues.

One major component, the “toxic component,” of a Type A individual is the likelihood to respond to frustrating situations with anger and hostility. Type A is found to be a good predictor of heart disease, likely due to this “toxic component.”

#### 8.1.2 Study on Hostility and High Blood Pressure

- Men wore blood pressure monitors all day and logged their activities and moods.
- Male participants high in hostility had higher blood pressure levels when interacting with others, whereas low-hostility individuals had no such reaction.
  - This was attributed to highly hostile individuals finding their conversations annoying or frustrating.
- Female participants showed no significant reaction.
  - Researchers suggested this could be because women, in general, prefer social interaction more than men.

#### 8.1.3 Additional Insights

- Type A people typically outperform Type B in achievement settings due to their higher drive, higher set goals, and attraction to competition. Some Type A individuals even perform better when they know they have competition than when they are not competing.
- The effects of hostility on the health of Type A individuals vary by culture.
- Type A individuals are less likely than Type B individuals to relinquish control of a task, even to someone more qualified. (Strube, Berry, & Moergen, 1985)



## 8.2 Social Anxiety

### 8.2.1 How Researchers Define Social Anxiety

Social Anxiety is related to social interactions or anticipated social interactions. It is a trait in which individuals experience anxiety during social encounters or in anticipation of them. Symptoms may include:

- Increased physiological arousal
- Inability to concentrate
- Feelings of nervousness

### 8.2.2 Study on Social Anxiety and Conversation Length (1987)

Researchers hypothesized that socially anxious individuals attempt to control others' impressions by keeping conversations short and non-threatening. They examined how personal stories varied when participants believed they would be evaluated versus when the stories were inconsequential.

- Socially anxious participants in the evaluation group told shorter and less revealing stories than non-shy/socially anxious participants and those in the non-evaluation group.

### 8.2.3 Additional Insights

- Most researchers today use the terms social anxiety and shyness synonymously, as there are high correlations between scales measuring these constructs.
- Social anxiety is distinct from introversion. Introverts prefer solitude, whereas socially anxious individuals dislike their shyness. A 1977 study by Pilkonis found that:
  - Two-thirds of shy individuals considered their shyness a real problem.
  - One-quarter expressed willingness to seek professional help to overcome it.
- Socially anxious individuals tend to believe they are less liked, fear rejection, and become self-conscious, which can lead to actual social rejection.
- 'Evaluation apprehension' is considered a key cause of social anxiety. To manage this fear, individuals:
  - Avoid social encounters.
  - Reduce interaction through avoiding eye contact, keeping conversations short, and limiting personal disclosures.
- Therapy for social anxiety often focuses on improving individuals' confidence in their ability to make a good impression.



### 8.2.4 Cultural Considerations in Social Anxiety (Morrison & Heimberg, 2013)

- Culture influences social anxiety symptoms and diagnosis.
- Some cultures, such as Korea and Japan, have unique social anxiety-related syndromes.
- Social norms, gender roles, shame, and embarrassment contribute to the development of social anxiety symptoms, with varying emphasis across cultures.

## 8.3 Emotions

### 8.3.1 How Researchers Define Emotions

Emotions are complex psychological and physiological states involving subjective experiences, physiological responses, and behavioral expressions. They influence decision-making, social interactions, and well-being.

### 8.3.2 Study on Negative Affect and Health (Smith, Wallston, & Dwyer, 1995)

- Studied rheumatoid arthritis patients categorized by high or low negative affect.
- High-negative-affect patients reported more symptoms and also had objectively worse physical health.

### 8.3.3 Additional Insights

- Expressing emotions improves personal and relational well-being. (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005)
- Positive and negative affects correlate with Big Five personality traits.
- Emotional expressiveness varies between individuals and is stable over time.

### 8.3.4 Discussion Questions

- Why is understanding emotions important in studying personality?
- Are positive and negative affects independent or opposites?

## 8.4 Optimism and Pessimism

### 8.4.1 Definitions

- Optimism: Tendency to see the positive in situations.



- Pessimism: Tendency to focus on the negative aspects of situations.

#### 8.4.2 Study on Optimism in Marital Well-Being (Neff & Geers, 2013)

- Newlyweds completed self-report questionnaires on optimism, neuroticism, and marital satisfaction.
- Couples participated in videotaped discussions on marital strife.
- Follow-up occurred at 6 and 12 months.
- Results:
  - Optimistic spouses used more constructive problem-solving.
  - They experienced fewer declines in marital well-being over time.

#### 8.4.3 Additional Studies

- Optimistic patients in cardiac rehabilitation followed treatment plans more successfully. (Shepperd, Maroto, & Phert, 1996)
- Optimistic spouses of Alzheimer's patients experienced less stress and depression. (Hooker, Monahan, Shifren, & Hutchinson, 1992)

#### 8.4.4 General Insights

- Optimism and pessimism shape overall life outlook rather than just reactions to specific events.
- Optimism varies across cultures (higher in individualistic cultures).
- Optimism is linked to better health, including stronger immune function.

#### 8.4.5 Discussion Questions

- What advantages do optimists have over pessimists?
- How do cultural differences shape optimism and pessimism?
- Why do optimists tend to be healthier?