



Temperament & Personality Development

Health
Psychology
(CMED2006)
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Learning Objectives

Describe the Big Five personality traits

Openness to experience

Conscientiousness

Extraversion

Agreeableness

Neuroticism

Outline the main dimensions of temperament

(Activity; Approach; Irritability; Task persistence)

Describe the nature and nurture factors that affect personality development

At the end of the lecture,
student should be able to:

- Describe the Big Five personality traits
- Outline the main dimensions of temperament
- Describe the nature and nurture factors that affect personality development



Part 1

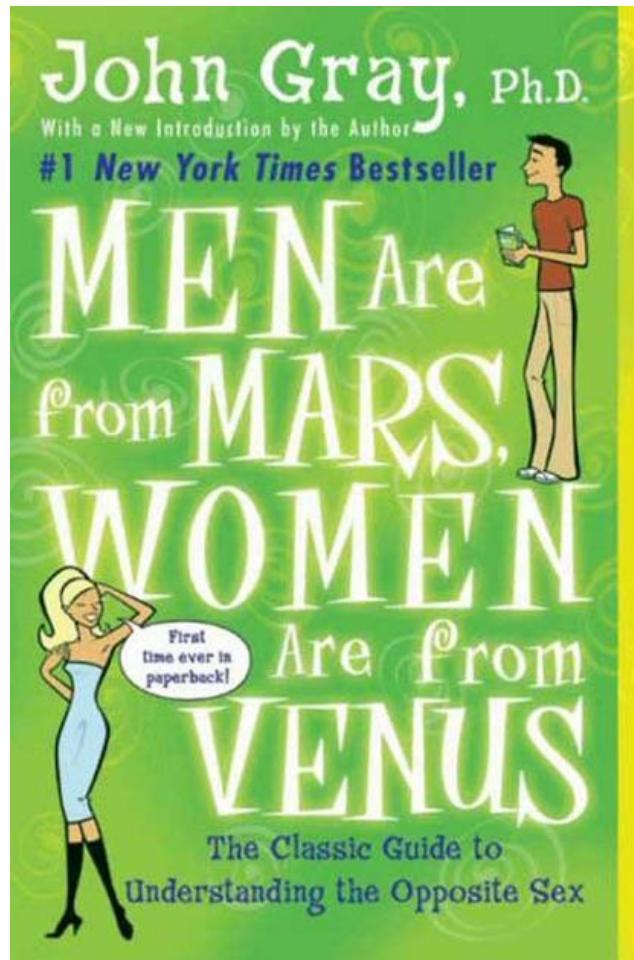
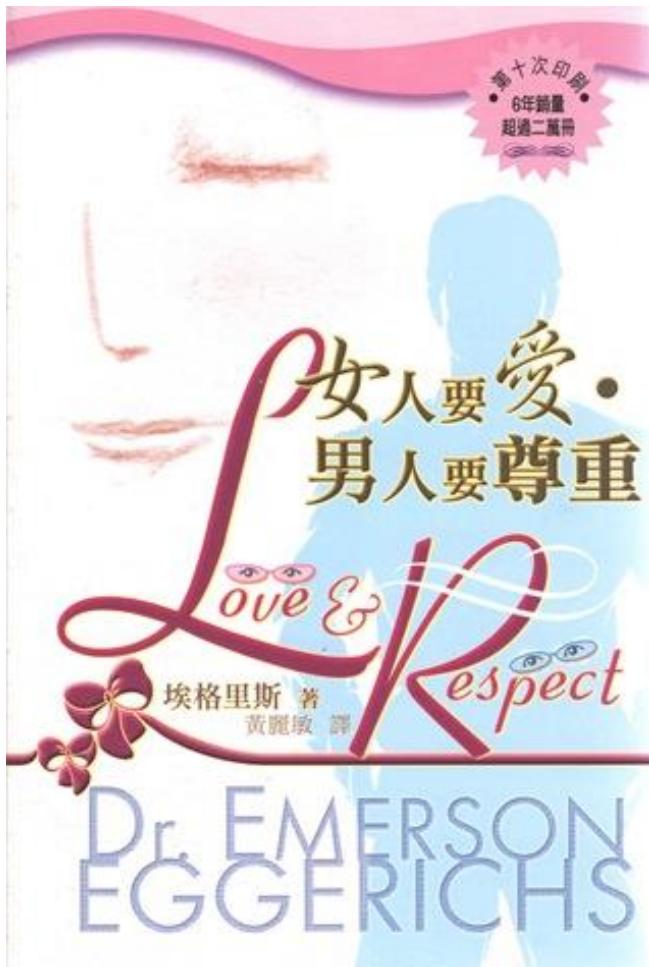
Individual Differences vs Group Differences



Individual Differences

Individual differences refer to any characteristics by which individuals may be distinguished from one another

We can talk about the difference in physical characteristics (e.g., height, weight, appearance, etc.) between different people, but in psychology we often talk about things like intelligence and personality – as well as possible factors that drives these differences (e.g., difference between men & women)



Men, Women & Anyone In-between

Men—Women and Male—Female are historically one of the most common way to divide people (and things, and even words)

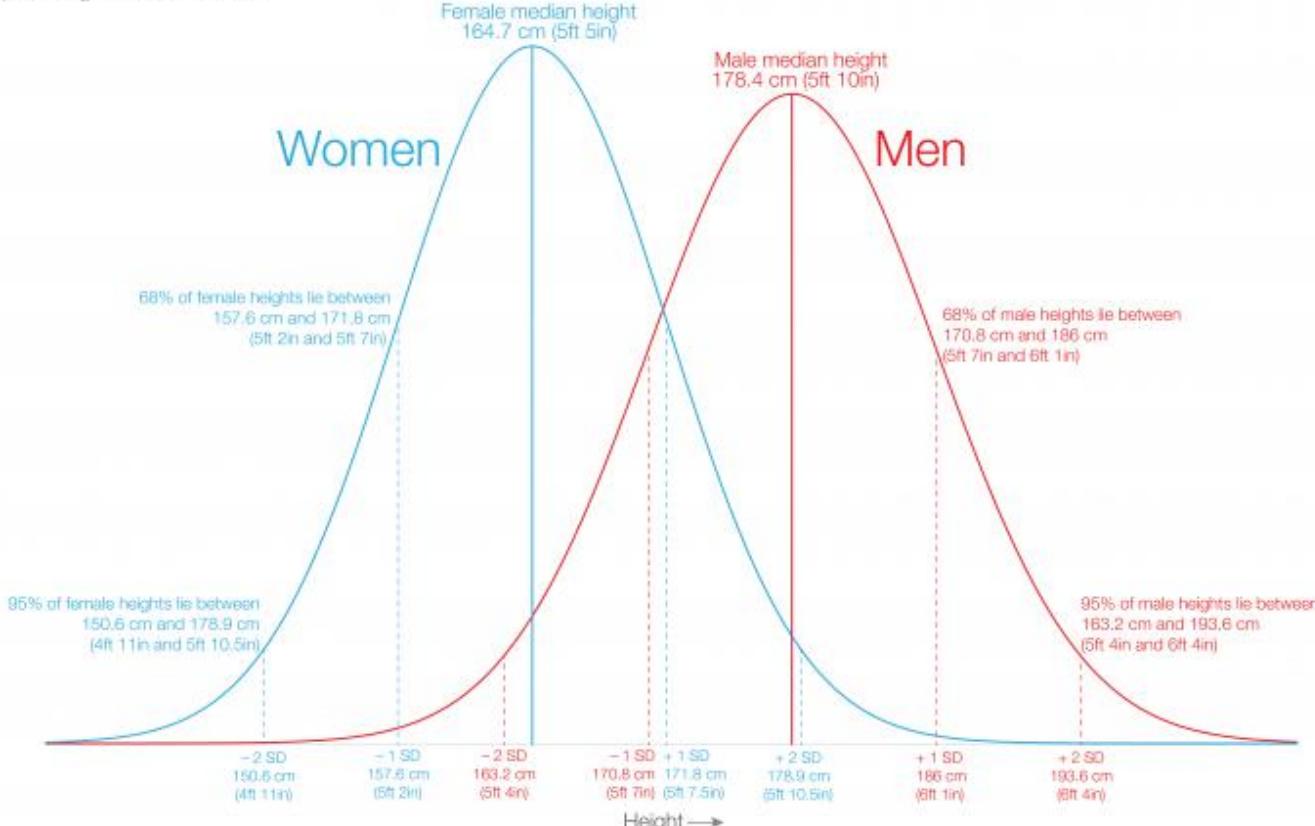
There are definitely differences between men and women, but note that a lot of the differences are the result of social factors rather than biological factors

The distribution of male and female heights

The distribution of adult heights for men and women based on large cohort studies across 20 countries in North America, Europe, East Asia and Australia. Shown is the sample-weighted distribution across all cohorts born between 1980 and 1994 (so reaching the age of 18 between 2008 and 2012).

Since human heights within a population typically form a normal distribution:

- 68% of heights lie within 1 standard deviation (SD) of the median height;
- 95% of heights lie within 2 SD.



Note: this distribution of heights is not globally representative since it does not include all world regions due to data availability.

Data source: Jelenković et al. (2016). Genetic and environmental influences on height from infancy to early adulthood: An individual-based pooled analysis of 45 twin cohorts.

This is a visualization from OurWorldInData.org, where you find data and research on how the world is changing.

Licensed under CC-BY by the author Cameron Appel.

Group Differences

Characteristics of men and women overlap quite a lot, so that it is often not very useful when we deal with individuals

Similarly, even if differences between groups are, on average, quite significant, that might not apply to individual members

Grouping/labelling can be convenient and comforting, but can lead to insensitivity and prejudice



Part 2

Temperament



Definition of Temperament

“The basic foundation of personality, usually assumed to be biologically determined and present early in life, including such characteristics as energy level, emotional responsiveness, demeanor, mood, response tempo, behavioral inhibition, and willingness to explore.”

(APA Dictionary of
Psychology, 2nd edition)



Temperament

Temperament is the basic set of behavioural and emotional predispositions present at birth – and which would eventually affect one's personality

In terms of infants, the most basic classification would be “easy children (40% of infants)”, “difficult children (10% of infants)” and “slow-to-warm-up children (15% of infants)” – the rest of infants being a combination of these



4 Key Dimensions of Temperament

Young children have less clear and less stable personality, but differences in temperament can still be observed

Note that like personality, temperament describe a child's tendencies to behave, rather than describe a type of children

A photograph of a baby with dark hair, wearing a blue shirt and white shorts, crawling on a green lawn. In the background, there's a colorful plastic trampoline and a soccer ball in the foreground. The baby is looking towards the camera with a joyful expression.

4 Key Dimensions: Activity

A tendency to move often and vigorously rather than to remain passive or immobile

Opposite to passivity and inactive



4 Key Dimensions: Approach

Also sociability

A tendency to move toward rather than away from new people, situations, or objects, usually accompanied by positive emotion

Opposite to inhibition and anxiety (a tendency to respond with fear or to withdraw from new people, situations, or objects)



4 Key Dimensions: Irritability

Also negative emotionality / anger

A tendency to respond with anger, fussiness, loudness, or irritability; a low threshold of frustration

Opposite to positive emotionality and calmness



4 Key Dimensions: Task Persistence

Also effortful control

An ability to stay focused, to manage attention and effort

Opposite to indolence and distractable



Development of Temperament & Personality

Temperament and personality are affected by different factors:

Heredity & Gender differences

Environment (including parenting style) – both behaviours and experiences affect how our brain develops (also see Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development)



Goodness of Fit

Compatibility between parent and child is important

Problems might arise if the parent's behaviour, demands, and expectations do not match the child's temperament and abilities

Parents (and indeed anyone working with young children) need to be sensitive to the difference in children's temperament



Tool 84: Dimensions of Temperament

A person's (especially a young person's) behaviour might be explained by their temperament and the goodness of fit between the person and those they are interacting with

One's temperament can ultimately affect their personality – both are the results of interactions between nature and nurture factors



Part 3

Personality & Personality Traits

Definition of Personality



“The enduring configuration of characteristics and behavior that comprises an individual’s unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns.”

(APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2nd edition)



Definition of Personality Trait

“A relatively stable, consistent, and enduring internal characteristic that is inferred from a pattern of behaviors, attitudes, feelings, and habits in the individual.”

(APA Dictionary of
Psychology, 2nd edition)



Personality

Characteristics of a person,
relatively stable

Tendencies, not types (e.g., the pseudoscience of enneagram,
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
& zodiac sign personality)

Develop through the
interaction between nature
(temperament) and nurture
(environment & experience)



Five-Factor Personality Model (FFM)

Most widely used taxonomy of personality is the Big Five personality traits / five-factor personality model, which states that individual differences in personality can be described through five main dimensions (OCEAN):

Openness to experience;
Conscientiousness;
Extraversion;
Agreeableness;
Neuroticism

A photograph of a person paragliding against a backdrop of majestic, snow-covered mountain peaks under a clear blue sky. The paraglider's canopy is a vibrant mix of red, orange, and blue. A small green gondola is visible at the top of the image.

Openness to Experience

One's tendency to be open to new aesthetic, cultural, or intellectual experiences

Associated with rich vocabulary, vivid imagination, interest in abstract ideas, willingness to try new and unconventional things, risk-taking behaviours, etc.

Conscientiousness



One's tendency to be organized, responsible, and hardworking

Associated with being organized, being prepared, having and following a schedule, paying attention to details, paying attention to one's duties, etc.



Extraversion

An orientation of one's interests and energies toward the outer world of people and things rather than the inner world of subjective experience

Associated with interacting with people, fond of talking, comfortable around people, drawing attention to oneself, needing more stimulation, etc.

Agreeableness

One's tendency to act in a cooperative, unselfish manner

Associated with being considerate and kind, being helpful to others, sympathize with others' feelings, being less competitive, being interested in other people's problems, etc.



A photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt and grey pants, sitting alone in a dark room. He is leaning forward with his head in his hands, appearing distressed or overwhelmed. He is seated in a brown leather armchair with a tufted backrest. The background is a dark, textured wall.

Neuroticism

A chronic level of emotional instability and proneness to psychological distress

Associated with being easily stressed, frequent mood swings, worried about things, easily disturbed, less easy to relax, etc.

A photograph of a concert or performance. In the foreground, several hands are raised, some forming a heart shape. The background is filled with bright stage lights and smoke, creating a hazy, energetic atmosphere.

Notes about Personality

The five dimensions of personality (and also most scientific theories of personality) are descriptive of a person's tendency to behave – and not prescriptive, nor are there moral judgement

People are NOT divided into personality types – for each dimension, most people are around the middle; and it is the combination of traits that make up a person's personality

A photograph of a person lying on their back on a grassy bank next to a large body of water. They are wearing a dark jacket, blue jeans, and brown boots. They are holding an open book in their hands. A red backpack is placed on the grass to the left of their head. The water is a deep teal color and has some ripples. The sky is clear and blue.

Tool 85: Five-Factor Personality Model (FFM)

A person's behaviour might be explained by their personality, which could be described according to the five dimensions of the five-factor personality model

The five dimensions being openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism

A photograph showing two young men in a study room. One man, seen from behind, wears a light green t-shirt. The other man, facing him, has dark skin and short black hair, wearing a dark blue t-shirt. They are seated at a light-colored wooden table, looking towards each other in what appears to be a conversation. Large windows in the background let in bright sunlight, creating a warm atmosphere.

Part 4

Explaining and Suggesting Behaviours

Scenario 1

How should a caretaker/parent interact with a child with the temperament below so as to help the child perform?

Activity—~~Passivity~~

Approach—Inhibit

Irritability—~~Calmness~~

Task persistence—~~Distractable~~

Scenario 2

How might we encourage a diabetic patient to adopt a healthier lifestyle if they have a high level of each of the factors below?

Openness to experience

Conscientiousness

Extraversion

Agreeableness

Neuroticism



Part 5

Conclusion



Temperament (tendencies)

Activity

Approach

Irritability

Task persistence

Five-Factor Personality Model (tendencies)

Openness to experience

Conscientiousness

Extraversion

Agreeableness

Neuroticism

Conclusion

It is tempting to divide people into broad groups and overestimate the differences between one person and the next (or underestimate the differences between two people in the same group)

Temperament is the basic set of behavioural and emotional predispositions present at birth

Personality is the enduring configuration of characteristics and behavior that comprises an individual's unique adjustment to life

A photograph of a library aisle. On both sides, there are tall metal bookshelves filled with books. The books are arranged in rows, their spines visible. Above the bookshelves, several vintage-style lightbulbs are suspended by wires, casting a warm, glowing light that illuminates the books. The lighting creates a cozy and scholarly atmosphere. In the background, more bookshelves and lightbulbs are visible, creating a sense of depth.

Reading / References

Boyd, DR & Bee, H (2019). Lifespan development (8th ed.). Chapter 6.4: Personality, Temperament, and Self-Concept; Chapter 8.2: Personality and Self-Concept; Boston, MA: Pearson.



~ End of Lecture ~

