11

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Personality

AMY WINEHOUSE IS A SINGER known for her personality. Her music has personality, yes—a bluesy, boozy, contralto that seems carefully composed to sound as though she doesn't care. The songs she chooses have personality, too, like the memorable "Rehab" ("They tried to make me go to rehab, I said 'No, no, no'"). Her life, at least as it's portrayed in gossip magazines and websites, is an expression of personality as well. If you believe all you read, she's had boyfriend troubles, drug troubles, drinking troubles, family troubles, international diplomacy troubles, and more. On top of all that, she's collected enough bad tattoos to rival the Sunday comics. How much of this is real and how much is a show we don't know. But she's one of a kind. Amy Winehouse has personality in an important sense—she has qualities that make her psychologically different from other people. ■

AP PHOTO/KEVORK DJANSEZIAN

Singer Amy Winehouse arrives at the MTV Movie Awards in Los Angeles, 2007.

Personality is *an individual's characteristic style of behaving, thinking, and feeling.* Winehouse's personal troubles, her melodramatic styles of song and life, her way of drawing attention to herself by embracing things others might call tacky, are all parts of her personality. In this chapter, we will explore personality, first by looking at what it is and how it is measured and then by focusing on each of four main approaches to understanding personality—trait-biological, psychodynamic, humanistic-existential, and social cognitive. (Psychologists have personalities, too, so their different approaches, even to the topic of personality, shouldn't be that surprising.) At the end of the chapter, we will discuss the psychology of self to see how our views of what we are like can shape and define our personality.

Personality: What It Is and How It Is Measured

If someone said, "You have no personality," how would you feel? Like a cookie-cutter person, a grayish lump, probably a bore to boot, who should go out and get a personality as soon as possible? People don't usually strive for a personality; one seems to develop naturally as we travel through life. As psychologists have tried to understand the process of personality development, they have pondered questions of description (How do people differ?), explanation (Why do people differ?), and the more quantitative question of measurement (How can personality be assessed?).

Describing and Explaining Personality

Like early biology studies, the descriptive aspect of personality psychology is taxonomic in approach. The first biologists earnestly attempted to classify all plants and animals—whether lichens or ants or fossilized skunks. Similarly, personality psychologists began by labeling and describing different personalities. And just as biology came of age with Darwin's theory of evolution, which *explained* how differences among species arose, the maturing study of personality has also developed explanations of the basis for psychological differences among people.

What does it mean to say that personality is in the eye of the beholder?

Most personality psychologists focus on specific, psychologically meaningful individual differences—characteristics such as honesty or anxiousness or moodiness. Still, personality is often in the eye of the beholder. There is usually a high degree of similarity among any one individual's descriptions of many different people ("Jason thinks that Bob is considerate, Jeff is kind, and Gina is nice to others"). In contrast, resemblance is quite low when many people describe one person ("Bob thinks Jason is smart, Jeff thinks he is competitive, and Gina thinks he has a good sense of humor") (Dornbusch et al., 1965). As you will see, theorists also differ in their views on the characteristics of personality worth describing.

In general, explanations of personality differences are concerned with (1) *prior events* that can shape an individual's personality or (2) *anticipated events* that might motivate the person to reveal particular personality characteristics. Thus, on the one hand, Amy

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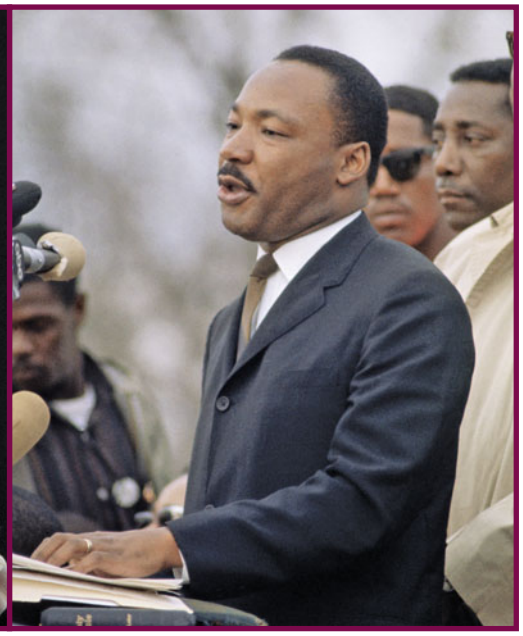

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How would you describe each of these personalities?

Winehouse's genes and prior experiences may have led her to a life of problem behavior; on the other hand, she expected to find happiness in drugs and alcohol, and those motives also might explain her behavior. Understanding the puzzle that is Winehouse's life—or the life of any ordinary woman or man—also depends on insights into the interaction between the past and future. Personality psychologists study questions of how our personalities are determined by the forces in our minds and in our personal history of heredity and environment, and by the choices we make and the goals we seek.

personality An individual's characteristic style of behaving, thinking, and feeling.

self-report A series of answers to a questionnaire that asks people to indicate the extent to which sets of statements or adjectives accurately describe their own behavior or mental state.

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) A well-researched clinical questionnaire used to assess personality and psychological problems.

Measuring Personality

Of all the things psychologists have set out to measure, personality must be one of the toughest. How do you capture the uniqueness of a person—like a moonbeam in a jar? Different traditions have tended to favor different measurement techniques. The general personality measures can be classified broadly into personality inventories and projective techniques.

Personality Inventories

To learn about an individual's personality, you could follow the person around and, clipboard in hand, record every single thing the person does, says, thinks, and feels—including how long this goes on before the person calls the police. Some observations might involve your own impressions ("Day 5: seems to be getting irritable"); others would involve objectively observable events that anyone could verify ("Day 7: grabbed my pencil and broke it in half, then bit my hand").

Psychologists have figured out ways to obtain objective data on personality without driving their subjects to distraction. The most popular technique is the **self-report**—*a series of answers to a questionnaire that asks people to indicate the extent to which sets of statements or adjectives accurately describe their own behavior or mental state*. The respondent typically produces a self-description by circling a number on a scale or indicating whether an item is true or false. The researcher then combines the answers to get a general sense of the individual's personality with respect to a particular domain.

Perhaps the best-known self-report measure is the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)**, *a well-researched clinical questionnaire used to assess personality and psychological problems*. The MMPI consists of more than 500 descriptive statements—for example, "I often feel like breaking things," "I think the world is a dangerous place," and "I'm good at socializing"—to which the respondent answers "true," "false," or "cannot say," depending on whether the item applies to him or her. Its 10 main subscales measure different personality characteristics which are thought to represent personality difficulties when demonstrated to an extreme degree (Hathaway & McKinley, 1951). Like many early psychological tests, the original items were generated by studying how specific groups of people, as compared to the general population, completed a variety of items and then creating the scales from the items that these groups answered differently.

In addition to assessing tendencies toward clinical problems—for example, depression, hypochondria, anxiety, paranoia, and unconventional ideas or bizarre thoughts and beliefs—the MMPI measures some relatively general personality characteristics, such as degree of masculine and feminine gender role identification, sociability versus social inhibition, and impulsivity. The MMPI also includes *validity scales* that assess a person's attitudes toward test taking and any tendency to try to distort the results by faking answers.

● What are some limitations of personality inventories?

Personality inventories such as the MMPI are easy to administer: Just give someone a pencil and away they go. The person's scores can be calculated by a computer and compared with the average ratings of thousands of other test takers. Because no interpretation of the responses is needed, biases are minimized. Of course, an accurate reading of personality will only occur if people provide honest responses—especially about characteristics that might be

projective techniques A standard series of ambiguous stimuli designed to elicit unique responses that reveal inner aspects of an individual's personality.

Rorschach Inkblot Test A projective personality test in which individual interpretations of the meaning of a set of unstructured inkblots are analyzed to identify a respondent's inner feelings and interpret his or her personality structure.

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) A projective personality test in which respondents reveal underlying motives, concerns, and the way they see the social world through the stories they make up about ambiguous pictures of people.

unflattering—and if they don't always agree or always disagree—a phenomenon known as *response style*. The validity scales help detect these problems but cannot take them away altogether.

Another drawback is related to the actual characteristics being measured. Certain personality factors may function largely outside consciousness, and so asking people to tell us about them makes little sense. (For example, would someone know if he or she were conceited?) Despite potential drawbacks, however, personality inventories remain an efficient and effective means of testing, classifying, and researching a wide range of personality characteristics.

Projective Techniques

The second major class of tools for evaluating personality, the **projective techniques**, consist of *a standard series of ambiguous stimuli designed to elicit unique responses that reveal inner aspects of an individual's personality.* The developers of projective tests assumed that people will project personality factors that are out of awareness—wishes, concerns, impulses, and ways of seeing the world—onto ambiguous stimuli and will not censor these responses. As an example of such projection, consider the game of cloud watching. If you and a friend were looking at the sky one day and she suddenly became seriously upset because one cloud looked to her like a flesh-eating monster, her response would reveal a lot more about her inner conflicts than her explicit answer to a direct question about the kind of things that frighten her.

SPENCER GRANT/PHOTOE

FIGURE 11.1
Sample Rorschach Inkblot *Test takers are shown a card such as this sample and asked, "What might this be?" What they perceive, where they see it, and why it looks that way are assumed to reflect unconscious aspects of their personality. (Behn-Rorschach Test, Verlag Hans Huber, Bern, Switzerland, 1941.)*

Probably the best-known and mostly widely used technique is the **Rorschach Inkblot Test**, *a projective personality test in which individual interpretations of the meaning of a set of unstructured inkblots are analyzed to identify a respondent's inner feelings and interpret his or her personality structure*. An example inkblot is shown in **FIGURE 11.1**. Responses are scored according to complicated systems (derived in part from research with patients) that classify *what* is seen (content), *where* it is seen (location), and *why* it is seen that way (determinants). For example, most people who look at **FIGURE 11.1** report seeing birds or people. Someone who is unable to see obvious items when he or she responds to a blot may be described as having difficulty perceiving the world as others do and as seeing things according to his or her unique perspective (Exner, 1993; Rapaport, 1946).

Can psychologists using the Rorschach test discover aspects of personality that are usually hidden, even from the person taking the test? Critics argue that although the Rorschach captures some of the more complex and private aspects of personality, the test is open to the subjective interpretation and theoretic biases of the examiner. In fact, to have value, a test of personality should permit prediction of a person's behavior, but evidence is sparse that Rorschach test scores have such predictive value (Dawes, 1994; Fowler, 1985; Wood, Nezworski, & Stejskal, 1996; Wood et al., 2003). Many psychologists still use the technique, but it is losing its popularity (Garb, 1999; Widiger, 2001).

Another widely used test is the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**, *a projective personality test in which respondents reveal underlying motives, concerns, and the way they see the social world through the stories they make up about ambiguous pictures of people*. To get a sense of the test, look at **FIGURE 11.2** on page 337. Who are those people, and what are they doing and thinking? What led them to this moment, and what will happen next? Different people tell very different stories about this image. In creating the stories, the test taker is thought to identify with the main characters and to project his or her view of others and the world onto the other details in the drawing. Psychologists who use the TAT look for repeated themes and their relationship across a large number of cards, typically 10.

ONLY HUMAN

RORSCHACH TEST WITH TOMATO SAUCE? In March 1991, motorists in Stone Mountain, Georgia, reported seeing the image of Christ in a forkful of spaghetti on a Pizza Hut billboard. One woman said the image caused her to abandon plans to quit her church choir.

Many of the TAT drawings tend to elicit a consistent set of themes, such as successes and failures, competition and jealousy, conflict with parents and siblings, feelings about intimate relationships, aggression and sexuality. The sample card shown in FIGURE 11.2 tends to elicit themes regarding mother-daughter relationships, aging, and concerns regarding femininity and women's roles (Murray, 1943). Here is one young woman's response to the drawing—one that seems to reveal her own personal internal situation and a conflict between her wish for independence and fear that this is wrong and is punishable by a tragic loss: "The old lady in the background seems angry and thinks the younger one is making a big mistake. Maybe they're related. . . . Everything the young woman does is wrong in her mother's eyes. The daughter just wants to get away and live her own life but is too guilty to leave her mother's side, thinking it will hurt her. In the end, hmm? The girl does leave and the mother dies."

● **Why might a projective test like the TAT story be less than reliable?**

Projective tests remain controversial in psychology. Critics argue that such tests are open to the subjective interpretation and theoretic biases of the examiner. Although a TAT story like the above may *seem* revealing, the examiner must always add an interpretation (was this about the client's actual mother, about her own conflicted desires for independence, about trying to be funny or creative or oddball?), and that interpretation could well be the scorer's *own* projection into the mind of the test taker. Thus, despite the rich picture of a personality and the insights into an individual's motives that these tests offer, projective tests should be understood primarily as a way in which a psychologist can get to know someone personally and intuitively (McClelland et al., 1953). When measured by rigorous scientific criteria, the TAT, like the Rorschach and other projective tests, has not been found to be reliable or valid in predicting behavior (Lilienfeld, Lynn, & Lohr, 2003).

FIGURE 11.2
Sample TAT Card *Test takers are shown cards with ambiguous scenes such as this sample and are asked to tell a story about what is happening in the picture. The main themes of the story, the thoughts and feelings of the characters, and how the story develops and resolves are considered useful indices of unconscious aspects of an individual's personality (Murray, 1943).*

summary quiz [11.1]

1. Which of the following is *not* a drawback of self-report personality measures such as the MMPI?
   a. People may respond in ways that put themselves in a flattering light.
   b. Some people tend to always agree or always disagree with the statements on the test.
   c. Responses do not need to be interpreted.
   d. People are unaware of some of their personality characteristics and thus cannot answer accurately.

2. Rorschach tests are losing popularity because
   a. there is little evidence that they have predictive value.
   b. personality factors may function outside of consciousness.
   c. their results are scored by computers.
   d. projective techniques have become more popular.

3. Which of the following is an accurate statement about projective techniques?
   a. They are easy to administer and score.
   b. They are open to subjective interpretation by the examiner.
   c. The method of scoring eliminates theoretical biases of the examiner.
   d. They are the most reliable and valid of the personality tests.

The Trait Approach: Identifying Patterns of Behavior

Imagine writing a story about the people you know. To capture their special qualities, you might describe their traits: Lulu is *friendly, aggressive,* and *domineering;* Seth is *flaky, humorous,* and *superficial*. The trait approach to personality uses such trait terms to characterize differences among individuals. In attempting to create manageable and meaningful sets of descriptors, trait theorists face two significant challenges: narrowing down the almost infinite set of adjectives, and answering the more basic question of why people have particular traits—whether they arise from biological or hereditary foundations.

Traits as Behavioral Dispositions and Motives

Gordon Allport (1937), one of the first trait theorists, proposed that personality can best be understood as a combination of traits. A **trait** is *a relatively stable disposition to behave in a particular and consistent way.* For example, a person who keeps his books organized alphabetically in bookshelves, hangs his clothing neatly in the closet, knows the schedule for the local bus, keeps a clear agenda in a daily planner, and lists birthdays of friends and family in his calendar can be said to have the trait of *orderliness*. This trait consistently manifests itself in a variety of settings.

The "orderliness" trait, of course, describes a person but doesn't explain his or her behavior. *Why* does the person behave in this way? There are two basic ways in which a trait might serve as an explanation—the trait may be a preexisting disposition of the person that causes the person's behavior, or it may be a motivation that guides the person's behavior. Allport saw traits as preexisting dispositions, causes of behavior that reliably trigger the behavior. The person's orderliness, for example, is an inner property of the person that will cause the person to straighten things up and be tidy in a wide array of situations.

How might traits both describe people and explain their behavior?

Henry Murray, a trait theorist interested in motivation, suggested instead that traits reflect needs or desires. Just as a hunger motive might explain someone's many trips to the snack bar, a need for orderliness might explain the neat closet, organized calendar, and familiarity with the bus schedule (Murray & Kluckhohn, 1953). As a rule, researchers examining traits as causes have used personality inventories to measure them, whereas those examining traits as motives have more often used projective tests.

A closet isn't just a place for clothes. In some cases, it's a personality test.

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The Search for Core Traits

Picking a single trait such as orderliness and studying it in depth doesn't get us very far in the search for the core of human character—for the basic set of traits that define how humans differ from one another. How have researchers tried to discover such core traits?

trait A relatively stable disposition to behave in a particular and consistent way.

Big Five The traits of the five-factor model: conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extroversion.

Classification Using Language

The study of core traits began with an exploration of how personality is represented in the store of wisdom we call language. Generation after generation, people have described people with words, so early psychologists proposed that core traits could be discerned by finding the main themes in all the adjectives used to describe personality. In one such analysis, a painstaking count of relevant words in a dictionary of English resulted in a list of over 18,000 potential traits (Allport & Odbert, 1936)!

Although narrowing down such a list isn't too difficult because so many words are synonyms—for example, *giving, generous,* and *bighearted* all mean more or less the same thing—the process is too subjective to permit development of a true set of core of traits. Just looking at traitlike words that seemed to represent motives, for instance, led Murray (1938) to propose over 40 basic motivations in addition to the need for orderliness.

More recently, researchers have used the computational procedure called *factor analysis,* described in Chapter 7, which sorts trait terms into a small number of underlying dimensions, or "factors," based on how people use the traits to rate themselves. In a typical study using factor analysis, hundreds of people rate themselves on hundreds of adjectives, indicating how accurately each one describes their personality. The researcher then calculates the patterns to determine similarities in the raters' usage—whether, for example, people who describe themselves as *responsible* also describe themselves as *careful* but not *negligent* or *careless*. Factor analysis can also reveal which adjectives are unrelated. For example, if people who describe themselves as *responsible* are neither more nor less likely to describe themselves as *creative* or *innovative,* the factor analysis would reveal that responsibility and creativity/innovation represent different factors.

Using the factor analysis technique, Hans Eysenck (1967) developed a model of personality with only two (later expanded to three) major traits. He identified one dimension that distinguished people who are sociable and active (extraverts) from those who are relatively introspective and quiet (introverts). His analysis also identified a second dimension ranging from the tendency to be very neurotic or emotionally unstable to the tendency to be more emotionally stable. He believed that many behavioral tendencies could be understood in terms of their relation to these core traits. FIGURE 11.3 suggests that these two dimensions may not be an oversimplified view; the two central dimensions seem to capture a much larger number of specific traits.

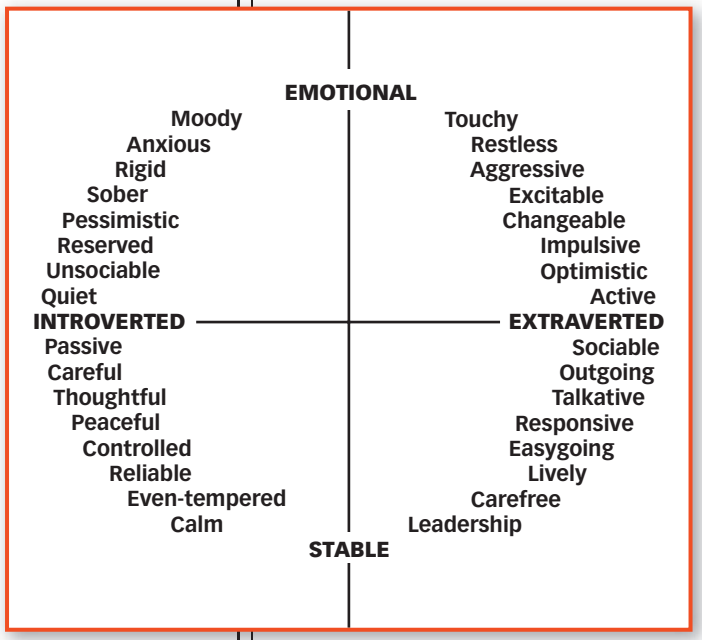


FIGURE 11.3 Eysenck's Depiction of Trait Dimensions *The trait dimensions shown here can be combined to describe a great deal of the variability in human personality. If you look at the adjectives between any two of the four possible points on the grid, you'll see a interesting range of possible surface characteristics (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985).*

The Big Five Dimensions of Personality

Today many factor analysis researchers agree that personality is best captured by five factors (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999). The **Big Five,** as they are affectionately called, are *the traits of the five-factor model: conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extraversion* (see TABLE 11.1). The five-factor model is now widely preferred for several reasons. First, modern factor analysis techniques confirm that this set of five factors strikes the right balance between accounting for as much variation in personality as possible while avoiding overlapping traits. Second, in a large number of studies using different kinds of data—people's descriptions of their own personalities, other people's descriptions of their personalities, interviewer checklists, and behavioral observation—the same five factors

TABLE 11.1

The Big Five Factor Model

Conscientiousness	organized . . . . . disorganized careful . . . . . careless self-disciplined . . . . . weak-willed
Agreeableness	softhearted . . . . . ruthless trusting . . . . . suspicious helpful . . . . . uncooperative
Neuroticism	worried . . . . . calm insecure . . . . . secure self-pitying . . . . . self-satisfied
Openness to experience	imaginative . . . . . down-to-earth variety . . . . . routine independent . . . . . conforming
Extraversion	social . . . . . retiring fun loving . . . . . sober affectionate . . . . . reserved

Source: McCrae & Costa, 1999, 1990.

have emerged. Third, and perhaps most important, the basic five-factor structure seems to show up across a wide range of participants, including children, adults in other cultures, and even among those who use other languages, suggesting that the Big Five may be universal (John & Srivastava, 1999).

What are the strengths of the five-factor model?

Research on the Big Five has shown that people's personalities tend to remain stable through their lifetime, scores at one time in life correlating strongly with scores at later dates, even later decades (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). Some variability is typical in childhood, with less in adolescence and then greater stability in adulthood. As William James put it: "It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again" (James, 1890, p. 121).

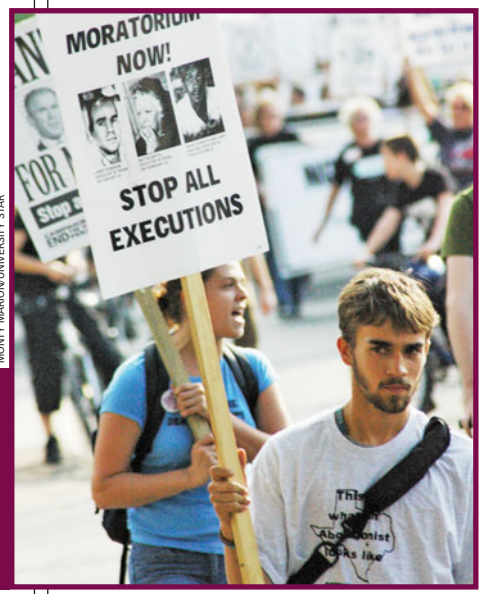
Traits as Biological Building Blocks

Can we explain *why* a person has a stable set of personality traits? On the one hand, many trait theorists have argued that immutable brain and biological processes produce the remarkable stability of traits over the life span.

On the other hand, brain damage certainly can produce personality change, as the classic case of Phineas Gage so vividly demonstrates (see Chapter 3). You may recall that after the blasting accident that blew a steel rod through his frontal lobes, Gage showed a dramatic loss of social appropriateness and conscientiousness (Damasio, 1994). In fact, when someone experiences a profound change in personality, testing often reveals the presence of such brain pathologies as Alzheimer's disease, stroke, or brain tumor (Feinberg, 2001). The administration of antidepressant medication and other pharmaceutical treatments that change brain chemistry can also trigger personality changes, making people, for example, somewhat more extraverted and less neurotic (Bagby et al., 1999; Knutson et al., 1998).

Genes, Traits, and Personality

Some of the most compelling evidence for the importance of biological factors in personality comes from the domain of behavioral genetics. Like researchers studying genetic influences on intelligence (see Chapter 7), personality psychologists have looked at correlations between the traits in monozygotic, or identical, twins who share the same genes and dizygotic, or fraternal, twins (who on average share only half of their genes). The evidence has been generally consistent: In one review of studies involving over 24,000 twin pairs, for example, identical twins proved markedly more similar to each other in personality than did fraternal twins (Loehlin, 1992).



MONTY MARION/UNIVERSITY STAR

Austin, Texas, protester marches to call for an end to capital punishment. Many of our opinions and attitudes, such as our view of capital punishment, appear to be shaped by our genes—so odds are that this protest is something that his family would approve.

Simply put, the more genes you have in common with someone, the more similar your personalities are likely to be. Genetics seems to influence most personality traits, and current estimates place the average genetic component of personality in the range of .40 to .60. These heritability coefficients, as you learned in Chapter 7, indicate that roughly half the variability among individuals results from genetic factors (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001). Genetic factors do

not account for everything, certainly—the remaining half of the variability in personality remains to be explained by differences in life experiences and other factors—but they appear to be remarkably influential.

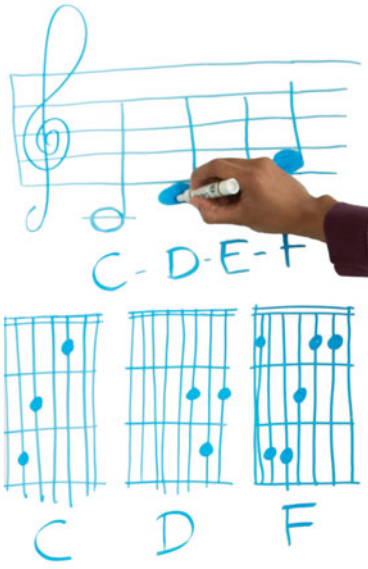
As in the study of intelligence, potential confounding factors must be ruled out to ensure that effects are truly due to genetics and not to environmental experiences. Are identical twins treated more similarly, and do they have a greater *shared environment* than fraternal twins? As children, were they dressed in the same snappy outfits and placed on the same Little League teams, and could this somehow have produced similarities in their personalities? Studies of identical twins reared far apart in adoptive families—an experience that pretty much eliminates the potential effect of shared environmental factors—suggest that shared environments have little impact: Reared-apart identical twins end up at least as similar in personality as those who grow up together (McGue & Bouchard, 1998; Tellegen et al., 1988).

Researchers have also assessed specific behavioral and attitude similarities in twins, and the evidence for heritability in these studies is often striking. When 3,000 pairs of identical and fraternal twins were asked their opinions on political and social issues, such as the death penalty, censorship, and nudist camps, significantly high heritability estimates were obtained for these and many other attitudes—for example, the score for views on the death penalty was approximately .50 (Martin et al., 1986). A specific gene directly responsible for attitudes on the death penalty or any other specific behavior or attitude is extremely unlikely. Rather, a set of genes—or, more likely, many sets of genes interacting—may produce a specific physiological characteristic such as a tendency to have a strong fear reaction in anticipation of punishment. This biological factor may then shape the person's belief about a range of social issues, perhaps including whether the fear of punishment is effective in deterring criminal behavior (Tesser, 1993).

What do studies of twins tell us about personality?

Traits in the Brain

But what neurophysiological mechanisms influence the development of personality traits? In his personality model, Eysenck (1967) speculated that individual differences in levels of cortical arousal might underlie differences between extraverts and introverts. Extroverts pursue stimulation because their *reticular formation*—the part of the brain that regulates arousal, or alertness (as described in Chapter 3)—is not easily stimulated. To achieve greater cortical arousal and feel fully alert, Eysenck argued, extroverts are drawn to activities such as listening to loud music and having a lot of social contact. In contrast, introverts may prefer reading or quiet activities because their cortex is very easily stimulated to a point higher than optimal.



Behavioral and physiological research generally supports Eysenck's view. When introverts and extroverts are presented with a range of intense stimuli, introverts respond more strongly, including salivating more when a drop of lemon juice is placed on their tongues and reacting more negatively to electric shocks or loud noises (Bartol & Costello, 1976; Stelmack, 1990). This reactivity has an impact on the ability to concentrate: Extroverts tend to perform well at tasks that are done in a noisy, arousing context—such as bartending or teaching—whereas introverts are better at tasks that require concentration in tranquil contexts—such as the work of a librarian or nighttime security guard (Geen, 1984; Lieberman & Rosenthal, 2001; Matthews & Gilliland, 1999).

What neurological differences explain why extraverts pursue more stimulation than introverts?

Teaching is a fine profession for an extrovert.

IMAGE100/ CORBIS

psychodynamic approach An approach that regards personality as formed by needs, strivings, and desires, largely operating outside of awareness motives that can also produce emotional disorders.

id The part of the mind containing the drives present at birth; it is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives.

ego The component of personality, developed through contact with the external world, that enables us to deal with life's practical demands.

superego The mental system that reflects the internalization of cultural rules, mainly learned as parents exercise their authority.

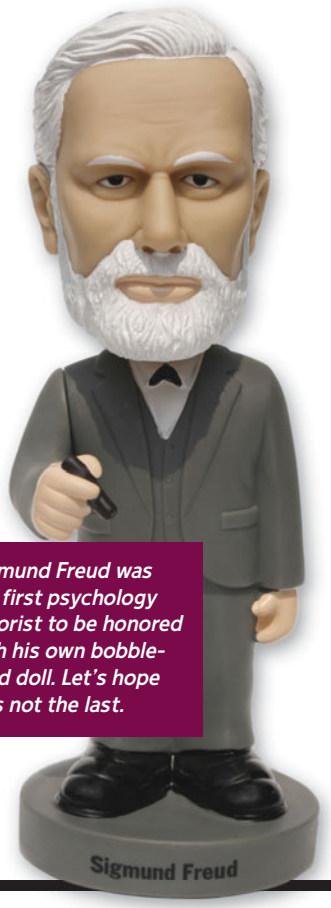
summary quiz [11.2]

4. One of the first theorists to propose that personality consisted of a combination of traits and that these traits were preexisting dispositions of the individual was
   a. Hans Eysenck.
   b. Gordon Allport.
   c. Henry Murray.
   d. Phineas Gage.

5. Which of the following is *not* one of the Big Five personality factors?
   a. openness to experience
   b. agreeableness
   c. self-esteem
   d. conscientiousness

6. Probably the most compelling evidence for the importance of biological factors in personality is the marked similarity in personality of
   a. fraternal twins reared apart.
   b. adopted children and their adoptive parents.
   c. identical twins reared together.
   d. identical twins reared apart.

7. The idea that individual differences in levels of cortical arousal may underlie differences between extroverts and introverts was proposed by
   a. Hans Eysenck.
   b. Gordon Allport.
   c. Henry Murray.
   d. Paul Broca.



THE PHOTO WORKS

Sigmund Freud was the first psychology theorist to be honored with his own bobblehead doll. Let's hope he's not the last.

The Psychodynamic Approach: Forces That Lie beneath Awareness

Rather than trying to understand personality in terms of broad theories for describing individual differences, Freud looked for personality in the details—the meanings and insights revealed by careful analysis of the tiniest blemishes in a person's thought and behavior. Working with patients who came to him with disorders that did not seem to have any physical basis, he began by interpreting the origins of their common mind-bugs, errors that have come to be called "Freudian slips."

Freud used the term *psychoanalysis* to refer to both his theory of personality and his method of treating patients. Freud's ideas were the first of many theories building on his basic idea that personality is a mystery to the person who "owns" it because we can't know our own deepest motives. The theories of Freud and his followers (discussed in Chapter 13) are referred to as the **psychodynamic approach.** According to this approach, *personality is formed by needs, strivings, and desires largely operating outside of awareness—motives that can produce emotional disorders.*

The Structure of the Mind: Id, Ego, and Superego

To explain the emotional difficulties that beset his patients, Freud proposed that the mind consists of three independent, interacting, and often conflicting systems: the id, the ego, and the superego.

The most basic system, the **id,** is *the part of the mind containing the drives present at birth; it is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives.* The id operates according to the *pleasure principle,* the psychic force that motivates the tendency to seek immediate gratification of any impulse. If governed

LEFT: © PARAMOUNT PICTURES
CENTER: © TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX FILM CORPORATION
RIGHT: © MGM

The id, ego, and superego go to Hollywood. Freud's themes of the wild id, the gray flannel ego, and the superego saying no show up in the movies, just as they do in life.

by the id alone, you would never be able to tolerate the buildup of hunger while waiting to be served at a restaurant but would simply grab food from tables nearby.

All that the id can do is wish. The **ego** is *the component of personality, developed through contact with the external world, that enables us to deal with life's practical demands.* The ego operates according to the *reality principle,* the regulating mechanism that enables the individual to delay gratifying immediate needs and function effectively in the real world. The ego helps you resist the impulse to snatch others' food and also finds the restaurant and pays the check.

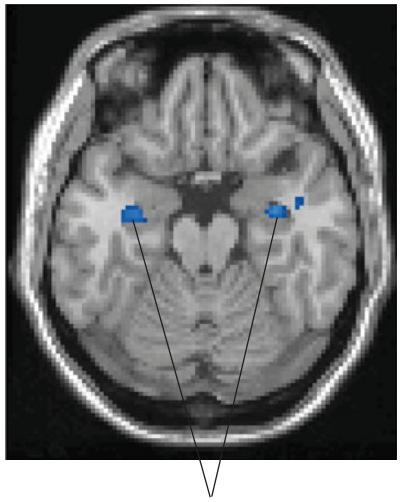
The final system of the mind is the **superego**, *the mental system that reflects the internalization of cultural rules, mainly learned as parents exercise their authority.* The superego consists of a set of guidelines, internal standards, and other codes of conduct that regulate and control our behaviors, thoughts, and fantasies. It acts as a kind of conscience, punishing us when it finds we are doing or thinking something wrong (by producing guilt or other painful feelings) and rewarding us (with feelings of pride or self-congratulation) for living up to ideal standards.

According to Freud, the relative strength of the interactions among the three systems of mind—that is, which system is usually dominant—determines an individual's basic personality structure. The id force of personal needs, the superego force of social pressures to quell those needs, and the ego force of reality's demands together create constant controversy, almost like a puppet theater or a bad play.

Dealing with Inner Conflict

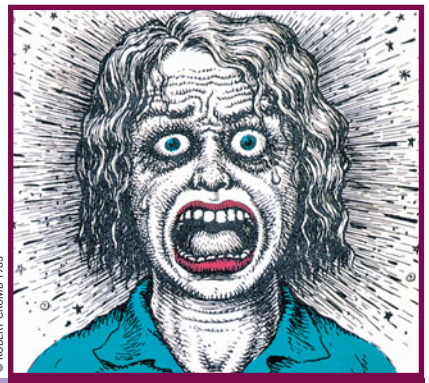
According to Freud, the dynamics between the id, ego, and superego are largely governed by *anxiety,* an unpleasant feeling that arises when unwanted thoughts or feelings occur—such as when the id seeks a gratification that the ego thinks will lead to real-world dangers or the superego sees as eliciting punishment. When the ego receives an "alert signal" in the form of anxiety, it launches into a defensive position in an attempt to ward off the anxiety. According to Freud, it first tries *repression,* which, as you read in Chapter 8, is a mental process that removes painful experiences and unacceptable impulses from the conscious mind. Repression is sometimes referred to as "motivated forgetting." Indeed, functional imaging studies suggest the repression of memories may involve decreased activation of the hippocampus—a region (as discussed in Chapter 5) that is central to memory (Anderson et al., 2004) (see **FIGURE 11.4**).

● **How is personality shaped by the interaction of the id, ego, and superego?**



COURTESY MICHAEL C. ANDERSON

FIGURE 11.4 Decreased Hippocampal Activity during Memory Suppression *The fMRI scans of people intentionally trying to forget a list of words reveal reduced activation (shown in blue) in the left and right hippocampal areas. (From Anderson et al., 2004.)*



Anxiety. Plain and simple.

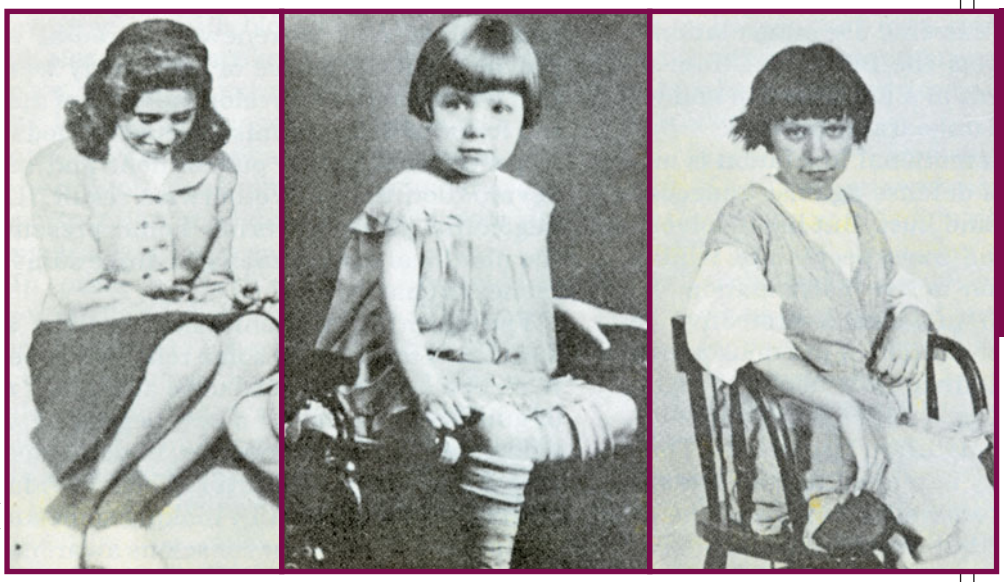
Repression may not be adequate to keep unacceptable drives from entering consciousness. When such material begins to surface, the ego can employ other means of self-deception, called **defense mechanisms**, which are *unconscious coping mechanisms that reduce anxiety generated by threats from unacceptable impulses*. Anna Freud (1936), Freud's daughter and a psychodynamic theorist, identified a number of defense mechanisms and detailed how they operate. Let's look at a few of the most common.

- **Rationalization** is *a defense mechanism that involves supplying a reasonable-sounding explanation for unacceptable feelings and behavior to conceal (mostly from oneself) one's underlying motives or feelings*. For example, someone who drops a class after having failed an exam might tell herself that she is quitting because poor ventilation in the classroom made it impossible to concentrate.
- **Reaction formation** is *a defense mechanism that involves unconsciously replacing threatening inner wishes and fantasies with an exaggerated version of their opposite*. Examples include being excessively nice to someone you dislike, finding yourself very worried and protective about a person you have thoughts of hurting, or being cold and indifferent toward someone to whom you are strongly attracted.
- **Projection** is *a defense mechanism that involves attributing one's own threatening feelings, motives, or impulses to another person or group*. For example, people who think that they themselves are overly rigid or dishonest may have a tendency to judge other people as having the same qualities (Newman, Baumeister, & Duff, 1995).
- **Regression** is *a defense mechanism in which the ego deals with internal conflict and perceived threat by reverting to an immature behavior or earlier stage of development*, a time when things felt safer and more secure. Examples of regression include the use of baby talk or whining in a child (or adult) who has already mastered appropriate speech or a return to thumb sucking, teddy bear cuddling, or watching cartoons in response to something distressing.
- **Displacement** is *a defense mechanism that involves shifting unacceptable wishes or drives to a neutral or less threatening alternative*. Displacement should be familiar to you if you've ever slammed a door, thrown a textbook across a room, or yelled at your roommate or your cat when you were really angry at your boss.
- **Identification** is *a defense mechanism that helps deal with feelings of threat and anxiety by enabling us unconsciously to take on the characteristics of another person who seems more powerful or better able to cope*. A child whose parent bullies or severely punishes her may later take on the characteristics of that parent and begin bullying others.
- **Sublimation** is *a defense mechanism that involves channeling unacceptable sexual or aggressive drives into socially acceptable and culturally enhancing activities*. Football, rugby, and other contact sports, for example, may be construed as culturally sanctioned and valued activities that channel our aggressive drives.

Through reaction formation, a person defends against underlying feelings, such as covering hostility with an exaggerated display of affection. Maybe there's more to this sibling squeeze than love?

Defense mechanisms are useful mindbugs: They help us overcome anxiety and engage effectively with the outside world. The ego's capacity to use defense mechanisms in a healthy and flexible fashion may depend on the nature of early experiences with caregivers, the defense mechanisms they used, and possibly some biological and temperamental factors as well (McWilliams, 1994). Our characteristic style of defense becomes our signature in dealing with the world—and an essential aspect of our personality.

How can our defense mechanisms be useful?



The young woman shown in the photograph on the left grew up under harsh circumstances: family strife, instability, and substance abuse, among other horrors. At age 17, she discovered a photograph of herself taken when she was 5 years old (middle) after which she adopted the look and mannerisms of a 5-year-old. The image on the right shows the same woman after regression (Masserman, 1961).

Psychosexual Stages and the Development of Personality

Freud had a great talent for coming up with troubling, highly controversial ideas. People in Victorian society did not openly discuss how much fun it is to suck on things, or the frustrations of their own toilet training, or their childhood sexual desire for their mother. Many consider Freud's views on personality development to be fanciful, and they are no longer widely held because little research evidence supports them; nevertheless, people find this part of his legacy oddly fascinating.

Freud believed that a person's basic personality is formed before 6 years of age during a series of sensitive periods, or life stages, when experiences influence all that will follow. Freud called these periods **psychosexual stages**, defined as *distinct early life stages through which personality is formed as children experience sexual pleasures from specific body areas and as caregivers redirect or interfere with those pleasures*. He argued that as a result of adult interference with pleasure-seeking energies, the child experiences conflict. At each stage, a different bodily region, or *erotogenic* zone, dominates the child's subjective experience—for example, during the oral stage, pleasure centers on the mouth. Each region represents a battleground between the child's id impulses and the adult external world. **TABLE 11.2** provides a summary of the psychosexual stages.

TABLE 11.2

The Psychosexual Stages

Stage	Oral	Anal	Phallic	Latency	Genital
Age	0–18 months	2–3 years	3–5 years	5–13 years	Adulthood
Erotogenic zone	Mouth	Anus/urethra	Penis/clitoris	—	Penis/vagina
Areas of conflict with caregiver	Feeding, weaning	Toileting	Masturbation (Oedipus conflict)	—	Adult responsibilities
Associated personality features	Talkative, dependent, addictive, needy	Orderly, controlling, disorganized, sloppy	Flirtatious, vain, jealous, competitive	—	Authentic investments in love and work; capacity for healthy adult relationships

defense mechanisms Unconscious coping mechanisms that reduce anxiety generated by threats from unacceptable impulses.

rationalization A defense mechanism that involves supplying a reasonable-sounding explanation for unacceptable feelings and behavior to conceal (mostly from oneself) one's underlying motives or feelings.

reaction formation A defense mechanism that involves unconsciously replacing threatening inner wishes and fantasies with an exaggerated version of their opposite.

projection A defense mechanism that involves attributing one's own threatening feelings, motives, or impulses to another person or group.

regression A defense mechanism in which the ego deals with internal conflict and perceived threat by reverting to an immature behavior or earlier stage of development.

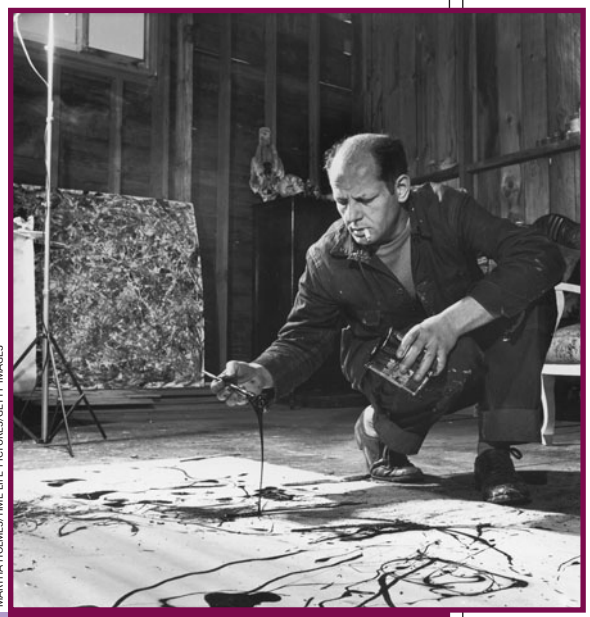
displacement A defense mechanism that involves shifting unacceptable wishes or drives to a neutral or less threatening alternative.

identification A defense mechanism that helps deal with feelings of threat and anxiety by enabling us unconsciously to take on the characteristics of another person who seems more powerful or better able to cope.

sublimation A defense mechanism that involves channeling unacceptable sexual or aggressive drives into socially acceptable and culturally enhancing activities.

psychosexual stages Distinct early life stages through which personality is formed as children experience sexual pleasures from specific body areas and caregivers redirect or interfere with those pleasures.

Problems and conflicts encountered at any psychosexual stage, Freud believed, will influence personality in adulthood. Conflict resulting from a person's being deprived or, paradoxically, overindulged at a given stage could result in **fixation**, meaning that the *person's pleasure-seeking drives become stuck, or arrested, at that psychosexual stage*. Freud described particular personality traits as being derived from fixations at the different psychosexual stages. Here's how he explained the effects of fixation.



MARTHA HOLMES/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

One of the id's desires is to make a fine mess, a desire that is often frustrated early in life, perhaps during the anal stage. Famous painter Jackson Pollack found a way to make extraordinarily fine messes, behavior that at some level all of us envy.

In the first year and a half of life, the infant is in the **oral stage**, *during which experience centers on the pleasures and frustrations associated with the mouth, sucking, and being fed*. Infants who are deprived of pleasurable feeding or indulgently overfed may develop an oral personality; that is, their lives will center on issues related to fullness and emptiness and what they can "take in" from others and the environment. When angry, such people may express themselves with "biting" sarcasm and "mouth off" at others—referred to as *oral aggression*. Personality traits associated with the oral stage include depression, lack of trust, envy, and demandingness.

Between 2 and 3 years of age, the child moves on to the **anal stage**, *during which experience is dominated by the pleasures and frustrations associated with the anus, retention and expulsion of feces and urine, and toilet training*. From the toddler's perspective, the soiling of one's diapers is a wonderful convenience that can feel pretty good. But sooner or later caregivers begin to disagree, and their opinions are voiced more strongly as the child gets older. Individuals who have had difficulty negotiating this conflict may develop a rigid personality and remain preoccupied with issues of control of others and of themselves and their emotions. They may be preoccupied with their possessions, money, issues of submission and rebellion, and concerns about cleanliness versus messiness.

Between the ages of 3 and 5 years, the child is in the **phallic stage**, *during which experience is dominated by the pleasure, conflict, and frustration associated with the phallic-genital region as well as coping with powerful incestuous feelings of love, hate, jealousy, and conflict*. In part, parental concerns about the child's developing awareness of the genital region set off the conflict: The child may touch his or her genitals in public or explore masturbation and may be curious about the parent's genitals.

According to Freud, boys in the phallic stage experience the **Oedipus conflict**, *a developmental experience in which a child's conflicting feelings toward the opposite sex parent is (usually) resolved by identifying with the same sex parent*. (In Greek myth, Oedipus was a young man who, unknowingly, killed his father and ended up marrying his mother.) Freud thought that, around age 4 or 5, boys wonder about their love affair with Mommy, noticing she has positive feelings for someone else (Daddy)—and experiencing jealousy. Freud believed individuals must give up their Oedipal desires if they are to be able to move on and build a life with a partner in the future. Males who are unable to resolve the Oedipus conflict and who get stuck in the phallic stage tend to be unusually preoccupied with issues of seduction, jealousy, competition, power, and authority. Females stuck in this phase, Freud thought, would display seductiveness, flirtatiousness, and jealousy.

A more relaxed period in which children are no longer struggling with the power of their sexual and aggressive drives occurs between the ages of 5 and 13, as children experience the **latency stage**, *in which the primary focus is on the further development of intellectual, creative, interpersonal, and athletic skills*. Because Freud believed that the most significant aspects of personality development occur during the first three psychosexual stages (before the age of 5 years), psychodynamic psychologists do not speak of fixation at the latency period. Simply making it to the latency period relatively undisturbed by conflicts of the earlier stages is a sign of healthy personality development.

At puberty and thereafter, the fifth and final stage of personality development occurs. This, the **genital stage**, is *the time for the coming together of the mature adult personality with a capacity to love, work, and relate to others in a mutually satisfying and reciprocal manner*. The degree to which the individual is encumbered by unresolved conflicts at the earlier

stages will impact whether he or she will be able to achieve a genital level of development. Freud believed that people who are fixated in a prior stage fail in developing healthy adult sexuality and a well-adjusted adult personality.

What should we make of all this? On the one hand, the psychoanalytic theory of psychosexual stages offers an intriguing picture of early family relationships and the extent to which they allow the child to satisfy basic needs and wishes. The theory picks up on themes that seem to ring true in many cases; you may very well know people who seem to be "oral" or "anal," for example, or who have issues about sexuality that seem to have had a great influence on their personalities. On the other hand, critics argue that psychodynamic explanations are too complex and tend to focus on after-the-fact interpretation rather than testable prediction. Describing a person fixated at the oral stage as "biting," for example, seems just so much wordplay—not the basis of a scientific theory. And, for example, the control issues that preoccupy an adult with a so-called anal character might reflect an inborn headstrong and controlling temperament and have nothing to do with a parental style of toilet training. The psychosexual stage theory offers a compelling set of story plots for interpreting lives once they have unfolded but has not generated the kinds of clear-cut predictions that inspire research.

● Why do critics say Freud's psychosexual stages are more interpretation than explanation?

"Don't worry—it's just a phase."

summary quiz [11.3]

8. Which of Freud's systems helps you to find a restaurant and to resist the temptation to snatch food off other people's plates?
a. id
b. ego
c. superego
d. pleasure principle

9. Your professor singled you out for criticism in class, which made you very angry. When you got home, you slammed the door and yelled at your roommate. Freud would say you are using which defense mechanism?
a. reaction formation
b. sublimation
c. displacement
d. projection

10. Your roommate has a rigid personality and is preoccupied with possessions, money, and issues of controlling others. According to Freud, your roommate is fixated at the _____ stage.
a. oral
b. anal
c. phallic
d. genital

11. According to Freud, psychological problems in adulthood are primarily a result of
a. making unhealthy choices when faced with difficult decisions.
b. experiencing considerable punishment and few rewards during childhood.
c. having a poor self-concept because of rejection by others.
d. having unresolved conflicts during one or more stages of psychosexual development.

fixation A phenomenon in which a person's pleasure-seeking drives become psychologically stuck, or arrested, at a particular psychosexual stage.

oral stage The first psychosexual stage, in which experience centers on the pleasures and frustrations associated with the mouth, sucking, and being fed.

anal stage The second psychosexual stage, which is dominated by the pleasures and frustrations associated with the anus, retention and expulsion of feces and urine, and toilet training.

phallic stage The third psychosexual stage, during which experience is dominated by the pleasure, conflict, and frustration associated with the phallic-genital region as well as powerful incestuous feelings of love, hate, jealousy, and conflict.

Oedipus conflict A developmental experience in which a child's conflicting feelings toward the opposite-sex parent is (usually) resolved by identifying with the same-sex parent.

latency stage The fourth psychosexual stage, in which the primary focus is on the further development of intellectual, creative, interpersonal, and athletic skills.

genital stage The final psychosexual stage, a time for the coming together of the mature adult personality with a capacity to love, work, and relate to others in a mutually satisfying and reciprocal manner.

The Humanistic-Existential Approach: Personality as Choice

In the 1950s and 1960s, psychologists began to try to understand personality from a viewpoint quite different from trait theory's biological determinism and Freud's focus on unconscious drives from unresolved child experiences. These new humanistic and existential theorists turned attention to how humans make *healthy choices* that create their personalities. *Humanistic psychologists* emphasized a positive, optimistic view of human nature that highlights people's inherent goodness and their potential for personal growth. *Existentialist psychologists* focused on the individual as a responsible agent who is free to create and live his or her life while negotiating the issue of meaning and the reality of death. The *humanistic-existential approach* integrates these insights with a focus on how a personality can become optimal.

Human Needs and Self-actualization

Humanists see the **self-actualizing tendency,** *the human motive toward realizing our inner potential,* as a major factor in personality. The pursuit of knowledge, the expression of one's creativity, the quest for spiritual enlightenment, and the desire to give to society are all examples of self-actualization. As you saw in Chapter 9, the noted humanistic theorist Abraham Maslow (1970) proposed a *hierarchy of needs,* a model of essential human needs arranged according to their priority, in which basic physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before a person can afford to focus on higher-level psychological needs. Only when these basic needs are satisfied can you pursue higher needs, culminating in *self-actualization*—the need to be good, to be fully alive, and to find meaning in life.

● What is it to be self-actualized?

Humanist psychologists explain individual personality differences as arising from the various ways that the environment facilitates—or blocks—attempts to satisfy psychological needs. Like a wilting plant deprived of water, sunshine, and nutrients, an individual growing up in an arid social environment can fail to develop his or her unique potential. For example, someone with the inherent potential to be a great scientist, artist, parent, or teacher might never realize these talents if his or her energies and resources are instead directed toward meeting basic needs of security, belongingness, and the like. Research indicates that when people shape their lives around goals that do not match their true nature and capabilities, they are less likely to be happy than those whose lives and goals do match (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

CHARLES QUIGG/AMHERST COLLEGE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In the seminar States of Poverty held at Amherst College, student Tony Jack asked, "Has anyone here ever actually seen a food stamp?" Tony had seen food stamps and more and would never have been able to afford an elite education if Amherst hadn't provided extra help with a full scholarship and a start-up grant and job. Tony was provided with conditions for growth—and graduated with honors in May 2007.

Personality as Existence

Existentialists agree with humanists about many of the features of personality but focus on challenges to the human condition that are more profound than the lack of a nurturing environment. Rollo May (1983) and Victor Frankl (2000), for example, argued that specific aspects of the human condition, such as awareness of our own existence and the ability to make choices about how to behave, have a double-edged quality: They bring an extraordinary richness and dignity to human life, but they also force us to confront realities that are difficult to face, such as the prospect of our own death. The **existential approach** *regards personality as governed by an individual's ongoing choices and decisions in the context of the realities of life and death.*

● What is angst, and how is it created?

According to the existential perspective, the difficulties we face in finding meaning in life and in accepting the responsibility of making free choices provoke a type of anxiety existentialists call *angst* (the anxiety of fully being). The human ability to consider

limitless numbers of goals and actions is exhilarating, but it can also open the door to profound questions such as "Why am I here?" and "What is the meaning of my life?"

Thinking about the meaning of existence also can evoke an awareness the inevitability of death. What, then, should we do with each moment? What is the purpose of living if life as we know it will end one day, perhaps even today? Alternatively, does life have more meaning given that it is so temporary?

Existential theorists do not suggest that people consider these profound existential issues on a day-to-day and moment-to-moment basis. Rather than ruminate about death and meaning, people typically pursue superficial answers that help them deal with the angst and dread they experience, and the defenses they construct form the basis of their personalities (Binswanger, 1958; May, 1983).

Unfortunately, security-providing defense mechanisms can be self-defeating and stifle the potential for personal growth. The pursuit of superficial relationships can make possible the avoidance of real intimacy. A fortress of consumer goods can provide a false sense of security. Immersion in drugs or addictive behaviors such as compulsive web browsing, video gaming, or television watching can numb the mind to existential realities.

If defenses are so thin and pointless, how do you deal with existence? For existentialists, the solution is to face the issues square-on and learn to accept and tolerate the pain of existence. Indeed, being fully human means confronting existential realities rather than denying them or embracing comforting illusions. This requires the courage to accept the inherent anxiety and the dread of nonbeing that is part of being alive. Such courage may be facilitated by developing supportive relationships with others who can supply unconditional positive regard. There's something about being loved that helps take away the angst.

self-actualizing tendency The human motive toward realizing our inner potential.

existential approach A school of thought that regards personality as governed by an individual's ongoing choices and decisions in the context of the realities of life and death.

summary quiz [11.4]

12. The view that personality is governed by an inherent striving toward self-actualization and the development of our unique potentials was proposed by
a. Abraham Maslow.
b. Rollo May.
c. Victor Frankl.
d. Albert Bandura.

13. Which approach regards personality as governed by an individual's choices in the context of the realities of life and eventual death?
a. humanistic
b. existential
c. psychodynamic
d. social cognitive

14. According to Rollo May and Victor Frankl, a major aspect of personality development involves
a. the importance of a nurturing environment.
b. gratifying basic physiological needs.
c. actualizing one's full potential.
d. questioning the meaning of life.

The Social Cognitive Approach: Personalities in Situations

What is it like to be a person? The **social cognitive approach** *views personality in terms of how the person thinks about the situations encountered in daily life and behaves in response to them.* Bringing together insights from social psychology, cognitive psychology, and learning theory, this approach emphasizes how the person experiences and construes situations (Bandura, 1986; Mischel & Shoda, 1999; Ross & Nisbett, 1991; Wegner & Gilbert, 2000).

The idea that situations cause behavior was a fundamental principle of behaviorism, as you read in Chapter 6. Consider how a behaviorist such as B. F. Skinner would explain your behavior right now. If you have been reinforced in the past by getting good grades when studying only the night before an exam, he would have predicted that you are in fact reading these words for the first time the night before the test! If you have been reinforced for studying well in advance, he would have predicted that you are reading this chapter with plenty of time to spare. For a behaviorist, then, differences in behavior reflect differences in how the behaviors have been rewarded in past situations.

Researchers in social cognition agree that the situation and learning history are key determinants of behavior, but they go much further than Skinner would have in looking inside the psychological "black box" of the mind to examine the thoughts and feelings that come between the situation and the person's response to it. Because human "situations" and "reinforcements" are radically open to interpretation, social cognitive psychologists focus on how people *perceive* their environments. People think about their goals, the consequences of their behavior, and how they might achieve certain things in different situations (Lewin, 1951). The social cognitive approach looks at how personality and situation interact to cause behavior, how personality contributes to the way people construct situations in their own minds, and how people's goals and expectancies influence their responses to situations.

Consistency of Personality across Situations

Although social cognitive psychologists attribute behavior both to the individual's personality and to his or her situation, situation can often trump personality. For example, a person would have to be pretty strange to act exactly the same way at a memorial service and a toga party. At the core of the social cognitive approach is a natural puzzle, the **person-situation controversy,** which focuses on *the question of whether behavior is caused more by personality or by situational factors.*

Does a person's behavior in one situation allow us to predict future behaviors?

This controversy began in earnest when Walter Mischel (1968) argued that measured personality traits often do a poor job of predicting individuals' behavior. Mischel reviewed decades of research that compared scores on standard personality tests with actual behavior, looking at evidence from studies asking questions such as "Does a person with a high score on a test of introversion actually spend more time alone than someone with a low score?" Mischel's disturbing conclusion: The average correlation between trait and behavior is only about .30. This is certainly better than zero (i.e., chance) but not very good when you remember that a perfect prediction is represented by a correlation of 1.0.

Even knowing how a person will behave in one situation is not particularly helpful in predicting the person's behavior in another situation. For example, in classic studies, Hartshorne and May (1928) assessed children's honesty by examining their willingness to cheat on a test and found that such dishonesty was not consistent from one situation to another. The assessment of a child's trait of honesty

Is this student, cheating on a test, more likely than others to steal candy or lie to her grandmother? Social cognitive research indicates that behavior in one situation does not necessarily predict behavior in a different situation.

VEER

in a cheating situation was of almost no use in predicting whether the child would act honestly in a different situation—such as when given the opportunity to steal money. Mischel proposed that measured traits do not predict behaviors very well because behaviors are determined more by situational factors than personality theorists were willing to acknowledge.

Is there no personality, then? Do we all just do what situations require? The person-situation controversy has inspired many studies in the years since Mischel's critique, and it turns out that information about both personality and situation are necessary to predict behavior. Although people may not necessarily act the same way across situations, they often do act in a similar manner within the same type of situation (Mischel & Shoda, 1999). A person who is outgoing at parties but withdrawn at the office would be difficult to characterize as an extravert or an introvert, but if he is *always* outgoing at parties and *always* withdrawn at the office, personality consistency within situations has been demonstrated.

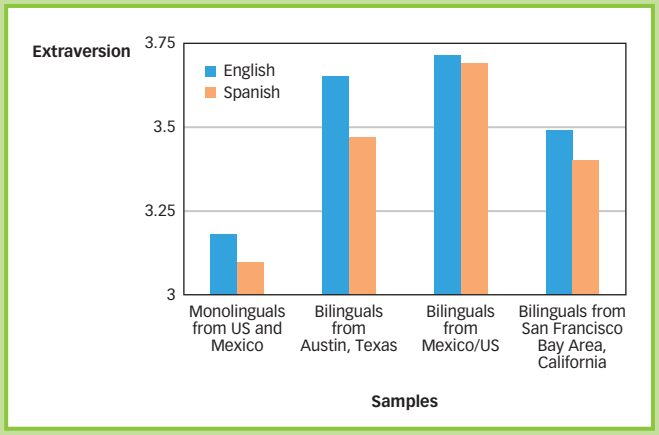
Among the children in Hartshorne and May's studies, cheating versus not cheating on a test was actually a fairly good predictor of cheating on a test later—as long as the situation was similar (Hartshorne & May, 1928). Personality consistency, then, appears to be a matter of when and where a certain kind of behavior tends to be shown. Social cognitive theorists believe these patterns of personality consistency in response to situations arise from the way different people construe situations and from the ways different people pursue goals within situations.

Culture & Community

Does Your Personality Change According to Which Language You're Speaking?

The personalities of people in groups speaking different languages often can diverge. A study revealed that personality tests taken by English-speaking Americans and Spanish-speaking Mexicans differ reliably: The Americans were found to be more extroverted, more agreeable, and more conscientious than the Mexicans (Ramirez-Esparza et al., 2006).

But why? To see if language might play a role in this difference, the researchers then sought out Spanish-English bilinguals in Texas, California, and Mexico and gave them the personality scale in each language. And in fact, language was a key: Scores of the bilingual participants were more extraverted, agreeable, and conscientious when they took the test in English than when they took it in Spanish. Personality may be influenced by the group you belong to because of the language you are speaking.



Personal Constructs

How can we understand differences in the way situations are interpreted? Recall our notion of personality often existing "in the eye of the beholder." Situations may exist "in the eye of the beholder" as well. One person's gold mine may be another person's hole in the dirt. George Kelly (1955) long ago realized that these differences in perspective could be used to understand the *perceiver's* personality. He suggested that people view the social world from differing perspectives and that these different views arise through the application of **personal constructs,** *dimensions people use in making sense of their experiences*. Consider, for example, different individuals' personal constructs of a clown: One person may see him as a source of fun, another as a tragic figure, and yet another as so frightening that the circus is off-limits.

● Why doesn't everyone love clowns?

Here's how Kelly assessed personal constructs about social relationships: He'd ask people to (1) list the people in their life, (2) consider three of the people and state a way in which two of them were similar to each other and different from the third, and (3) repeat this for other triads of people to produce a list of the dimensions used to classify friends and family. One respondent might focus on the degree to which people (self included) are lazy or hardworking, for example; someone else might attend to the degree to which people are sociable or unfriendly.

social cognitive approach An approach that views personality in terms of how the person thinks about the situations encountered in daily life and behaves in response to them.

person-situation controversy The question of whether behavior is caused more by personality or by situational factors.

personal constructs Dimensions people use in making sense of their experiences.

Are two of these people taller and one shorter? Are two bareheaded while one wears a hood? Or are two the daughters and one the mom? George Kelly held that the personal constructs we use to distinguish among people in our lives are basic elements of our own personalities.

DAN WEGNER

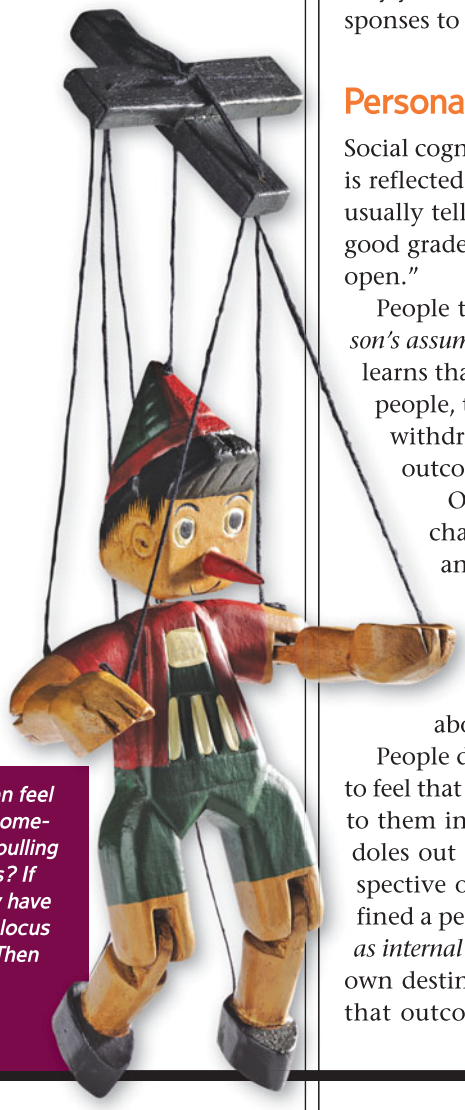
Kelly proposed that different personal constructs (*construals*) are the key to personality differences—that is, that different construals lead to disparate behaviors. Taking a long break from work for a leisurely lunch might seem lazy to you. To your friend, the break might seem an ideal opportunity for catching up with friends, so he will wonder why you always choose to eat at your desk. Social cognitive theory explains different responses to situations with the idea that people see things in different ways.

Personal Goals and Expectancies

Social cognitive theories also recognize that a person's unique perspective on situations is reflected in his or her personal goals, which are often conscious. In fact, people can usually tell you their goals, whether they are to "find a date for this weekend," "get a good grade in psych," "establish a fulfilling career," or just "get this darn bag of chips open."

People translate goals into behavior in part through **outcome expectancies**, *a person's assumptions about the likely consequences of a future behavior.* Just as a laboratory rat learns that pressing a bar releases a food pellet, we learn that "if I am friendly toward people, they will be friendly in return" or "if I ask people to pull my finger, they will withdraw from me." So we learn to perform behaviors that we expect will have the outcome of moving us closer to our goals.

Outcome expectancies combine with a person's goals to produce the person's characteristic style of behavior. An individual with the goal of making friends and the expectancy that being kind will produce warmth in return is likely to behave very differently from an individual whose goal is to achieve fame at any cost and who believes that shameless self-promotion is the route to fame. We do not all want the same things from life, clearly, and our personalities largely reflect the goals we pursue and the expectancies we have about the best ways to pursue them.



MASTERFILE

Does it often feel as though someone else is pulling your strings? If so, you may have an external locus of control. Then again, you might be a marionette.

People differ in their generalized expectancy for achieving goals. Some people seem to feel that they are fully in control of what happens to them in life, whereas others feel that the world doles out rewards and punishments to them irrespective of their actions. Julian Rotter (1966) defined a person's **locus of control** as *the person's tendency to perceive the control of rewards as internal to the self or external in the environment.* People who believe they control their own destiny are said to have an *internal* locus of control, whereas those who believe that outcomes are random, determined by luck, or controlled by other people are

What is the advantage of an internal locus of control?

described as having an *external* locus of control. These beliefs translate into individual differences in emotion and behavior. For example, people with an internal locus of control tend to be less anxious, achieve more, and cope better with stress than do people with an external orientation (Lefcourt, 1982).

summary quiz [11.5]

15. The psychologist who noted that personality traits often do a poor job of predicting an individual's behavior was
a. George Kelly.
b. Walter Mischel.
c. Julian Rotter.
d. B. F. Skinner.

16. Dimensions that people use in making sense of their experiences are called
a. social cognitions.
b. outcome expectancies.
c. personal constructs.
d. locuses of control.

17. Tyler has been getting poor evaluations at work. He attributes this to having a mean boss who always assigns him the hardest tasks. According to Julian Rotter, Tyler would be said to have
a. external locus of control.
b. internal locus of control.
c. high performance anxiety.
d. poorly developed personal constructs.

The Self: Personality in the Mirror

Imagine that you wake up tomorrow morning, drag yourself into the bathroom, look into the mirror, and don't recognize the face looking back at you. This was the plight of a patient studied by neurologist Todd Feinberg (2001). The woman, married for 30 years and the mother of two grown children, one day began to respond to her mirror image as if it were a different person. She talked to and challenged the person in the mirror. When there was no response, she tried to attack it as if it were an intruder. Her husband, shaken by this bizarre behavior, brought her to the neurologist, who was gradually able to convince her that the image in the mirror was in fact herself.

Most of us are pretty familiar with the face that looks back at us from every mirror. We developed the ability to recognize ourselves in mirrors by 18 months of age (as discussed in Chapter 8), and we share this skill with chimps and other apes who have been raised in the presence of mirrors. Self-recognition in mirrors signals our amazing capacity for reflexive thinking, for directing attention to our own thoughts, feelings, and actions—an ability that enables us to construct ideas about our own personality. Unlike a cow, which will never know that it has a poor sense of humor, or a cat, which will never know that it is awfully friendly (for a cat), humans have rich and detailed self-knowledge.

Admittedly, none of us know all there is to know about our own personality (or psychodynamic psychologists would be out of work). But we do have enough self-knowledge to reliably respond to personality inventories and report on our traits and behaviors. These observations draw on our **self-concept**, *a person's explicit knowledge of his or her own behaviors, traits, and other personal characteristics,* and our **self-esteem**, *the extent to which an individual likes, values, and accepts the self.* Self-concept and self-esteem are critically important facets of personality, not just because they reveal how people see their own personalities, but because they also guide how people think others will see them.

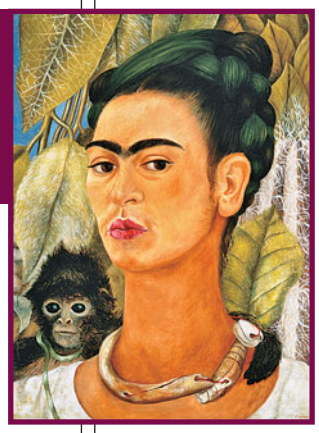
outcome expectancies A person's assumptions about the likely consequences of a future behavior.

locus of control A person's tendency to perceive the control of rewards as internal to the self or external in the environment.

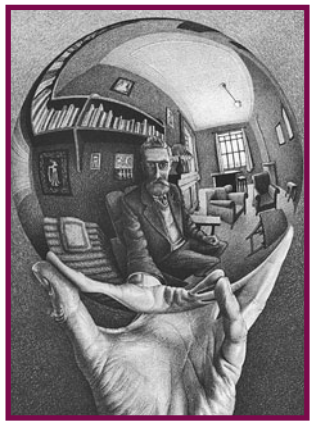
self-concept A person's explicit knowledge of his or her own behaviors, traits, and other personal characteristics.

self-esteem The extent to which an individual likes, values, and accepts the self.

What do these self-portraits of Frida Kahlo, M. C. Escher, Norman Rockwell, Salvador Dalí, Wanda Wulz, and Jean-Michel Basquiat reveal about each artist's self-concept?



ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY/CORBIS



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EJ ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NY

ROCKBANQUE D'IMAGES, ADAGP/ART RESOURCE, NY

Self-concept

Almost everyone has a place for memorabilia, a drawer or box somewhere that holds all those sentimental keepsakes—photos, yearbooks, cards and letters, maybe that scrap of the old security blanket—all memories of "life as *Me*." Perhaps you've wanted to organize these things sometime but have never gotten around to it. Fortunately, the knowledge of ourselves that we store in our *autobiographical memory* seems to be organized naturally in two ways: as narratives about episodes in our lives and in terms of traits (as would be suggested by the distinction between episodic and semantic memory discussed in Chapter 5).

Self-concept Organization

The aspect of the self-concept that is a *self-narrative*—a story that we tell about ourselves—can be brief or very lengthy. Your life story could start with your birth and upbringing, describe a series of defining moments, and end where you are today. You could select specific events and experiences, goals and life tasks, and memories of places and people that have influenced you. Self-narrative organizes the highlights and low blows of your life into a story in which you are the leading character and binds them together into your self-concept (McAdams, 1993).

What is your life story as you see it—your self-narrative?

Self-concept is also organized in a more abstract way, in terms of personality traits. Just as you can judge an object on its attributes ("Is this apple green?"), you are able to judge yourself on any number of traits—whether you are considerate or smart or lazy or active or, for that matter, green—and do so quite reliably, making the same rating on multiple occasions. One person might define herself as independent, for example, whereas another might not care much about her level of independence but instead emphasize her sense of style.

self-verification The tendency to seek evidence to confirm the self-concept.

How do our behavior self-narratives and trait self-concepts compare? These two methods of self-conceptualization don't always match up. You may think of yourself as an honest person, for example, but also recall that time you nabbed a handful of change from your parents' dresser and conveniently forgot to replace it. The traits we use to describe ourselves are generalizations, and not every episode in our life stories may fit. In fact, research suggests that the stores of knowledge about our behaviors and traits are not very well integrated (Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994). In people who develop amnesia, for example, memory for behaviors can be lost even though the trait self-concept remains stable (Klein, 2004). People can have a pretty strong sense of who they are even though they may not remember a single example of when they acted that way.

HIDEO KURIHARA/ALAMY

A key element in personality involves the stories, myths, and fairy tales we tell ourselves about our lives. Are you living the story of the prince or princess in a castle, or are you the troll in the woods?

Causes and Effects of Self-concept

How do self-concepts arise, and how do they affect us? Although we can gain self-knowledge in private moments of insight, we more often arrive at our self-concepts through interacting with others. Young children in particular receive plenty of feedback from their parents, teachers, siblings, and friends about their characteristics, and this helps them to form an idea of who they are. Even adults would find it difficult to hold a view of the self as "kind" or "smart" if no one else ever shared this impression. The sense of self, then, is largely developed and maintained in relationships with others.

Over the course of a lifetime, however, we become less and less impressed with what others have to say about us. As a result, the person who says you're a jerk may upset you momentarily, but you bounce back, secure in the knowledge that you're not truly a jerk. And just as we might argue vehemently with someone who tried to tell us a refrigerator is a pair of underpants or that up is actually down and to the left, we are likely to defend our self-concept against anyone whose view of us departs from our own.

Because it is so stable, a major effect of the self-concept is to promote consistency in behavior across situations (Lecky, 1945). As existential theorists emphasize, people derive a comforting sense of familiarity and stability from knowing who they are. We tend to engage in what William Swann (1983) called **self-verification**, *the tendency to seek evidence to confirm the self-concept,* and we find it disconcerting if someone sees us quite differently from the way we see ourselves. In one study, Swann (1983) gave people who considered themselves submissive feedback that they seemed very dominant and forceful. Rather than accepting this discrepant information, they went out of their way to act in an extremely submissive manner. Our tendency to project into the world our concept of the self contributes to personality coherence. This talent for self-reflection enables the personality to become self-sustaining.

Self-esteem

On the whole, whereas self-concept defines what we think of ourselves, self-esteem is the extent to which we generally like (or dislike) that portrait of ourselves. When our friend Amy Winehouse sang "You know I'm no good," she was telling us something abour her self-esteem. Researchers who study self-esteem typically ask participants to fill out a self-esteem questionnaire that asks people to evaluate themselves in terms of statements such as "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself," or "At times, I feel I am no good at all" (Rosenberg, 1965). People who strongly agree with the positive statements about themselves and strongly disagree with the negative statements are considered to have high self-esteem; people who show the opposite pattern are considered to have low self-esteem.

In general, compared with people with low self-esteem, those with high self-esteem tend to live happier and healthier lives, cope better with

[HOT SCIENCE]

Implicit Egotism: Liking Ourselves without Knowing It

What's your favorite letter of the alphabet? About 30% of people answer by picking what just happens to be the first letter of their first name. Could this choice indicate that some people think so highly of themselves that they base judgments of seemingly unrelated topics on how much it reminds them of themselves?

This *name-letter effect* was discovered some years ago (Nuttin, 1985), but only recently have researchers gone on to discover how broad the egotistic bias in preferences can be. Brett Pelham and his colleagues have found subtle yet systematic biases toward this effect when people choose their home cities, streets, and even occupations (Pelham, Mirenberg, & Jones, 2002). When the researchers examined the rolls of people moving into several southern states, for example, they found people named George were more likely than those with other names to move to Georgia. The same was true for Florences (Florida), Kenneths (Kentucky), and Louises (Louisiana). You can guess where the Virginias tended to relocate. The name effect seems to work for occupations as well: Slightly more people named Dennis and Denise chose dentistry and Lauras and Lawrences chose law compared with other occupations. Although the biases are small (if your name is Wally, you don't *have* to move to Walla Walla), they are consistent across many tests of the hypothesis.

These biases have been called expressions of *implicit egotism* because people are not typically aware that they are influenced by the wonderful sound of their own names (Pelham, Carvallo, & Jones, 2005). When Buffy moves to Buffalo, she is not likely to volunteer that she did so because it matched her name. Yet people who show this egotistic bias in one way also tend to show it in others: People who strongly prefer their own name letter also are likely to pick their birth date as their favorite number (Koole, Dijksterhuis, & van Knippenberg, 2001). And people who like their name letter were also found to evaluate themselves positively on self-ratings of personality traits. This was especially true when the self-ratings were made in response to instructions to work *quickly.* The people who preferred their name letter made snap judgments of themselves that leaned in a positive direction—suggesting that their special self-appreciation was an automatic response.

HEIDI CODY/HEIDICODY.COM

What's your favorite letter?

At some level, of course, a bit of egotism is probably good for us. It's sad to meet someone who hates her own name or whose snap judgment of self is "I'm worthless." Yet in another sense, implicit egotism is a curiously subtle mindbug—a tendency to make biased judgments of what we will do and where we will go in life just because we happen to have a certain name. Yes, the bias is only a small one. But your authors wonder: Should we have considered writing with a colleague whose name wasn't Dan?

stress, and be more likely to persist at difficult tasks. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem are more likely—for example—to perceive rejection in ambiguous feedback from others and to develop eating disorders than those with high self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Sources of Self-esteem

Some psychologists contend that high self-esteem arises primarily from being accepted and valued by significant others (Brown, 1993). Other psychologists focus on the influence of specific self-evaluations, judgments about one's value or competence in specific domains such as appearance, athletics, or scholastics.

An important factor is whom people choose for comparison. For example, James (1890) noted that an accomplished athlete who is the second best in the world should feel pretty proud, but this athlete might not if the standard of comparison involves

SHAUN BOTTERILL/GETTY IMAGES

Silver medalist Duje Draganja of Croatia, gold medalist G. Hall Jr. of the United States, and bronze medalist Roland Schoeman of South Africa show off their medals following their 50-meter swimming final. Notice the expression on Draganja's face compared to those of the gold and bronze medalists.

being best in the world. In fact, athletes in the 1992 Olympics who had won silver medals looked less happy during the medal ceremony than those who had won bronze (Medvec et al., 1995). If the actual self is seen as falling short of the ideal self—the person that they would like to be—people tend to feel sad or dejected; when they become aware that the actual self is inconsistent with the self they have a duty to be, they are likely to feel anxious or agitated (Higgins, 1987).

Self-esteem is also affected by what kinds of domain we consider most important in our self-concept. One person's self-worth might be entirely contingent on, for example, how well she does in school, whereas another's self-worth might be based on his physical attractiveness (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Pelham, 1985). The first person's self-esteem might receive a big boost when she gets an A on an exam, but much less of a boost when she's complimented on her new hairstyle—and this effect might be exactly reversed in the second person (see the Hot Science box on page 356).

The Desire for Self-esteem

What's so great about self-esteem? Why do people want to see themselves in a positive light and avoid seeing themselves negatively?

One theory suggests that self-esteem feels good because it reflects our degree of social dominance or status. People with high self-esteem seem to carry themselves in a way that is similar to high-status animals of other social species. Dominant male gorillas, for example, appear confident and comfortable and not anxious or withdrawn. Perhaps

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High self-esteem in humans may reflect the same sort of social status and respect that dominant male gorillas enjoy.

self-serving bias People's tendency to take credit for their successes but downplay responsibility for their failures.

narcissism A trait that reflects a grandiose view of the self combined with a tendency to seek admiration from and exploit others.

high self-esteem in humans reflects high social status or suggests that the person is worthy of respect, and this perception triggers natural affective responses (Barkow, 1980; Maslow, 1937).

How might self esteem have played a role in evolution?

Another approach, based on evolutionary theory, holds that early humans who managed to survive to pass on their genes were those able to maintain good relations with others rather than being cast out to fend for themselves. Self-esteem could have evolved as an inner gauge of how much a person feels included by others at any given moment (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

A third major theory is consistent with the existential and psychodynamic approaches to personality and suggests that the source of distress underlying negative self-esteem is ultimately the fear of death (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). In this view, humans find it anxiety provoking, in fact terrifying, to contemplate their own mortality, and so they try to defend against this awareness by immersing themselves in activities (e.g., earning money or dressing up to appear attractive) that their culture defines as meaningful and valuable. The higher our self-esteem, the less anxious we feel with the knowledge that someday we will no longer exist.

Whatever the reason that low self-esteem feels so bad and high self-esteem feels so good, people are generally motivated to see themselves positively. In fact, we often process information in a biased manner in order to feel good about the self. Research on the **self-serving bias** shows that *people tend to take credit for their successes but downplay responsibility for their failures*. You may have noticed this tendency in yourself, particularly in terms of the attributions you make about exams when you get a good grade ("I studied really intensely, and I'm good at that subject") or a bad grade ("The test was ridiculously tricky, and the professor is a nimnutz").

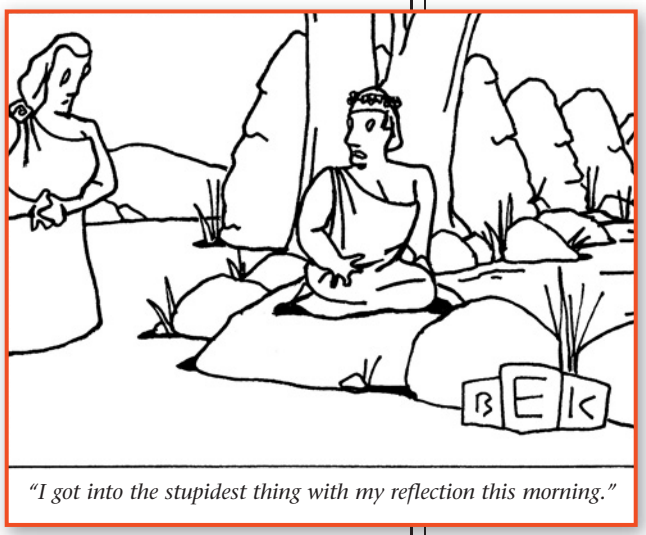
On the whole, most people satisfy the desire for high self-esteem and maintain a reasonably positive view of self by engaging in the self-serving bias. In fact, if people are asked to rate themselves across a range of characteristics, they tend to see themselves as better than the average person in most domains (Alicke et al., 1995). For example, 90% of drivers describe their driving skills as better than average, and 86% of workers rate their performance on the job as above average. These kinds of judgments simply cannot be accurate, statistically speaking, since the average of a group of people has to be the average, not better than average! This mindbug may be adaptive, however. People who do not engage in this self-serving bias to boost their self-esteem tend to be more at risk for depression, anxiety, and related health problems (Taylor & Brown, 1988).

At the same time, a few people take positive self-esteem to the extreme. **Narcissism**, *a grandiose view of the self combined with a tendency to seek admiration from and exploit others,* is considered a personality disorder (see Chapter 13). Healthy self-esteem seems to lie between these extremes: where people employ a self-serving bias—without letting it get out of control.

The self is the part of personality that the person knows and can report about. Some of the personality measures we have seen in this chapter—such as personality inventories based on self-reports—are really no different from measures of self-concept. Both depend on the person's perceptions and memories of the self's behavior and traits. But personality runs deeper than this as well. The unconscious forces identified in psychodynamic approaches provide themes for behavior, and sources of mental disorder, that are not accessible for self-report. The humanistic and existential approaches remind us of the profound concerns we humans face and the difficulties we may have in understanding all the forces that shape our self-views. Finally, in emphasizing how personality shapes our perceptions of social life, the social cognitive approach brings the self back to center stage. The self, after all, is the hub of each person's social world.

ONLY HUMAN

SPECIAL, SO VERY SPECIAL Furious at a rush-hour accident that blocked traffic in the Boston suburb of Weymouth, motorist (and software engineer) Anna Gitlin, 25, went ballistic at a police officer and then allegedly bumped him with her car, screaming, "I don't care who [expletive deleted by the *Boston Globe*] died. I'm more important!"



"I got into the stupidest thing with my reflection this morning."

summary quiz [11.6]

18. If you are like many college students, you attribute your good exam grades to your ability and effort, and attribute your bad exam grades to an unfair teacher or the extreme difficulty of the test. This is known as
a. self-narrative.
b. self-verification.
c. self-serving bias.
d. self-esteem.

19. Which is true of self-narratives and trait self-concepts?
a. Both are aspects of the self-concept.
b. The two are highly consistent with each other.
c. When people develop amnesia, they lose their memory for both their past behaviors and their trait self-concept.
d. Self-narratives are the assessments we make of our personality traits.

20. Which of the following is *not* one of the theories that attempts to explain the benefits of high self-esteem?
a. It reflects high status.
b. It reflects a narcissistic view of the self.
c. It reflects being accepted by others.
d. It reflects a defense against the awareness of death.

21. William Swann developed the concept known as
a. self-narrative.
b. self-serving bias.
c. narcissism.
d. self-verification.

WhereDoYouStand?

Personality Testing for Fun and Profit

Many people enjoy filling out personality tests. In fact, dozens of Web sites, magazine articles, and popular books offer personality tests to complete as well as handy summaries of test scores. Unfortunately, many personality tests are no more than a collection of questions someone has put together to offer entertainment to test takers. These tests yield a sense of self-insight that is no more valid than what you might get from the random "wisdom" of a fortune cookie or your daily horoscope.

The personality tests discussed in this chapter are more valid, of course: They have been developed and refined to offer reliable predictions of a person's tendencies. Still, the validity of many personality tests, particularly the projective tests, remains controversial, and critics question whether personality tests should be used for serious purposes.

In fact, business, government, and the military often use personality tests in hiring. And vocational counselors use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality test (which primarily assesses the individual's standing on the extraversion/introversion personality dimension) to direct people toward occupations that match their strengths. Although such tests have been criticized for their flimsy theoretical and research foundations (Paul, 2004), businesses have not abandoned them. The possibility also exists that such tests might be someday used to predict whether criminals behind bars have been rehabilitated or might return to crime if released. If tests could be developed that would predict with certainty whether a person would be likely to commit a violent crime or become a terrorist or a sexual predator, do you think such tests should be used to make decisions about people's lives?

Think of all you have learned about the different approaches to personality, the strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of tests, the person-situation controversy, and the fact that personality measures do correlate significantly (although not perfectly) with a person's behaviors. Are personality tests useful for making decisions about people now? If such tests were perfected, should they be used in the future? Where do you stand?

CHAPTER REVIEW

Summary

Personality: What It Is and How It Is Measured

- In psychology, personality refers to a person's characteristic style of behaving, thinking, and feeling.
- Personality psychologists attempt to find the best ways to describe personality, to explain how personalities come about, and to measure personality.
- Two general classes of personality tests are personality inventories, such as the MMPI, and projective techniques, such as the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the TAT.

The Trait Approach: Identifying Patterns of Behavior

- The trait approach tries to identify personality dimensions that can be used to characterize an individual's behavior.
- Many personality psychologists currently focus on the Big Five personality factors: conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extroversion.
- To address the question of why traits arise, trait theorists often adopt a biological perspective, construing personality largely as the result of genetic influences on brain mechanisms.

The Psychodynamic Approach: Forces That Lie beneath Awareness

- Freud believed that the personality results from a complex interplay among id, ego, and superego.
- Defense mechanisms are methods the mind may use to reduce anxiety generated from unacceptable impulses.
- Freud also believed that the developing person passes through a series of psychosexual stages and that individuals who fail to progress beyond one of the stages have corresponding personality traits.

The Humanistic-Existential Approach: Personality as Choice

- The humanistic-existential approach to personality grew out of philosophical traditions that are at odds with most of the assumptions of the trait and psychoanalytic approaches.
- Humanists see personality as directed by an inherent striving toward self-actualization and development of our unique human potentials.
- Existentialists focus on angst and the defensive response people often have to questions about the meaning of life and the inevitability of death.

The Social Cognitive Approach: Personalities in Situations

- The social cognitive approach focuses on personality as arising from individuals' behavior in situations.
- According to social cognitive personality theorists, the same person may behave differently in different situations, but should behave consistently in similar situations.
- People translate their goals into behavior through outcome expectancies, their assumptions about the likely consequences of future behaviors.

The Self: Personality in the Mirror

- The self-concept is a person's knowledge of his or her behaviors, traits, and other characteristics.
- People's self-concept develops through social feedback, and people often act to try to confirm these views.
- Self-esteem is a person's evaluation of self, and is derived from being accepted by others, as well as by how we evaluate ourselves by comparison to others.

Key Terms

personality (p. 333)
self-report (p. 335)
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (p. 335)
projective techniques (p. 336)
Rorschach Inkblot Test (p. 336)
Thematic Apperception Text (TAT) (p. 336)
trait (p. 338)
Big Five (p. 339)
psychodynamic approach (p. 342)
id (p. 342)
ego (p. 343)
superego (p. 343)
defense mechanisms (p. 344)
rationalization (p. 344)
reaction formation (p. 344)
projection (p. 344)
regression (p. 344)
displacement (p. 344)
identification (p. 344)
sublimation (p. 344)
psychosexual stages (p. 345)
fixation (p. 346)
oral stage (p. 346)
anal stage (p. 346)
phallic stage (p. 346)
Oedipus conflict (p. 346)
latency stage (p. 346)
genital stage (p. 346)
self-actualizing tendency (p. 348)
existential approach (p. 348)
social cognitive approach (p. 350)
person-situation controversy (p. 350)
personal constructs (p. 351)
outcome expectancies (p. 352)
locus of control (p. 352)
self-concept (p. 353)
self-esteem (p. 353)
self-verification (p. 355)
self-serving bias (p. 358)
narcissism (p. 358)

Critical Thinking Questions

1. A school librarian is exhausted after the third grade class has spent an hour in the library. At the same time, the gym teacher dreads running the quiet study hall. What is the neurological explanation for both of their reactions?
2. Research on men who report *homophobia*—the dread of gay men and lesbians—revealed an interesting result (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996). Homophobic participants, heterosexual men who agreed with statements such as "I would feel nervous being with a group of homosexuals," and a comparison group of nonhomophobic men were shown videos of sexual activity, including heterosexual, gay male, and lesbian segments. Each man's sexual arousal was then assessed by means of a device that measures penile tumescence. Curiously, the homophobic men showed greater arousal to the male homosexual images than did men in a control group. The psychoanalytic interpretation seems clear: Men troubled by their own homosexual arousal formed opposite reactions to this unacceptable feeling, turning their unwanted attraction into "dread."

   Do these results imply that homophobia is a defense mechanism? If so, which one?
3. The text says, "There's something about being loved that helps take away the angst."

   According to a humanist or existentialist, what are some specific ways love could lessen angst?
4. The text discusses how behavior self-narratives and trait self-concepts don't always match up.

   Think about your own self-narrative and self-concept. Are there areas that don't match up? How might you explain that?

Answers to Summary Quizzes

Summary Quiz 11.1
1. c; 2. a; 3. b

Summary Quiz 11.2
4. b; 5. c; 6. d; 7. a

Summary Quiz 11.3
8. b; 9. c; 10. b; 11. d

Summary Quiz 11.4
12. a; 13. b; 14. d

Summary Quiz 11.5
15. b; 16. c; 17. a

Summary Quiz 11.6
18. c; 19. a; 20. b; 21. d