Overview of Personality

SIUE PSYC 340

Personality Defined

- **Personality**: Unique and relatively enduring internal and external aspects of a person's character that influence behavior in different situations

- More complex than just adjectives

- Includes subjective social and emotional qualities and the way others see us

- Resistant to sudden changes but not rigid

- Influences experiences, expectations, and choices

Personality and Social Media

Do people present their real selves on social media?	Does the use of social media influence or change one's personality?	Does the use of social media differ with different personalities?
· Studies conducted in the United States and Germany found that social networking sites do convey accurate images or impressions of the personality profiles people offer (Back et al., 2010; Gosling, Gaddis, & Vazire, 2007).	· One study found that high levels of social media use can reduce psychological well-being and decrease the quality of relationships with friends and romantic partners (Blais, Craig, Pepler, & Connolly, 2008; Huang, 2010a; Kross et al., 2013).	· Studies in Eastern and Western cultures suggest extraverts and narcissists were more likely to use Facebook than those who were not extraverted or narcissistic (Kuo & Tang, 2014; Michikyan, Subrahmanyam, & Dennis, 2014; Ong et al., 2011; Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2014; Winter et al., 2014).

Personality Defined

- Virtual depiction:

  - Studies conducted in the United States and in Germany found that social networking sites do convey accurate images or impressions of the personality profiles we offer.

  - The researchers concluded that depictions of personalities presented online are at least as accurate as those conveyed in face-to-face interactions.

  - Research has found that more women than men send selfies and that excessive use of them can make the sender less likeable and even reduce the intimacy or closeness of friendships.

  - We are not always honest in how we depict ourselves in person either, particularly when we meet new people we want to impress, like a date or an employer.

Personality Defined

- Effect of social media on personality:

  - One study of adolescents in China aged 13 to 18 found that excessive time spent using the Internet resulted in significant levels of anxiety and depression when compared to teenagers who spent considerably less time online.

  - An online survey of college students in the United States showed that those who spent time talking with their parents on the telephone had more satisfying personal and supportive relationships with them than students who kept in touch with the parents through social networking sites.

  - In addition, college students who communicated with their parents on social networking sites reported greater loneliness, anxiety, and conflict in their relationships with their parents.

Personality Defined

- Effect of personality on social media:

  - Studies in both Eastern and Western cultures found that those who were more extraverted and narcissistic (who had an inflated, unrealistic self-concept) were much more likely to use Facebook than those who did not score high on those personality characteristics.

  - The more narcissistic teenagers were also more likely to update their Facebook status more frequently.

  - Other studies suggest that those who report high use of social networking sites tend to be more extraverted, more open to new experiences, lower in self-esteem and socialization skills, less conscientious, and lower in emotional stability than those who report lower levels of usage.

Race, Gender, and Culture

- Early personality theorists were mostly White men of European or American heritage, and their theories ignored the influence of race, gender, and other cultural differences.

- Although improvements have been made, most modern personality research is conducted in English-speaking countries using college students as participants.

Race, Gender, and Culture

- Cross-cultural psychology research suggests both nature (biology) and nurture (environment) influence personality development.

- Cultural differences in child-rearing practices - Individualistic cultures value democratic and permissive techniques, while collectivistic cultures value authoritarian and restrictive techniques.

- Cultural differences in self-promotion – Individualistic cultures value self-enhancement, while collectivistic cultures value self-effacement.

Personality Assessment

- A major application of theory and research

- Used for diagnosis, education, counseling, and research

- Principles of measurement:

  - **Reliability**: The consistency of response to a psychological assessment device

  - **Validity**: The extent to which an assessment device measures what it is intended to measure

Personality Assessment

Self-report inventories	Online test administration	Projective tests
Clinical interviews	Behavioral assessment	Thought and experience samples

Self-Report Inventories

- Asks subjects to report on their own behaviors, feelings, symptoms, attitudes, interests, fears, and values

- Example – Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)

Advantages
Quick and objective scoring
Quick assessment

Disadvantages
Not suited for people who possess limited reading skills
Tendency to provide socially desirable answers

Examples of Items from a Self-Report Inventory

○ False ○ True   1. I like mechanics magazines.
○ False ○ True   2. I have a good appetite.
○ False ○ True   3. I wake up fresh and rested most mornings.
○ False ○ True   4. I think I would enjoy the work of a librarian.
○ False ○ True   5. I am easily awakened by noise.
○ False ○ True   6. My father is a good man (or if your father is dead) my father was a good man.
○ False ○ True   7. I like to read newspaper articles on crime.
○ False ○ True   8. My hands and feet are usually warm enough.
○ False ○ True   9. My daily life is full of things that keep me interested.
○ False ○ True   10. I am about as able to work as I ever was.
○ False ○ True   11. There seems to be a lump in my throat much of the time.
○ False ○ True   12. My sex life is satisfactory.
○ False ○ True   13. People should try to understand their dreams and be guided by or take warning from them.
○ False ○ True   14. I enjoy detective or mystery stories.
○ False ○ True   15. I work under a great deal of tension.
○ False ○ True   16. Once in a while I think of things too bad to talk about.
○ False ○ True   17. I am sure I get a raw deal from life.
○ False ○ True   18. I am troubled by attacks of nausea and vomiting.
○ False ○ True   19. When I take a new job, I like to find out whom it is important to be nice to.
○ False ○ True   20. I am very seldom bothered by constipation.
○ False ○ True   21. At times I have very much wanted to leave home.
○ False ○ True   22. No one seems to understand me.
○ False ○ True   23. At times I have fits of laughing and crying that I cannot control.
○ False ○ True   24. Evil spirits possess me at times.
○ False ○ True   25. I would like to be a singer.
○ False ○ True   26. I feel that it is certainly best to keep my mouth shut when I am in trouble.
○ False ○ True   27. When people do me wrong, I feel I should pay them back, just for the principle of the thing.
○ False ○ True   28. I am bothered by an upset stomach several times a week.
○ False ○ True   29. At times I feel like swearing.
○ False ○ True   30. I have nightmares every few nights.
○ False ○ True   31. I find it hard to keep my mind on a task or job.
○ False ○ True   32. I have had very peculiar and strange experiences.
○ False ○ True   33. I seldom worry about my health.
○ False ○ True   34. I have never been in trouble because of my sexual behavior.
○ False ○ True   35. Sometimes when I was young I stole things.

Online Test Administration

- Advantages:

  - Less time-consuming and expensive

  - More objective scoring

  - Accepted by younger employees

  - Prevents test takers from changing their answers and looking ahead

Take a free self-report inventory:
https://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/

Projective Tests

- Present ambiguous stimuli to subjects and record their responses, which are assumed to project their innermost needs and values

- Low reliability and validity due to subjective interpretation of test results

- Examples:

  - Rorschach Inkblot Technique

  - Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

  - Word association and sentence completion

Take a free projective test:
https://www.idrlabs.com/rorschach/test.php

Clinical Interviews

- Involve a trained professional asking subjects about their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, past and present life experiences, and social relationships and take notes of their general appearance, demeanor, and non-verbal cues

Advantages
Problem areas can be explored in detail

Disadvantages
Subjective

Behavioral Assessments

- Involve observers evaluating subjects' behavior in a given situation

- Assessment occurs during clinical interview

Advantages
Provides valuable insights

Disadvantages
Less systematic

Thought and Experience Sampling

- **Thought sampling**: Subjects record their thoughts in a systematic manner (often using smart devices and other technology) over a period of time

- **Experience sampling**: Subjects describe the social and environmental context in which the experience being sampled occurs

Advantages
Determines how context influences thought and mood

Disadvantages
Participant may forget to record activities
Emotions and mood affect nature of information reported

Race, Gender, and Culture in Assessment

- Race and gender impact personality assessment.

- What is normal in one culture may be judged as undesirable, wrong, sick, or just plain weird in other cultures.

- Ensuring that personality tests accurately reflect and measure relevant personality variables is difficult and requires extensive knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural differences.

Personality Research

Clinical method

Experimental method

Virtual research method

Correlational method

Clinical Method

- **Case study or case history**: Collects a detailed history of a person's past and present lives

- Also includes dream analysis, tests, and interviews

Advantages
Provides an in-depth view of one's personality

Disadvantages
Subjective
Accuracy of childhood memories cannot be checked

Experimental Method

- Allows researchers to study cause-and-effect relationships

- Involves random assignment and control over procedures

Independent variable	Dependent variable
Variable that is manipulated	Variable that is measured

Experimental group	Control group
Exposed to experimental treatment	Does not receive experimental treatment

Experimental Method

Advantages
Well-controlled and systematic

Disadvantages
Safety and ethical issues restrict control over some aspects of personality
Dependent variable is influenced by the subject's attitude

Virtual Research Method

- Crowdsourcing services like Mechanical Turk on Amazon

- Psychological tests, opinion surveys, and responses to experimental stimuli

Advantages
Fast and inexpensive
Reaches broad range of subjects

Disadvantages
Sample may not represent the population
Online subjects may differ from non-responders
Honesty and accuracy of data is questionable

Correlational Method

- Measures the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables

- Expressed by the correlation coefficient, which ranges from -1.00 to +1.00

  - The closer it is to -1.00 or +1.00, the stronger the relationship

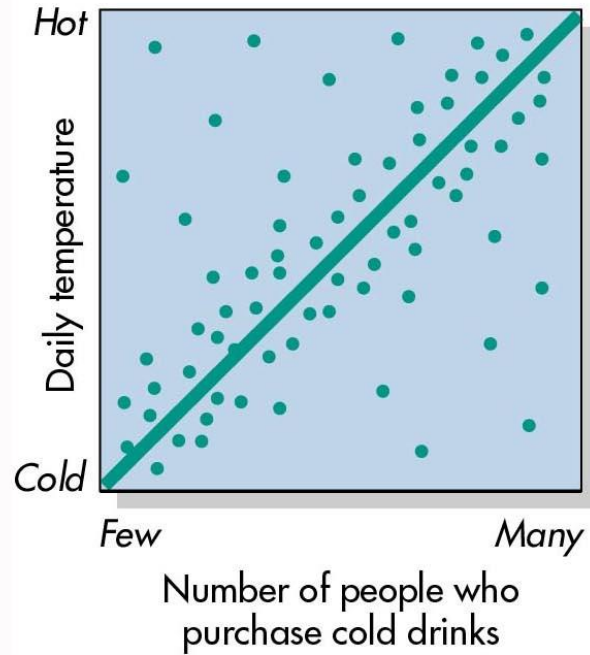| Advantages |
| --- |
| Helps make predictions in the real world |

Disadvantages
Cause and effect conclusions may be flawed

Correlational Method

Positive Correlation — Daily temperature (Cold to Hot) vs. Number of people who purchase cold drinks (Few to Many)

Negative Correlation — Daily temperature (Cold to Hot) vs. Number of people who wear sweaters (Few to Many)

No Correlation — Daily temperature (Cold to Hot) vs. Number of people who have the hiccups (Few to Many)
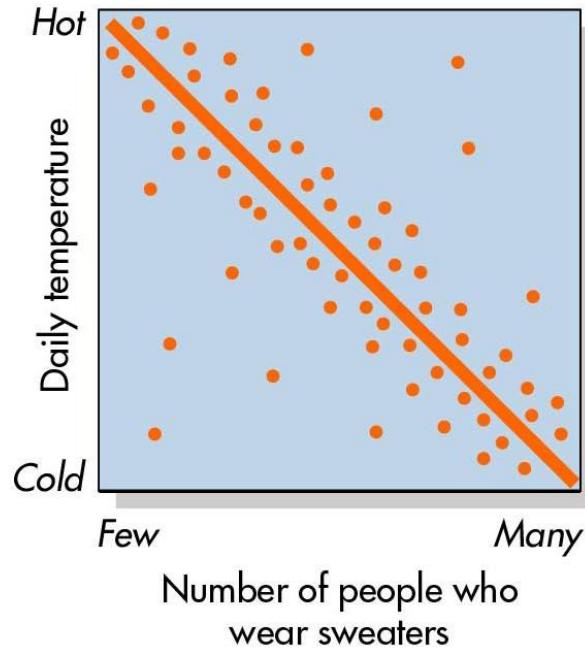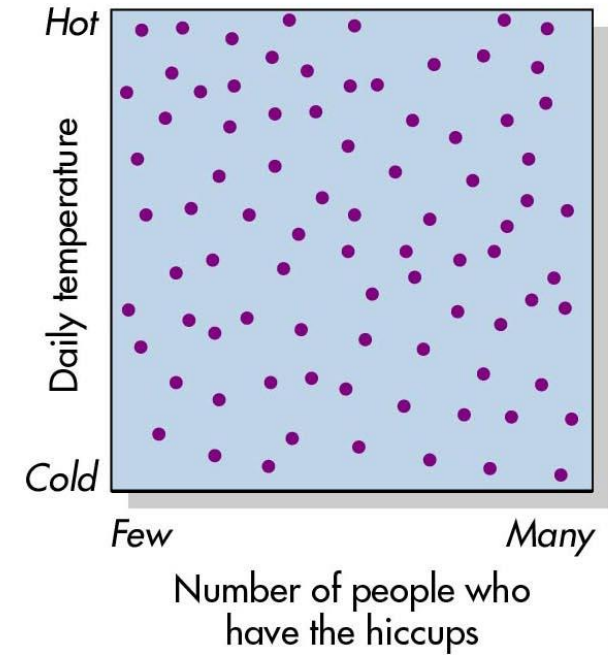
Personality Theory

- **Theory**: A set of principles that must:

  - Be testable and capable of stimulating research,

  - Explain the resulting data in a coherent framework, and

  - Contribute to our understanding of behavior

- Can be influenced by the specific events in the theorist's life

Personality Theory

- Free will or determinism?

- Inherited nature or nurturing environment?

- Dependent on or independent of childhood?

- Unique or universal?

- Satisfaction or growth?

- Optimism or pessimism?