Personality

14

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter you should appreciate that:

■ personality theorists are concerned with identifying generalizations that can be made about consistent individual differences between people's behaviour and the causes and consequences of these differences;

■ Sigmund Freud developed a psychoanalytic approach that emphasized the role of the unconscious in regulating behaviour;

■ Raymond Cattell and Hans Eysenck proposed traits as descriptors that we use to describe personality and that have their origins in everyday language;

■ biological theories of personality attempt to explain differences in behaviour in terms of differences in physiology, particularly brain function;

■ research in behavioural genetics has permitted the examination of both genetic and environmental factors in personality;

■ social–cognitive theories of personality examine consistent differences in the ways people process social information, allowing us to make predictions about an individual's behaviour in particular contexts.

INTRODUCTION

You do not need to be a psychologist to speculate about personality. In our everyday conversations we refer to the personality traits of people we know. Novels, playwrights and filmmakers make constant use of the personality of key figures in their stories, and this is one of the great attractions of popular fiction. The term 'personality' is now part of everyday language, and theories of personality are generated by all of us every time we answer the question, 'What is she or he like?'

As a branch of psychology, personality theory dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century and the psychoanalytic approach of Sigmund Freud. During the last century a number of different approaches have developed:

■ trait approaches (G.W. Allport, 1937; Cattell, 1943; Eysenck, 1947);

■ biological and genetic approaches (Eysenck, 1967, 1990; Plomin, 1986; Plomin et al., 1997);
■ phenomenological approaches (Kelly, 1955; Rogers 1951);
■ behavioural and social learning approaches (Bandura, 1971; Skinner, 1953); and
■ social–cognitive approaches (Bandura, 1986; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Mischel, 1973).

This chapter focuses on trait, biological and genetic, and social–cognitive approaches, providing a representative account of current research activity. We will also look at psychoanalytic and humanistic approaches for an insight into the beginning and history of personality theory.

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

In 400 BC, Hippocrates, a physician and a very acute observer, claimed that different personality types are caused by the balance of bodily fluids. The terms he developed are still sometimes used today in describing personality. Phlegmatic (or calm) people were thought to have a higher concentration of phlegm; sanguine (or optimistic) people had more blood; melancholic (or depressed) people had high levels of black bile; and irritable people had high levels of yellow bile.

Hippocrates' views about the biological basis of personality are echoed in contemporary theories that link the presence of brain chemicals such as noradrenaline and serotonin to mood and behaviour.

But how do we define 'personality'? Within psychology two classic definitions are often used:

> Personality is a dynamic organisation, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person's characteristic patterns of behaviour, thoughts and feelings.
>
> **G.W. Allport, 1961**

> More or less stable, internal factors . . . make one person's behaviour consistent from one time to another, and different from the behaviour other people would manifest in comparable situations.
>
> **Child, 1968**

Both these definitions emphasize that personality is an internal process that guides behaviour. Gordon Allport (1961) makes the point that personality is psychophysical, which means both physical and psychological. Recent research has shown that biological and genetic phenomena do have an impact on personality. Child (1968) makes the point that personality is stable – or at least relatively stable. We do not change dramatically from week to week,

Figure 14.1

Jekyll-and-Hyde personality changes are, thankfully, extremely rare.

we can predict how our friends will behave, and we expect them to behave in a recognizably similar way from one day to the next.

Child (1968) includes consistency (within an individual) and difference (between individuals) in his definition, and Allport (1961) refers to characteristic patterns of behaviour within an individual. These are also important considerations. So personality is what makes our actions, thoughts and feelings consistent (or relatively consistent), and it is also what makes us different from one another.

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES – FREUD AND BEYOND

By the early years of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) had begun to write about psychoanalysis, which he described as 'a theory of the mind or personality, a method of investigation of unconscious process, and a method of treatment' (1923/62).

Central to a psychoanalytic approach is the concept of *unconscious mental processes* – the idea that unconscious motivations and needs have a role in determining our behaviour. This approach also emphasizes the irrational aspects of human behaviour and portrays aggressive and sexual needs as having a major impact on personality.

> **unconscious mental processes** processes in the mind that people are not normally aware of

FREUD'S MODELS OF THE MIND

Freud developed a number of hypothetical models to show how the mind (or what he called the *psyche*) works:

> **psyche** psychoanalytic term meaning 'mind'

- a *topographic model of the psyche* – or how the mind is organized;
- a *structural model of the psyche* – or how personality works; and
- a *psychogenetic model of development* – or how personality develops.

> **topographic model of the psyche** Freud's model of the structure of the mind

> **structural model of the psyche** Freud's model of how the mind works

> **psychogenetic model of development** Freud's model of personality development

Topographic model of the psyche

Freud (1905/53b) argued that the mind is divided into the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious.

According to Freud, the conscious is the part of the mind that holds everything you are currently aware of. The preconscious contains everything you could become aware of but are not currently thinking about. The unconscious is the part of the mind that we cannot usually become aware of. Freud saw the

Pioneer

Figure 14.2

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach assumed that unconscious motivations and needs have a role in determining our behaviour.
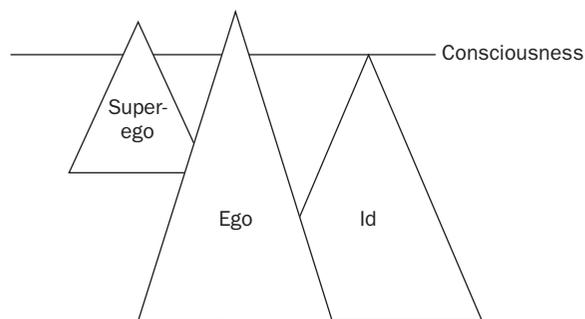
Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) Born the son of a Jewish wool merchant, Freud spent most of his life in Vienna. He studied medicine and specialized in neurology. After becoming disillusioned with physical treatments for mental illness, he became interested in the notion of a 'talking cure'. Freud went on to become the founder of psychoanalysis. He died in England in 1939.

Figure 14.3

Freud said that the psyche was like an iceberg, with most of it being below the level of consciousness. The tip of the iceberg, above the water, corresponds to what we can become aware of. We are aware of some aspects of ego and superego functioning, but the processes of the id are entirely within the unconscious.

unconscious as holding all the urges, thoughts and feelings that might cause us anxiety, conflict and pain. Although we are unaware of them, these urges, thoughts and feelings are considered by Freud to exert an influence on our actions.

Structural model of the psyche

Alongside the three levels of consciousness, Freud (1923/62, 1933) developed a structural model of personality involving what he called the id, the ego and the superego (figure 14.3).

According to Freud, the id functions in the unconscious and is closely tied to instinctual and biological processes. It is the primitive core from which the ego and the superego develop. As the source of energy and impulse it has two drives:

Eros – a drive for life, love, growth and self-preservation

Thanatos – a drive for aggression and death

Eros the desire for life, love and sex within psychoanalytic theory

Thanatos the drive for aggression and death in Freudian psychoanalysis

These drives, or instincts, are represented psychologically as wishes that need to be satisfied.

External or internal stimulation creates tension, which the id seeks to reduce immediately. This is called the 'pleasure principle' – the idea that all needs have to be satisfied immediately, avoiding pain and seeking pleasure, regardless of external conditions. The id is directly linked to bodily experience and cannot deal effectively with reality. As such it is limited to two forms of response – reflex responses to simple stimuli (e.g. crying with pain), or primary process thinking (hallucinatory images of desired objects), which provides a basic discharge of tension.

According to Freud, primary process thinking does not actually meet the fundamental need of the organism – just as dreaming of water does not satisfy thirst – so a second structure, the ego, focuses on ensuring the id's impulses are expressed effectively in the context of the real world. The ego, as a source of rationality, conforms to the 'reality principle' – delaying the discharge of energy from the id until an appropriate object or activity can be found. The ego engages in secondary process thinking. It takes executive action on the part of the ego to decide which actions are appropriate, which id impulses will be satisfied, how and when.

But the ego has no moral sense, only practical sense. It is a third structure, the superego, which, according to Freud, provides moral guidance, embodying parental and societal values. The superego has two sub-systems:

- conscience, or images of what is right and what deserves punishment – this is the basis for guilt; and
- ego ideal, or images of what is rewarded or approved of – this is the basis for pride.

Violation of superego standards can generate anxiety over loss of parental love, which is experienced as guilt. By the same token, Freud viewed a 'weak' superego as the cause of self-indulgence and criminality.

According to Freud, the ego mediates between id impulses, superego directives and the real world. Conflicts in this process can lead to three types of anxiety:

- neurotic anxiety – that the id will get out of control;
- moral anxiety – that past or future behaviour is immoral; or
- reality anxiety – about objective dangers in the environment.

When anxiety cannot be dealt with by realistic methods, the ego calls upon various defence mechanisms to release the tension. Defence mechanisms deny, alter or falsify reality. As they operate unconsciously, they are not immediately obvious to us or to other people. Defence mechanisms include:

- displacement – substituting an acceptable behaviour for an anxiety-inducing one;
- projection – projecting the threatening thing on to others;
- reaction formation – creating an attitude opposite to the one that you hold;
- intellectualization – transforming emotional or affective drives into rational intentions; and
- regression – reverting to modes of behaviour from childhood in order to avoid conflict.

Psychogenetic model of development

Freud (1900/1953) proposed that child development proceeds through a series of stages related to physical development, and that adult personality is influenced by how crises are resolved at each stage.

Each stage is named after an erogenous zone, or area of the body that can experience pleasure from the environment. Excessive gratification or frustration at any one stage can result in the fixation of libido and subsequent disruption to normal personality development.

1 Oral stage (**birth to 18 months**) At the beginning of this stage children are highly dependent on their mothers and derive pleasure from sucking and swallowing. Freud suggested that children who become fixated at this early oral stage derive pleasure in adulthood from activities such as overeating, smoking, drinking and kissing. He referred to such people as oral-incorporative or oral-ingestive.

Later in the oral stage, children begin to cut teeth and experience pleasure from biting and chewing. Fixation at this later part of the stage results in chewing objects and nail-biting in adulthood, as well as being sarcastic and critical. Freud called those fixated at this level oral-aggressive or oral-sadistic.

2 Anal stage (**18 months to three years**) At this stage pleasure is gained from the expulsion and retention of faeces. This is also a stage at which children start to explore their environment but experience control and discipline from their parents. According to Freud, fixation at this stage may result in people being messy and generous – anal expulsive characters, or being mean and orderly – anal-retentive characters.

3 Phallic stage (**three to five years**) It is at the phallic stage that children discover pleasure from touching their genitals. They also become aware that they are in competition with siblings and their father for their mother's attention.

Freud believed that boys become increasingly attached to their mother at this stage and resent the presence of their father. These feelings produce anxiety or fear of punishment from the father – or *castration anxiety*. In order to protect themselves against this anxiety, boys identify with their fathers. Freud called boys' desire for their mother the *Oedipus complex*, because of the similarity to the ancient Greek play in which Oedipus unwittingly kills his father and marries his mother.

castration anxiety a male's fear of losing his genitals, which Freud believed was related to the Oedipus complex

Oedipus complex a description used by Freud of boys' tendency in the phallic stage to be attracted to their mothers and to resent their fathers

Freud argued for a rather different process in girls. He believed that girls reject their mother at the phallic stage, owing to resentment that they have been born without a penis. They then feel increasing attraction to their father, who has the penis they lack. Penis envy is not resolved until women have a male child, thereby symbolically obtaining a penis. This process was also named after an ancient Greek play – *Electra*. In Greek mythology, Electra was famous for her devotion to her father, and sought revenge against her mother for her father's death.

Fixation at the phallic phase and failure to resolve the Electra or Oedipus complex was viewed as the cause of sexual and/or relationship difficulties in later life.

4 Latency stage (**six to twelve years**) According to Freud, personality is formed by the end of the phallic stage, and sexual impulses are rechannelled during the latency period into activities such as sport, learning and social activities.

5 Genital stage (**13 years to adult**) As young people approach the age of reproductive ability, they begin to focus their libido, or sexual energy, towards the opposite sex. If the earlier psychosexual stages have been successfully negotiated, the individual should now begin to form positive relationships with others.

IN THE WAKE OF FREUD

A number of notable theorists followed Freud. Some had worked with him and then moved on to develop their own versions of psychoanalytic theory. These theorists have been called

neo-analytic, post-Freudian and psychodynamic, in order to differentiate their work from Freud's.

Jung's aims and aspirations

Carl Jung (1875–1961) was one of the first prominent analysts to break away from Freud. Jung worked with Freud in the early stages of his career, and was viewed by him as the disciple who would carry on the Freudian tradition. But Jung saw humans as being guided as much by aims and aspirations as by sex and aggression.

analytical psychology the theory of personality developed by Carl Jung, in which people are viewed as striving towards self-actualization

To distinguish his approach from classic psychoanalysis, Jung named it *analytical psychology* (1951). A basic assumption of his theory is that personality consists of competing forces and structures within the individual that must be balanced. Unlike Freud, he emphasized conflicts between opposing forces within the individual, rather than between the individual and the demands of society, or between the individual and reality.

Horney's optimism

Karen Horney (1885–1952) was another disciple of Freud who developed a theory that deviated from basic Freudian principles. Horney adopted a more optimistic view of human life, emphasizing human growth and self-realization. She concentrated on early childhood development, and her work formed the basis of much later work in this area.

One of Horney's major contributions was her challenge to Freud's treatment of women. She countered that, in the early part of the twentieth century, women were more likely to be affected by social and cultural oppression than the absence of a penis.

The failings of psychoanalytic theory

Freud was an original thinker who created a comprehensive theory of human behaviour, which had a profound impact on twentieth century society, as well as in areas of human endeavour such as art and literature. Few theorists in any scientific discipline have attained such a degree of fame, and few theoretical concepts have been so fully incorporated into Western culture.

Despite this, Karl Popper (1957) declared that psychoanalysis is a pseudoscience because it is inherently untestable. He argued that psychoanalysis is unfalsifiable because the logic of the theory allows for any finding to be explained in different ways. For example, Freud states that aggressive impulses can lead either to aggressive actions or to reaction formations against them. So it is impossible to test definitively any hypotheses about aggressive action.

Freudian psychoanalytic theory presents imprecise concepts and metaphors based on Freud's interpretation of unrecorded therapy sessions, and as such it cannot be thoroughly examined through experimental and scientific methods. Nevertheless, recent developments within cognitive psychology concerning human memory and subliminal perception have reopened the unconscious for serious scientific investigation. For a related consideration from the neuropsychological perspective, see Faulkner and Foster (2002). These authors argue that the effects of brain injury may teach us a considerable amount about the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind.

HUMANISTIC THEORIES – INDIVIDUALITY

Humanistic, or phenomenological, theories of personality present a positive and optimistic view of human behaviour.

humanistic a branch of personality theory that emphasizes the capacity for personal growth

In complete contrast to theories from the psychodynamic tradition, people are viewed as experiencing beings rather than victims of their unconscious motivations and conflicts. So the emphasis here is on individual experiences, relationships and ways of understanding the world. Fundamental to these theories are the beliefs that everyone's experience is unique, and the individual's perception of the world is critical to their understanding and behaviour.

Humanistic theories have formed the basis of many therapeutic procedures on which modern counselling techniques are based.

THE DRIVE TO FULFIL POTENTIAL

Approval and self-actualization

Carl Rogers (1902–87) saw humans as intrinsically good and as having an innate desire for self-improvement. He believed that self-concept is critical to our experience of the world, and that this develops from the child's perceptions of his parents' approval.

Rogers believed that all people have a basic need for positive regard – approval and love. How we feel about ourselves is determined by how others react to or approve of us, and we tend to be unhappy if we feel that others are not happy with us. According to Rogers, children develop *conditions of worth* – criteria for what we must or must not do in order

conditions of worth conditions under which affection is given

to gain approval. Although this is essential to the socialization of children, Rogers also argued that conditions of worth may interfere with personal development if our sole objective is to gain approval from others.

Experiencing unconditional positive regard – love and affection – enables us to grow and to satisfy our core tendency, which is to fulfil our potential by developing our capacities and talents

self-actualization the tendency to grow in ways that maintain or enhance the self

to the full. This is called *self-actualization*. Activities that are self-actualizing are perceived as satisfying, says Rogers, whereas activities that are incompatible with self-actualization are frustrating.

From a scientific perspective, the tendency to self-actualize is vague and untestable. While we may all have the same capacity to self-actualize, the form that actualization takes will be unique to each individual, making it impossible to establish objective criteria for measurement.

Client-centred therapy

Rogers developed a therapeutic approach known as client-centred therapy, which gives a central role to the therapist's unconditional positive regard for the client (see chapter 16). The therapist has to be trusting, accepting and empathic. Rogers argued that this helps the individual in therapy to recognize and untangle her feelings and return to an actualizing state.

One of Rogers' most important contributions to psychology was his attempt to evaluate this method of therapy. Rogers and Dymond (1954) set out to examine changes in the discrepancy between present self-concept and the ideal self (the person the client would like to be). This was done using a Q-sort technique (devised by Stephenson, 1953), whereby the client is given a range of cards on which there is a descriptive statement, such as: 'I don't trust my own emotions' and 'I have a warm emotional relationship with others.'

The client is asked to sort these cards in order, from 'most like me' to 'least like me' under the headings 'Self' and 'Ideal'. From this, Rogers and Dymond produced a numerical discrepancy between real and ideal self. By administering the Q-sort at different times during therapy, the effectiveness of the therapy sessions can be assessed.

Figure 14.4

Client-centred therapy requires the therapist to be trusting, accepting and empathic.

UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN PSYCHOLOGICAL WORLD

Personal construct theory

To examine how individuals view the world, George Kelly (1905–67) developed *personal construct* theory.

personal construct a mental representation used to interpret events

In contrast to the psychoanalytic emphasis on the person as a victim of unconscious desires and impulses, this humanistic theory portrays people as active hypothesis-generators. Personal construct theory treats the individual as her own personal scientist, one who is actively aware of how her own psychological world is constructed and construed. By understanding how the individual perceives the world, we can anticipate how they will behave within it and understand their reactions to events.

According to Kelly, trait theories (see below) try to locate the individual on the personality theorists' dimensions, whereas personal construct theory looks at how people see and align events according to their own personal dimensions. Kelly basically took the view that we are all scientists – so each individual is continually categorizing, interpreting, labelling and judging himself and his world. Each of us generates constructs and hypotheses, which then help us to anticipate and control events in our lives.

The subjective nature of reality

Consistent with this is the notion that we cannot know what another person really means when they say that they are in love or that they are unfriendly. We can only begin to know by relating what they say to their behaviour.

Kelly also proposed the notion of constructive alternativisim – the idea that there is no reality, that reality is only what we perceive it to be. This comes from the observation that while we may not always be able to change events, we can always construe them differently. Different people may choose to perceive an event in different ways, which allows for different courses of action. For Kelly, part of the therapeutic process was to help the client find appropriate or useful constructs of events, rather than simply being concerned with diagnosis and categorization.

Kelly saw the individual as being capable of enacting many different roles and engaging in continuous change. In his terms, a 'role' is an attempt to see another person through that person's own constructs. To enact a role, your behaviour must be guided by your perception of the other person's viewpoint. Kelly used role-playing as a therapeutic technique to help people gain new perspectives, and to find more convenient ways of living.

Explaining negative emotions

Kelly also tried to explain why people experience certain negative emotions. Anxiety, he suggested, occurs when our construct system provides no means for dealing with an experience. This can occur when we start a new job or have to deal with a person we

do not understand. Guilt results from discrepancy between our ideal self and our action. So you feel guilty when you do something that is discrepant with the kind of person you would like to be, or thought you were.

TRAIT THEORIES – ASPECTS OF PERSONALITY

traits labels given to consistent and enduring aspects of personality, viewed as continuous dimensions

types a term used by early personality theorists, who divided people into different categories, or types
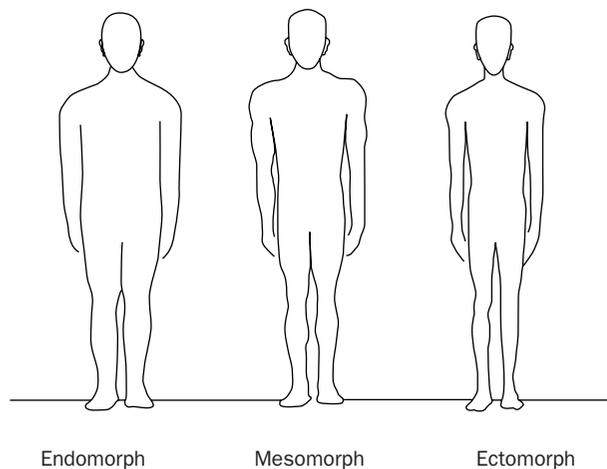
Traits – or descriptors used to label personality – have their origins in the ways we describe personality in everyday language.

In the early years of personality theory, many theorists used the term *types* to describe differences between people. Sheldon (1954), for example, categorized people according to three body types (see figure 14.5) and related these physical differences to differences in personality. Endomorphic body types are plump and round with a tendency to be relaxed and outgoing. Mesomorphic physiques are strong and muscular, and usually energetic and assertive in personality. Ectomorphic body types are tall and thin and tend to have a fearful and restrained personality.

Not only is it unlikely that personality can be mapped to body type, but the idea that all people can be allocated to a small number of categories is challenged by modern trait theories.

BODY TYPES

Endomorph   Mesomorph   Ectomorph

Figure 14.5

Three body types, according to Sheldon (1954). Endomorphic body types are plump and round with a tendency to be relaxed and outgoing. Mesomorphic physiques are strong and muscular, and usually energetic and assertive in personality. Ectomorphic body types are tall and thin and tend to have a fearful and restrained personality.

Modern theorists view traits as continuous rather than discrete entities. So, rather than being divided into categories, people are placed on a trait continuum representing how high or low each individual is on any particular dimension. The assumption is that we all possess each of these traits to a greater or lesser degree, and that comparisons can be made between people.

For example, categorizing people into separate groups of 'sociable' versus 'unsociable' is considered to be meaningless. Instead, it is considered more useful by trait theorists to determine the amount of sociability each person exhibits. Personality theorists regard most traits as forming a normal distribution, so some people will be very high in sociability and others very low, but most people will be somewhere in the middle.

CATTELL'S 16 TRAIT DIMENSIONS

Gordon Allport (1897–1967) made the first comprehensive attempt to develop a framework to describe personality using traits. Allport and Odbert (1936) used Webster's (1925) *New International Dictionary* to identify terms that describe personality.

This work was developed further by Raymond Cattell (1905–97), who used a statistical procedure called factor analysis to determine the structure of personality. Factor analysis is a tool for summarizing the relationships among sets of variables by identifying those that co-vary and are different from other groups of variables (see chapter 13). In personality theory, factor analysis can be used to identify which sets of variables most simply and accurately reflect the structure of human personality.

Like Allport, Cattell believed that a useful source of information about the existence of personality traits could be found in language, the importance of a trait being reflected in how many words describe it. Cattell called this the *lexical criterion of importance*. Building on Allport's work, Cattell (1943) collated a set of 4500 trait names from various sources and then removed obvious synonyms and metaphorical terms, until he reduced these to 171 key trait names. Cattell collected ratings of these words and factor-analysed the ratings.

lexical criterion of importance Cattell's proposal that an aspect of personality described by many words in the vernacular is likely to be more important than one described by just a few

Cattell's subsequent investigations yielded three types of data, which he categorized as follows:

- L-data – life record data, in which personality assessment occurs through interpretation of actual records of behaviour throughout a person's lifetime (e.g. report cards, ratings by friends and military conduct reports);
- Q-data – data obtained by questionnaires (e.g. asking people to rate themselves on different characteristics); and
- T-data – or objective psychometric test data (e.g. the thematic apperception test).

On the basis of this research, Cattell (1947) developed a model of personality describing 16 trait dimensions. He then developed a

questionnaire to measure these traits (Cattell, Eber & Tastuoka, 1977) called the Sixteen Personality Factors Questionnaire (16PF). Here are the 16 trait dimensions used in the 16PF:

Reserved--Outgoing
Less intelligent-------------------------------------More intelligent
Stable, ego strength--------------------------Emotionality / neuroticism
Humble--Assertive
Sober--Happy-go-lucky
Expedient--Conscientious
Shy--Venturesome
Tough-minded--Tender-minded
Trusting---Suspicious
Practical--Imaginative
Forthright--Shrewd
Placid---Apprehensive
Conservative---------------------------------------Experimenting
Group-dependent-------------------------------------Self-sufficient
Undisciplined--------------------------------------Controlled
Relaxed--Tense

EYSENCK'S SUPERTRAITS

supertraits Eysenck's three key traits, which he also referred to as types

extraversion the tendency to seek and engage with the company of others

introversion the tendency to avoid the company of others and to withdraw from social situations

neuroticism the tendency to be worried and anxious

Hans Eysenck (1916–97) was a contemporary of Cattell and also used factor analysis to classify personality traits. But Eysenck (1967) began with a theory of personality which he based on two *supertraits – extraversion– introversion* and *neuroticism–* stability.
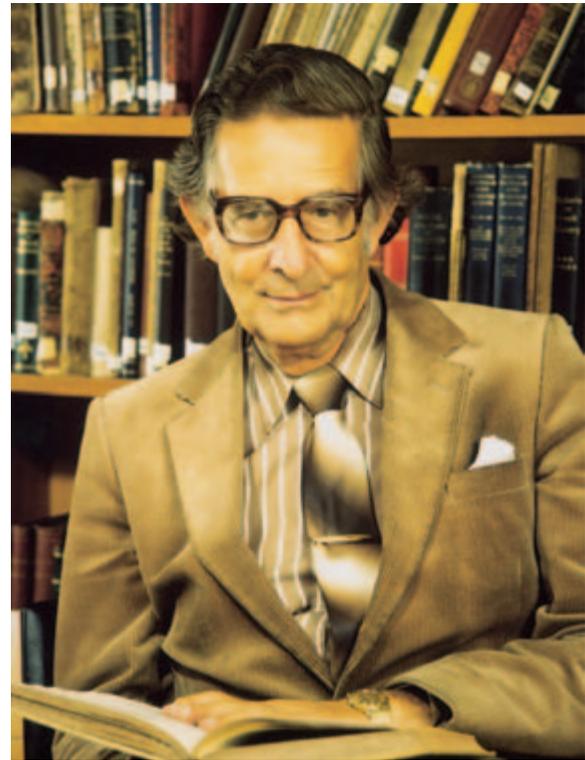
According to this theory, people who are highly extraverted are sociable and outgoing, and crave excitement and the company of others. People who are highly introverted are quiet and introspective; they tend to prefer time alone and to be cautious in the way they plan their lives. People who are highly neurotic tend to be anxious, moody and vulnerable, whereas people who are low on neuroticism tend to be stable, calm and even-tempered.

Eysenck viewed the supertraits of extraversion and neuroticism as independent, and believed that different personalities arise from differing combinations of the two supertraits.

Figure 14.7 shows the traits associated with Eysenck's two major personality dimensions (Eysenck, 1975). People who are high in both neuroticism and extraversion tend to exhibit quite different traits than someone who is low in both, or a combination of low and high. So people who are high on both extraversion and neuroticism tend to be touchy and aggressive, whereas people who are high on extraversion and low on neuroticism tend to be carefree and sociable.

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Figure 14.6

Hans Eysenck's theory of personality was based on two supertraits – *extraversion–introversion* and *neuroticism– stability*.
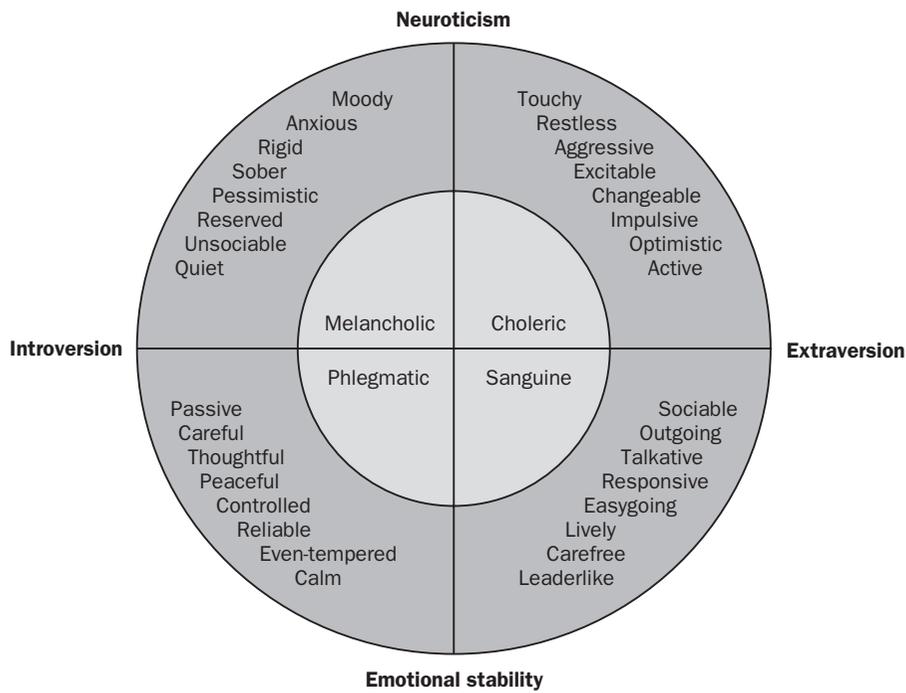
Hans J. Eysenck (1916–97) Born in Berlin, Eysenck moved to England in 1934. Until his death in 1997, Eysenck was the most widely cited psychologist in the world. Best known for his work in personality, Eysenck also contributed to the founding of cognitive-behaviour therapy as an alternative to psychodynamic therapies. His involvement with research on the relationship between race and IQ rendered him a controversial figure. Eysenck founded the Department of Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, The Maudsley Hospital, London, in 1946 and continued to work there long beyond his formal retirement in 1983.

A further supertrait identified by Eysenck (1982) is *psychoticism*. People scoring high on psychoticism are described

psychoticism the tendency to be cold, aggressive and antisocial

as: 'egocentric, aggressive, impersonal, cold, lacking in empathy, impulsive, lacking in concern for others and generally unconcerned about the rights and welfare of other people'.
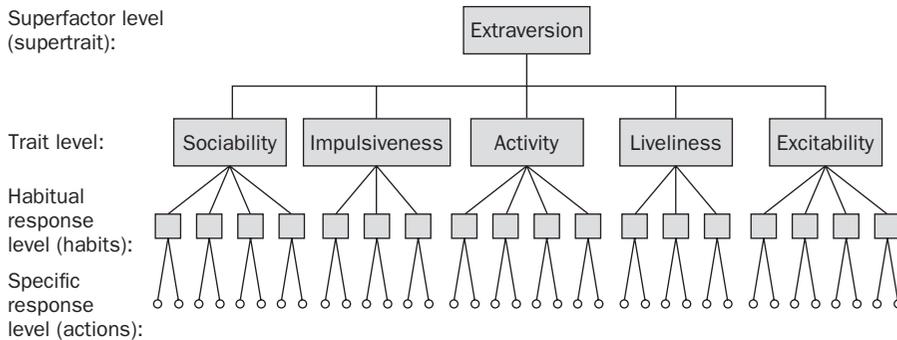
Eysenck's (1967) hierarchical model divides personality into various units (figure 14.8). This allows personality to be described

Figure 14.7

Four personality types can be derived from the traits associated with Eysenck's two major personality dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism. Source: Adapted from Eysenck (1975).

Figure 14.8

Eysenck's hierarchical model of personality. Source: Eysenck (1967).

at a number of different levels – supertraits, traits, habits and actions. Each supertrait is made up of a number of traits, which are in turn derived from habitual responses and specific responses (actions). According to this model, many specific actions make up habitual responses, which are represented as trait dimensions, which in turn are part of one supertrait. All levels are important in determining behaviour.

Like Cattell, Eysenck developed a questionnaire designed to measure his supertraits – the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, or EPQ (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; see table 14.1). He also developed a theory of the biological basis of personality, which is described later.

Table 14.1 Examples of items from the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire.

Question	Trait
Are you a talkative person?	Extraversion
Do you like going out a lot?	
Does your mood often go up and down?	Neuroticism
Are your feelings easily hurt?	
Have you ever taken anything (even a pin or a button) that belonged to someone else?	Lie scale
As a child, were you ever cheeky to your parents?	

Source: Eysenck and Eysenck (1975).

FIVE FACTORS OF PERSONALITY

Although trait theories were well established by the 1960s, there was no consensus concerning the number or nature of the traits that make up personality.

Replications of Cattell's work in factor analysis often failed to find the original factor structure he described. Instead, a number of studies using Cattell's variables came up with a simpler five factor structure (Fiske, 1949; Tupes & Christal, 1958, 1961).

five factor model of personality a model developed using factor analysis to try to determine the key traits in human personality

Since then, further research has confirmed a basic *five actor model of personality* or 'Big Five' (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993):

Extraversion	Sociable vs. retiring
	Fun-loving vs. sober
	Affectionate vs. reserved
Agreeableness	Softhearted vs. ruthless
	Trusting vs. suspicious
	Helpful vs. uncooperative
Conscientiousness	Well organized vs. disorganized
	Careful vs. careless
	Self-disciplined vs. weak willed
Neuroticism	Worried vs. calm
	Insecure vs. secure
	Self-pitying vs. self-satisfied
Openness	Imaginative vs. down-to-earth
	Prefers variety vs. prefers routine
	Independent vs. conforming

(From Costa & McCrae, 1985)

Extraversion and neuroticism are defined in the same way as Eysenck defined them. Openness to experience/intellect refers to receptivity to new ideas and experiences. People low on this trait prefer the familiar, practical and concrete, whereas those high on this trait are open to new experience, curious and imaginative. Agreeableness means the extent to which people are trusting, generous and concerned for others. Those low on agreeableness are viewed as antagonistic, tough-minded and hard-headed. Conscientiousness relates to organization and achievement. Highly conscientious individuals are ambitious, hard-working, competent and organized, and those low in conscientiousness are easy-going, low in self-discipline and not goal-driven.

While this model presents five categories, it should not be seen as a simplistic generalization of trait theory. As in Eysenck's (1967) model, each of the five factors is made up of a number of more specific traits. A questionnaire designed to measure traits within a five factor framework, the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae, 1985), consists of 300 items. Respondents decide how characteristic each item is of themselves, rating each item on a five-point scale. As well as scoring on the five factors, respondents receive scores on six sub-scales associated with each of the factors.

Most of the early work on the Big Five model was conducted in North America using the English language. If personality theorists are to have solid evidence of a universal five factor personality structure, they need to find evidence that the same model applies when languages other than English are used and when personality is examined in many different cultures. A recent review of studies involving European languages (De Raad et al., 1998) found general support for the Big Five. Evidence from studies conducted in non-Western cultures is less widely available, but does show some support for a five factor structure (Church et al., 1997).

The Big Five forms the basis for trait assessment of personality at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with questionnaires

such as the NEO-PI and subsequent revisions (NEO-PI-R, Costa & McCrae, 1992) being used widely in occupational psychology.

TRAIT DEBATES

Do we all possess all traits?

Gordon Allport (1937) was the first trait theorist to raise an issue that began a long debate within personality theory. It concerns whether personality is *nomothetic* or *idiographic*.

A nomothetic approach allows us to make comparisons between people. Its basic premise is that we are all governed by the same behavioural principles – so we all have the same traits

nomothetic an approach to personality that emphasizes comparisons between individuals and proposes that people are all governed by the same basic behavioural principles

idiographic an approach to personality that proposes each individual is unique and cannot be compared with another

and differ only in the extent to which each trait is present. The idiographic approach proposes that each individual is unique and there are some traits that may be possessed by only one person. So, according to the idiographic approach, comparing one person with another becomes meaningless. More recently Baumeister and Tice (1988) have suggested that certain trait dimensions apply to some people more than others, and that some traits may not be important at all in any one person's personality.

The person–situation debate

Since the development of trait theories in the 1950s and 1960s, personality researchers have been concerned about the relationship between traits and behaviour.

Mischel (1968) used the phrase 'personality coefficient' to highlight the rather modest correlations between traits (as measured by self-report questionnaires) and behaviour. A major debate ensued, focusing on whether an individual's actions are better predicted by the situation or by his/her personal characteristics.

The debate was resolved by the concept of interactionism, proposed by Magnusson and Endler (1977) – the idea that personality and the environment interact with each other to produce behaviour.

Another important notion is that some situations may have more influence over behaviour than others. Buss (1989) argued that behaviour is determined more by the situation when it is novel, formal and/or public, and more by personality when the situation is informal, familiar and/or private. So in a strong situation like a lecture, for instance, it might be quite hard to draw conclusions about a fellow student's personality when most people simply sit quietly and take notes. But in a pub or party, people's behaviour is variable enough for personality differences to become apparent.

Everyday Psychology

Personality profiling in the workplace

Many organizations are now administering personality tests to assess suitability for employment, redeployment and promotion or to determine training needs (see chapter 20). The goal is to achieve a better fit between people and jobs. But is personality profiling really a good idea?

In the intensifying competition for jobs and talented employees, hiring the 'right' person becomes increasingly important (especially in situations where a 'wrong' decision can be damaging and painful for employer and employee alike). At the same time, there is increasing evidence of the inefficiency of traditional job recruitment practices such as the job interview (especially when these practices are used in the absence of other forms of selection procedure).

Personality profiling is therefore being adopted more and more as an objective, efficient and fair way of identifying, recruiting and encouraging talent in the workplace.

Personality profiling aims at a certain kind of 'truth', but it does not pretend to capture the individual's character permanently or completely (different people may manifest different aspects of their personality in different situations). The personality tests usually chosen are deliberately designed to evaluate more stable personality traits and avoid value judgements such as 'good' or 'bad'. These instruments are usually designed to identify trends and preferences in behaviour, especially in a work environment.

Many people are cynical about psychometric tests, especially those that try to sum up their personalities. But a properly devised personality test can help the participant to make more informed career decisions and to deal more effectively with people and situations. Results should not be regarded as a final judgement of character, but rather as an extrapolation of ways in which an individual will tend to behave under certain conditions.

Many tests are designed to stimulate role-play and perspective taking. For example, it may become apparent not only how you feel about certain work colleagues, but also why. This often serves to stimulate a dialogue. The process may also allow you to think through the implications of your personality type even before you encounter a particular scenario.

Knowing yourself can give you and employers a common language to work with. And if there is an aspect of your personality you had not fully thought about, or could not quite understand, instead of learning the hard way through a painful confrontation you may later regret, personality testing may provide the kind of insight that will enable you to avoid a confrontational situation. Such knowledge may not be a substitute for real-life experience, but it can enhance personal awareness and understanding of individual differences.

Furnham, A., 1992, *Personality at Work: The Role of Individual Differences in the Work Place*, London: Routledge.

BIOLOGICAL AND GENETIC THEORIES – THE WAY WE ARE MADE

INHIBITION AND AROUSAL

Why do extraverts seek excitement?

In 1967 Eysenck developed inhibition theory. He argued that individual differences in extraversion–introversion are strongly determined by heredity and have their origins in the central nervous system. According to this theory, information from the environment is transmitted from the sense organs along neural pathways to the brain, where excitatory and inhibitory cortical processes result in either the facilitation or inhibition of behavioural and cognitive responses, in certain specific ways.

Eysenck maintained that extraverts have relatively strong inhibitory processes and weak excitatory processes. Their 'strong' nervous system enables them to tolerate a high degree of stimulation. The brain's slower and weaker reaction to stimuli creates a hunger or desire for strong sensory stimulation. So extraverts seek excitement from the environment.

Introverts, on the other hand, have strong excitory processes and weak inhibitory process. Their nervous systems are 'weak', but they have brains that react more quickly and strongly to stimuli. So they can tolerate only relatively small amounts of stimulation.

Developing the theory

Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) redeveloped inhibition theory to formulate *arousal theory*, which identifies the physiological systems underlying introversion–extraversion.

> **arousal theory** developed by Eysenck, this theory provides an account of the physiological systems underlying introversion–extraversion.

The differences in the behaviour of extraverts and introverts are traced to various parts of the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) – a network of fibres travelling upwards from the lower brain stem to the thalamus and cortex. Stimulation of the ARAS results in increases in alertness and arousal of the cortex. Other fibres descending from the lower brain stem influence bodily musculature and the autonomic nervous system. At the same time, fibres descending from the cortex can modulate the

activity of the brain stem, increasing or inhibiting the excitability of the ARAS. So the relationship between the ARAS and the cortex is reciprocal.

The high cortical arousability of introverts is supposed to amplify incoming stimulation. According to this framework, very high and very low levels of stimulation are considered to produce negative hedonic tone, which is experienced as negative feelings and negative evaluation of the experience. Positive hedonic tone occurs only at intermediate levels of sensory stimulation. The levels at which negative and positive hedonic tone occur will be different for introverts and extraverts.

Testing the theory

Using this theoretical formulation psychologists have been able to make predictions about the behaviour of introverts and extraverts in experiments ranging from sensory deprivation to students' study habits. For example, Campbell and Hawley (1982) predicted that introverts would prefer study locations that minimize intense external stimulation (such as study carrels) whereas extraverts would prefer large, open reading areas where socializing is permitted and both auditory and visual stimulation is high. These researchers gave students the EPQ, noted their preferred seating areas in a campus library, and asked them to fill out a study habits questionnaire. Their predictions turned out to be correct. They also found that extraverts took more study breaks, looking and walking around the room, going out for coffee etc. Davies and Parasuraman (1982) found that extraverts also make more errors than introverts on long vigilance tasks. Eysenck explained this finding by suggesting that extraverts generate reactive inhibition (fatigue) more quickly and at greater levels than introverts when they are performing long tasks.

Despite evidence that appears to support Eysenck's theory, a comprehensive review by Stelmack (1990) showed that introverts and extraverts show no difference in brain-wave activity when at rest or asleep. It therefore seems likely that extraverts and introverts differ in terms of their sensitivity to stimulation, rather than in base rate levels of cortical activity.

Stress and performance

There has not been much direct investigation of how neuroticism affects performance, but many studies have examined the effect of anxiety – one of the component traits of neuroticism. According to Eysenck, the adverse effects of anxiety on performance are attributable to task-irrelevant processing activities, such as worry. Consistent with this, Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) found that students who report high levels of worry perform less well on tests. And when highly anxious people do perform well, it is at the expense of more effort and distress.

Sensation seeking

The differences between those who prefer bungee-jumping and those who world rather watch a good movie can also be addressed using a biological theory of personality.

Zuckerman (1994) conducted research into sensation seeking over a 30-year period, developing a questionnaire to measure the phenomenon and a biological theory to explain it. Zuckerman, Kolin, Price and Zoob (1964) identified four aspects of sensation seeking:

1. thrill and adventure seeking (risky sport)
2. experience seeking (desire for novelty)
3. disinhibition (stimulation through social activity)
4. boredom susceptibility (low tolerance for repetitive events)

Sensation seekers are more likely to have more sexual partners, use illegal drugs, take part in risky sport, be more complex, original and creative, and have more liberal and nonconforming attitudes. Zuckerman (1994) explained differences in sensation seeking in terms of level of arousal in the catecholamine system. (This system comprises neurons communicating via catecholamines, which include epinephrine, or adrenaline, norepinephrine and dopamine; see chapter 3.) According to Zuckerman, those with a low optimal level in this system work to reduce the stimulation in their environment, whereas those with a high optimal level seek to increase it.

GENETICS VS. ENVIRONMENT

Recent work in behavioural genetics has examined the contribution of genetic and environmental factors to human behaviour. A good example of this approach is represented by the twin studies of intelligence already discussed in chapter 13.

Evidence for and against genetic influence

In 1976 Loehlin and Nicholls examined the scores on self-report personality questionnaires of 800 pairs of twins. Nearly all traits showed moderate genetic influence, with monozygotic (identical) twins being much more similar than dizygotic (fraternal, or non-identical) twins. A more extensive study (Loehlin, 1992) of 24,000 twin pairs in many different countries confirmed that monozygotic twins are much more similar than dizygotic twins on the Big Five personality dimensions. Riemann, Angleitner and Strelau (1997) found the same results when twins were rated by their friends on the same factors.

Studies of genetically unrelated family members (parents and their adopted children) show no similarity in personality traits such as extraversion and neuroticism (Loehlin, 1992). This suggests that family environment itself does not contribute to similarities in personality between family members. Interestingly, recent studies have also shown only very slight similarities in personality between adopted children and their biological parents. A study by Plomin, Corley, Caspi, Fulker and DeFries (1998) found some evidence for a genetic basis for sociability, but almost no similarities in emotionality between biological parents and their adopted-away children, or between adoptive parents and their adopted children.

Thus both adoption studies and twin studies are consistent with a genetic influence on personality. Only identical twins have

Research close-up 1

The Twins Early Development Study

The research issue

The UK Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Research Centre was launched in 1994 as a partnership between the MRC (Medical Research Council) and the Institute of Psychiatry. This multidisciplinary institution studies child development from a range of complementary perspectives: adult psychiatry, developmental psychopathology, development in the family, personality traits, social epidemiology, cognitive abilities, statistical genetics, and molecular genetics.

The Twins Early Development Study (TEDS) focused on early development, preferentially targeting the three most important psychological problems in childhood that impact upon personality development: communication disorders, mild mental impairment and behavioural difficulties.

The TEDS twins represent a large sample that was assessed longitudinally at two, three, four, seven and nine years of age. Developmental comparisons have been made in order to investigate genetic and environmental contributions to change and continuity in language and cognitive development. The focus is on developmental delays in early childhood and their association with behavioural problems.

Design and procedure

In this study, the monozygotic (MZ) twin differences method was used to investigate non-shared environmental influences on early behavioural development, independent of genetic influences (which were clearly the same for each MZ twin).

The parents of four-year-old MZ twin pairs (N = 2353) assessed themselves on two parenting measures – the need for harsh parental discipline and the occurrence of negative parental feelings towards the child – and assessed the twins on four behavioural measures – anxiety, prosocial behaviour, hyperactivity and conduct problems.

Results and implications

The study found that within-twin pair differences in parenting style correlated significantly with noted within-twin pair differences in behaviour. The findings additionally suggested a stronger influence of non-shared environmental factors in behaviourally 'extremely different' twin dyads. The study also noted that non-shared relationships between parents and MZ twins were also stronger in higher risk environments – that is, families with lower socio-economic status, greater 'family chaos', or greater maternal depression.

The findings indicate that parenting style can influence behavioural (and potentially personality) outcomes over the first four years of life. In particular, differences in parenting style influenced differences in behaviour in identical twins, in a study where the potential genetic influence on behaviour was clearly controlled through the twins being genetically identical.

These findings have potentially important implications for child-rearing practices and for behavioural and personality development in children, indicating that the way in which parents behave towards their children can significantly affect their children's behavioural outcome. The authors conclude that some systematic non-shared environmental relationships can be identified, and these links are stronger for more discordant twins and higher-risk families. However, note the possibility of circular reasoning being applied in this study, given that the parents were rating their own conduct towards their twins.

Asbury, K., Dunn, J.F., Pike, A., & Plomin, R., 2003, 'Nonshared environmental influences on individual differences in early behavioural development: A monozygotic twin differences study', *Child Development*, 74 (3), 933–43.

exactly the same combinations of genes; dizygotic twins, just like ordinary siblings, will each inherit a different random sampling of half of each parent's genes. It is also possible that research findings from twin studies are partly explained by the unique circumstances of being a twin. For example, twins who look similar may be encouraged to act in a similar way, whereas non-identical twins may be encouraged to behave differently.

Genes in the environment

Until researchers began to look at genetic components in personality, psychologists had generally assumed that familial similarities are caused by similar environments. However, it is a mistake to view familial environments as shared between family members (see chapter 13). Children growing up in the same family can experience very different lives, and even common family experiences such as death or divorce are experienced differently by different siblings (Dunn & Plomin, 1990). Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that more recent studies have tended to downplay the role of the 'shared environment', because often it is not fully shared between family members. A complex interaction between genes and environment may be the key consideration.

Research in behavioural genetics has also begun to consider the effects of genetics on the environment. Parenting behaviour

Figure 14.9

Robert Plomin's research involves identifying genes for personality traits.

Robert Plomin (1948–) is Professor of Behavioural Genetics at the Institute of Psychiatry in London and Deputy Director of the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry (SGDP) Research Centre. The goal of the SGDP Research Centre is to bring together genetic and environmental research strategies to study behavioural development, a theme that characterizes his research. Plomin's special interest is in harnessing the power of molecular genetics to identify genes for psychological traits in order to advance our understanding of the developmental interplay between genes and environment.

Table 14.2 Types of cognitive–affective units in the personality system.

Cognitive–affective units in the personality system	Explanation
Encodings	Units or constructs for categorizing events, people and the self
Expectancies and beliefs	Relating to the social world and about outcomes for behaviour; self-efficacy
Affects	Feelings, emotions and affective responses to stimuli
Goals and values	Desirable and aversive affective states and outcomes, life goals, values
Competencies and self-regulatory plans	Behaviours and strategies for organizing actions and influencing outcomes, one's own behaviour and reactions

Source: Mischel and Shoda (1995).

Mischel helps us to answer these questions. In 1973 he proposed a set of psychological person variables for analysing individual differences in cognitive terms. These variables are assumed to interact with each other as we interpret the social world and act on it. After a number of developments and refinements, Mischel and Shoda (1995) renamed the variables as *cognitive–affective units in the personality system*, integrating constructs from research in cognition and social learning.

> **cognitive–affective units in the personality system** a model of categories through which personality can be examined within a social cognitive framework

This model provides a classification system of broad cognitive categories, which describe interacting processes that may lead to personality differences (table 14.2). We will explore social–cognitive theories by taking one category at a time.

may have a genetic influence, in terms of the parts of the parent's personality which are influenced by genetic factors. In addition, recent research suggests that parenting behaviour may also be influenced by genetic components of the child's personality. Plomin, DeFries and Fulker (1988) found that adoptive parents were more responsive to their adopted children whose natural mother had been high on activity and impulsivity. It is therefore possible that children who are genetically more active and impulsive cause their parents to be more responsive to their needs than do other children. Therefore, the relationship between genes and environment may be an even more complex (two-way) interaction than was previously thought.

SOCIAL–COGNITIVE THEORIES – INTERPRETING THE WORLD

How do cognitive and social processes affect behaviour? And how do different processing strategies result in differing personalities?

ENCODINGS – OR HOW WE PERCEIVE EVENTS

A lecturer ending a class 20 minutes early may delight those who are bored and want to go to the coffee shop but equally irritate those who want to make further progress on the topic being discussed.

Processes such as selective attention, interpretation and categorization cause us to perceive the same events and behaviours in different ways (Argyle & Little, 1972) – a phenomenon that most likely remains stable throughout our lives (Peterson, Seligman & Vaillant, 1988).

Attributional style

Examples of a social–cognitive approach that examines *encoding* are the reformulated model of helplessness and depression (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978) and hopelessness theory (Abramson, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989). A key variable here is

Figure 14.10

Martin Seligman – a world authority on learned helpless-ness, depression and optimism.

Martin Seligman (1942–) is Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Seligman has written numerous books and journal articles on motivation and personality. He is a world authority on learned helpless-ness, depression and optimism. In recent years, Seligman has taken a leading position in promoting 'positive psy-chology'. In 1998 he served as President of the American Psychological Association.

attributional style the characteristic patterns of explanation people use to make sense of life-events

attributional style, or stable individual differences in the way people explain events in their lives. Differences in attributional style lead us to explain events in a characteristic way (see chapter 17).

Distinctions are made between particular dimensions of attribution:

- internal–external – the extent to which events are seen as caused by the self, rather than factors external to the self;
- stable–unstable – the extent to which causes are seen to persist across time; and

- global–specific – the extent to which the cause is something that affects many things in our life, rather than just specific situations.

Research based on this theoretical framework shows that people who tend to make stable and global explanations for negative events (relating to unchangeable factors that can affect many things in their lives) will be more likely to become depressed when unpleasant things happen to them.

The hopelessness model of depression (figure 14.11) describes how a negative life event can precipitate depression in people who have depressogenic inferential styles. Metalsky, Halberstadt and Abramson (1987) found that students who failed an exam and had a stable, global attributional style were more likely to suffer from persistent depressed mood than those who had the opposite style.

Attributional style is associated with a variety of behavioural outcomes, ranging from performance (e.g. in sports, insurance sales, academic tasks) to physical health (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995).

Cognitive appraisal

Research by Lazarus (1966, 1990) resulted in the con-cept of *cognitive appraisal* (see chapter 6). Lazarus inves-tigated people's reactions to

cognitive appraisal determines reac-tions to stressful events, according to Lazarus
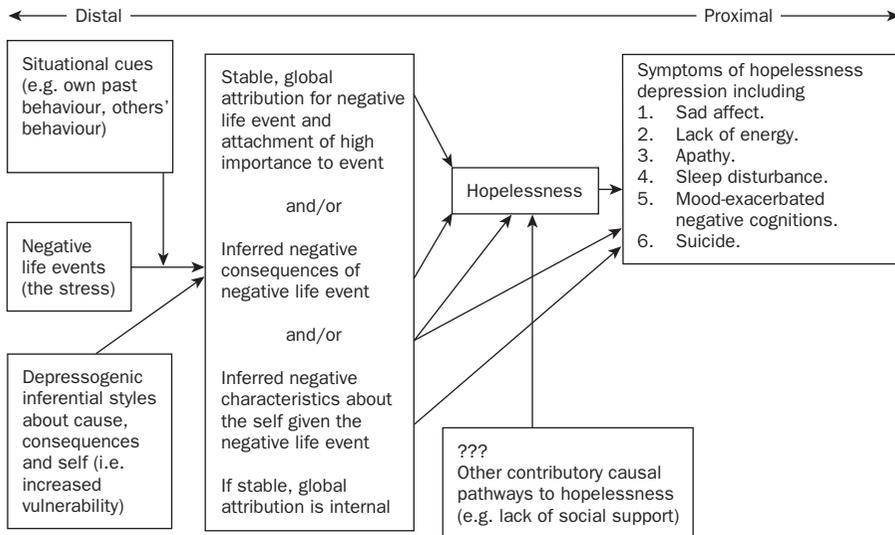
stressful situations and concluded that how we view or appraise stress, cognitively, is more important than the actual amount of stress we are experiencing. Lazarus suggested that, in our pri-mary appraisal of an event, we decide whether it is irrelevant to our wellbeing, benign–positive or stressful. Secondary appraisals then determine the cognitive resources available to cope with the event.

Following appraisal, we employ various coping mechanisms. Much of Lazarus's research has involved the identification and evaluation of coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example:

- confrontational coping is when you get angry with the per-son you think has caused the stress you are experiencing;
- seeking social support is finding someone to help or talk to about the situation; and
- escape–avoidance is when you try to think about some-thing else or avoid dealing with the problem.

EXPECTANCIES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EFFICACY

Expectancies are the possible outcomes that we expect or anticip-ate in a given situation, and how confident we are that we can perform a particular behaviour. To predict how someone will behave in a specific situation, we have to consider their expecta-tions about the possibilities in that situation. These expectancies

Situational cues (e.g. own past behaviour, others' behaviour)

Stable, global attribution for negative life event and attachment of high importance to event

and/or

Symptoms of hopelessness depression including
1. Sad affect.
2. Lack of energy.
3. Apathy.
4. Sleep disturbance.
5. Mood-exacerbated negative cognitions.
6. Suicide.

Hopelessness

Negative life events (the stress)

Inferred negative consequences of negative life event

and/or

Depressogenic inferential styles about cause, consequences and self (i.e. increased vulnerability)

Inferred negative characteristics about the self given the negative life event

If stable, global attribution is internal

???
Other contributory causal pathways to hopelessness (e.g. lack of social support)

Figure 14.11

The hopelessness model of depression. Source: Adapted from Abramson et al. (1989).

Research close-up 2

Attributional style as a personality factor in insurance sales performance

The research issue

Seligman (1991) summarizes different dimensions of attributional style as forming 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' explanatory styles for favourable (success) and unfavourable (failure) events. In this study, attributional style, for both positive and negative events, was measured using a questionnaire.

According to the reformulated learned helplessness model of depression, individuals with an optimistic explanatory style are more resilient when faced with unfavourable events (e.g. failure in an exam, loss of a job) compared to individuals with a pessimistic explanatory style.

One occupation in which employees experience frequent success and failure is the selling of financial services. In the USA, Seligman and Schulman (1986) showed that pessimistic style for negative events is negatively related to sales performance, and that an optimistic style for both positive and negative events predicts survival persistence in the job and sales achievement.

More general research in the UK suggests that an optimistic style for positive events is more predictive of high performance than an optimistic style for negative events (e.g. Brewin & Shapiro, 1984; Furnham et al., 1992).

The aim of this study (Corr & Gray, 1996) was to examine the relationship between attributional style and sales in financial services salespeople. It was hypothesized that if attributional style is an important personality variable, then individual differences in attributional style should be related to differences in sales performance.

Design and procedure

Participants were 130 senior salespeople in a UK insurance company, all male. Measures were recorded using the Seligman Attributional Style Questionnaire (SASQ; Peterson et al., 1982). This presents respondents with 12 hypothetical situations (e.g. 'You do a project that is highly praised'). Six of these situations were 'negative' and six 'positive'. Within each of these categories, three situations were related to interpersonal events and three to achievement events.

Composite scores were calculated for positive and negative events. Sales outcomes were measured by the number of policies sold x average value of the policy, and also by company ranking of performance, from 1 (best salesman) to n (worst salesman).

Attributional style was measured by questionnaire completion in groups during the training sessions. Sales performance was measured over a six-month period.

Results and implications

Positive attributional style was positively correlated with sales, showing that salespeople scoring higher in positive attributional style were more successful than their lower scoring colleagues. Positive attributional style for achievement-related situations was the best predictor of performance ranking.

The results of this study do not tell us about the direction of causation. Being successful may lead to high levels of optimism, or being optimistic may lead to high levels of success. But prospective studies have shown that differing aspects of attributional style between individuals can predict future performance in sales (Corr & Gray, 1996) and academic achievement (Houston, 1994).

Corr, P.J., & Gray, J.A., 1996, 'Attributional style as a personality factor in insurance sales performance in the UK', *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, 69, 83–7.

will determine which behaviour is selected by them from a potentially large number of possibilities.

Mischel (1973/1990) defined three types of expectancy:

1. Behaviour–outcome relations are the relationship between possible behaviour and expected outcomes in any situation – 'if I do this, then that will happen' (see chapter 4). We use our previous experience to determine our behaviour and to guide what we expect to happen. For example, when we go to a wedding, we use information about previous weddings we have attended to guide our expectations. (This is related to the notion of 'scripts' that was referred to in chapter 12.) It is also adaptive to be able to recognize and appreciate new contingencies, as employing outdated ones may lead to inappropriate behaviour.

2. Stimulus–outcome relations – we learn that certain cues or stimuli are likely to lead to certain events, and we learn to react accordingly. Physical characteristics, self-presentational techniques and forms of dress are all examples of stimuli that lead us to have certain expectations about someone's behaviour. For example, we would not expect someone in an expensive suit to begin digging the road. Non-verbal behaviours can also lead us to expect certain kinds of behaviour. If you ask a friend for a favour and they begin to nod and smile, you have a different expectation of the outcome than if they begin to frown and look away. Such cues are often culturally or personally determined.

3. Self-efficacy is a person's belief that they can perform a certain behaviour. People differ in how effective they expect themselves to be in a situation, and these expectations seem to affect their actual performance (Bandura, 1978). Much of the research that has examined expectancies within personality psychology has focused on this third type of expectancy. The concept of *self-efficacy* was first developed by Bandura (1978, 1982) and is defined as the belief that one can bring about certain outcomes. According to Bandura (1986), there are four determinants of self-efficacy beliefs:

> **self-efficacy** the extent to which people believe that they can bring about outcomes

   - actual performance accomplishments are what we have achieved in the past, and these are the primary source of self-efficacy information;
   - vicarious experiences are what we observe about others' performance, and how we evaluate ourselves in relation to other people;
   - verbal persuasion relates to what others tell us they think we can do (our own perceived self-efficacy being influenced by how other people convey their confidence in, or doubts about us); and
   - emotional arousal is our awareness of our levels of autonomic and emotional arousal – the cues we receive from our own physical and emotional feelings.

Self-efficacy has been shown to be a strong predictor of coping with disease (O'Leary, 1992), phobias (Cervone et al., 1991) and academic performance (Houston, 1995). For example, Houston found that efficacy has a protective role for students: those who are high in efficacy are less likely to become depressed when they fail academic tests.

AFFECTS – HOW WE FEEL

The way we feel can be determined by stable individual differences in personality as well as by immediate responses to situations as they occur. Both types of emotional reaction can have an important impact on the way we behave. Mischel and Shoda (1995) describe this interplay in terms of 'hot' emotions having an impact on 'cool' cognitions. Feeling angry, anxious or happy might impact on any of the other types of cognition, changing the way we respond. So a person who is already feeling happy may react very positively to meeting a friend in the street, someone who is already feeling angry may lose their temper when their car is scraped in the car park. A dispositionally calm person may still become anxious when the elevator they are travelling in becomes stuck between floors.

GOALS, VALUES AND THE EFFECTS OF REWARD

Two people with similar encoding styles and expectancies may behave differently because they have different personal values. Subjective values are viewed as acting as a) motivating stimuli and b) incentives. Our actions are often the result of intrinsic motivation, related to personal preferences and values.

Deci and Ryan (1985) made the distinction between i) self-determined and ii) controlled actions. Self-determined actions have some intrinsic interest or value to the individual, whereas controlled actions satisfy external pressures or demands, or are done to gain some form of payment. Many studies have shown that offering reward for certain tasks actually decreases people's motivation to perform those tasks (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985). Related to this finding, Deci (1975) distinguished between two aspects of reward – controlling and informational. A reward that has a controlling aspect might make people feel their efforts are not self-determined. Reward that has an informational aspect can have two consequences – it may make people feel they have high levels of competence, which in turn increases motivation, or it may make them feel they are only engaging in the activity for reward, which decreases motivation.

COMPETENCIES AND SELF-REGULATORY PLANS

These are our rules for and reactions to our own performance. In the absence of external constraints and monitors, we set performance goals for ourselves. We react with self-criticism if we do not meet these standards, and self-praise or satisfaction if we do meet them, or even exceed them. Self-regulation is the process through which we influence our environment and behaviour.

Self-consciousness

control theory of human functioning a metaphorical thermostat system used to model the ways in which people set standards for their own behaviour and how they monitor this behaviour

Carver and Scheier (1981, 1990) developed a *control theory of human functioning*, which states that there are stable individual differences in the extent to which we attend to aspects of the self. Control theory uses a metaphorical thermostat system to model the ways in which people set standards for their own behaviour and how they monitor their behaviour in order to meet these standards. If we perceive ourselves to have reached too high a standard, the personality system will reduce the discrepancy between the standard and the perceived level. If we are not meeting the standard we have set for ourselves, motivation and effort will be set in motion to reduce the discrepancy.

People differ in the levels and kinds of controls included in their self-regulatory system. The extent to which we attend to aspects of the self has been defined as a personality variable called

self-consciousness the tendency to direct attention towards the self

self-consciousness. Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss (1975) developed a self-consciousness scale to measure what they considered to be stable individual difference in private and public self-consciousness. Private self-consciousness is attention to our own inner feelings, desires and standards, whereas public self-consciousness is attention to what others think and observe about us.

The importance of self-consciousness is illustrated by a study in which participants looked at photographs or slides of people with positive or negative facial expressions (Kleinke, Peterson & Rutledge, 1998). Participants attempted to communicate these facial expressions as accurately as they could to a video camera. Some were able to view themselves in a mirror while doing this, and some were not. Participants in a control group maintained neutral facial expressions. The researchers found that participants experienced increased positive mood when they engaged in positive facial expressions and decreased positive moods with negative facial expressions (see chapter 6). Furthermore, these effects were enhanced when participants viewed themselves in a mirror – and the positive effects were stronger for participants with high private self-consciousness.

Self-guides

In his self-discrepancy theory, Higgins (1987, 1989) suggested that we have self-guides representing internalized standards, which may be unconsciously activated to influence behaviour. There are two particularly important self-guides:

1. The 'ideal self' represents the attributes that we would like to possess (ideals that we and important others hold). It is associated with positive outcomes, and is derived from the positive affect associated with attaining standards set by important figures from childhood owards.

2. The 'ought self' represents the attributes that we feel we should possess (duties and responsibilities). It is associated with negative outcomes, and is derived from negative affects associated with not fulfilling duties and responsibilities. According to Higgins' self-discrepancy theory, we are motivated to reduce two kinds of discrepancy. These are discrepancies between how we actually see ourselves and how we would like to be ideally (this is the 'actual self-ideal self' (AI) discrepancy), as well as between how we actually see ourselves and how we ought to be (the 'actual self-ought self' (AO) discrepancy). All children learn ideal and ought self guides, but Newman, Higgins and Vookles (1992) found that first-born children are more strongly orientated toward the standards of others, and their AI and AO discrepancies are associated with more emotional distress than in the case of second and later-born children.

Self-monitoring and competencies

Snyder (1974) and Snyder and Gangestad (1986) developed a scale designed to assess the degree to which individuals regulate their behaviour in order to make a particular social impression. They found that high self-monitors alter their behaviour in response to specific situational demands, and are therefore likely to display less consistency in their actions.

Competencies (the ability to generate particular cognitions and behaviours) are thought to be related to intelligence and social maturity. Mischel (1990) argued that we develop competencies to create cognitions and behaviours that may be conceptualized as *social intelligence* (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987). In other words, we

social intelligence competencies and skills used in social behaviour

develop abilities to transform and use social information and knowledge actively, and to create thoughts and actions, rather than simply storing a whole load of 'recipe' responses.

Each individual acquires the capacity actively to construct a multitude of potential behaviours with the knowledge and skills available to him. People vary enormously in the range and quality of the cognitive and behavioural patterns they can generate, and in their social problem-solving strategies.

Social intelligence

Cantor (1990) outlines the cognitive competencies we use to solve everyday life tasks within a theory of social intelligence. She describes the representation of goals, plans for achieving goals, representations of the self and possible selves, the development of coping mechanisms and self-regulation. She uses three concepts to examine the processes that guide social behaviour:

- schemas that channel perception and memory in specific settings;
- life tasks that individuals construct as goals; and
- strategies that are used to pursue the goals.

Cantor describes a series of studies that have examined life tasks and cognitive strategies during major life transitions (e.g. from school to university, and from university to work). This research has identified types of life tasks that are common amongst young people during these transitions, as well as strategies that are used to tackle them.

In identifying strategies used in academic contexts, Norem (1989, Norem & Cantor, 1986) identified a distinction between 'optimists' and 'defensive pessimists'. Optimists feel little anxiety about achievement tasks, work hard and keep their performance expectations high. Defensive pessimists set low expectations and ruminate over the worst potential outcomes. And yet, despite differing strategies, research shows that the two types of student do not differ significantly in terms of actual academic performance. Both strategies are adaptive in different ways: optimists avoid considering what might go wrong, and defensive pessimists play out worst case scenarios in order to deal with anxiety and focus on the task.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This chapter offers only an overview of the world of personality. It has examined different theoretical explanations of why we show consistency in our behaviour, thoughts and actions and why these consistencies make us different from each other.

Psychoanalytic theorists focus on unconscious processes and the impact of early childhood experience; in contrast, humanistic theorists emphasize human experience and positive aspects of behaviour. Trait theorists have been concerned with the labelling and measurement of personality dimensions, based on assumptions of stable genetic and biological explanations for personality. The complex way in which genes and environment determine personality has presented an important puzzle for personality theory. Social–cognitive theories provide an explanation for differences in personality in terms of the ways we process information and perceive our social world.

Within psychology the complexities of how our personality develops and determines our behaviour have resulted in a number of differing theoretical perspectives and debates. These debates – about interactions between genes and environment, biology and experience, the person and the situation – will continue to engage psychologists in the twenty-first century.

Summary

- Personality theorists are concerned with identifying generalizations that can be made about consistent individual differences between people's behaviour and the causes and consequences of these differences.
- Sigmund Freud developed a psychoanalytic approach that emphasized the role of the unconscious in regulating behaviour. Freud produced hypothetical models of the structure of the mind, the way personality works and the ways in which it develops.
- Psychoanalytic theories are not testable in the same way as modern scientific psychology.
- Traits are descriptors for personality, which have their origins in everyday language. Hans Eysenck and Raymond Cattell both developed trait theories that exerted a considerable impact on research in personality.
- In recent years, researchers have developed a five factor model of personality, which might represent evidence of a universal structure for personality.
- Biological theories of personality attempt to explain differences in behaviour in terms of differences in physiology, particularly brain function.
- Hans Eysenck developed explanations for both extraversion and neuroticism based on theories of cortical arousal.
- Research in behavioural genetics has permitted the examination of both genetic and environmental factors in personality.
- Identical twins are much more similar in personality than are fraternal twins, but personality similarities between parents and children, or between siblings, are not always very strong.
- Social–cognitive theories of personality examine consistent differences in the ways people process social information, allowing us to make predictions about individuals' behaviour in particular contexts.
- Mischel devised a framework of broad cognitive categories involving processes that may lead to personality differences.

REVISION QUESTIONS

1. How do personality theorists define personality?
2. Why are both consistency and difference important concepts for the personality psychologist?
3. Why is the unconscious so important in Freud's theory of personality?
4. In what ways did Freud link personality development to physical development?
5. According to Eysenck, what are the three primary dimensions of personality?
6. What are the Big Five?
7. What is more important in determining behaviour – the person or the situation?
8. Is extraversion related to brain-wave activity?
9. Are identical (monozygotic) twins more similar in personality than non-identical (dizygotic) twins?
10. Is our personality an effect of how we interpret the world, or does it cause it?
11. Does the way we perceive stress determine how we cope with it?
12. How do internalized standards affect our behaviour?

FURTHER READING

Carver, C.S., & Scheier, M.F. (1996). *Perspectives on Personality*. 3rd edn. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
Divides personality into different perspectives and includes a considerable amount of material on self-regulation.

Mischel, W. (1999). *Introduction to Personality*. 6th edn. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
An interesting introduction to personality research.

Pervin, L.A. (1996). *The Science of Personality*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
A readable and reasonably comprehensive account of personality research.

Peterson, C., Maier, S.F., & Seligman, M.E.P. (1993). *Learned Helplessness: A Theory for the Age of Personal Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.
The history and development of learned helplessness theory.

Plomin, R. (1994). *Genetics and Experience: The Interplay Between Nature and Nurture*. London: Sage.
Examines the role of both nature and nurture in the development of individual differences.

Plomin, R., DeFries, J.C., McClearn, G.E., & Rutter, M. (1997). *Behavioral Genetics*. 3rd edn. New York: Freeman.
Introduces the field of behavioural genetics, including genetic factors in ability and disability, personality and psychopathology.

Contributing author:
Diane M. Houston