

# Desiree napoleon

Psychology



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Desiree Napoleon PSYC 100. 50 November 14, 2011 Weiten, Chapter 11, Personality Theory, Research and Assessment Personality can be defined as an individual's unique collection of consistent behavioral traits, which make human being hardwired to act in certain ways in certain situations. Some of the ways in which we behave are basic. These basic behaviors, scientists believe, can determine less basic behaviors. For example, if a person tends to be boisterous and easily irritated, this may stem from a basic excitable personality trait. Cattell used factor analysis to reduce a large number of personality traits to just sixteen basic ones, which he felt could be used to describe most anyone's personality. McCrae and Costa (1987, 1997, 1999, 2003) broke this down even further to establish a five-factor model of personality, which theorized that human beings' personalities could be derived from the following higher-order traits: a. Extraversion, those who exhibit gregariousness, friendliness, and assertiveness. b. Neuroticism, those who tend to be anxious, insecure, vulnerable, or hostile. c. Openness to experience, curiosity, artistic sensitivity, unconventionalism. d. Agreeableness, those who exhibit modesty, sympathy, straightforwardness. e. Conscientiousness, characterized by diligence, punctuality and dependability. Some scientists also refer to this trait as constraint. There are correlations between these five traits and life outcomes. For example, high conscientiousness has been associated with academic success, and a highly neurotic mien is thought to play some role in the rate of mental disorders and even divorce. Personality theory is grouped in the text according to psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic, and biological perspectives. One of the most well-known proponents of psychodynamic of psychoanalytic theory was Sigmund Freud. Freud felt that human personality was shaped largely by <https://assignbuster.com/desiree-napoleon/>

early childhood experiences, the motives and conflicts of our unconscious minds, and on how we cope with our sexual and aggressive urges. He also felt that we had little to no control over our minds or destinies. Freud was met with a great deal of criticism by his peers, as he broke personality down into three distinct structures, the id, our primitive, instinctive part that operates according to the pleasure principle, or immediate gratification of urges, the ego, which governs decision-making and deals in the reality principle (the delaying of gratifying one's id until more suitable outlets can be found), and the superego, which incorporates social standards to determine what is right or wrong. With that said, our behaviors are just the result of those three components warring with one another. Sexual and aggressive urges, Freud felt, were of special consequence, as the 'rules' governing those tend to be not as obvious, and the messages we receive these urges are often inconsistent, which results in those urges often being frustrated. Lingering frustration of this sort gives rise to anxiety, and the use of such defense mechanisms such as repression, projection, reaction formation, and regression in order to cope with unpleasant feelings associated with this anxiety. Freud also thought levels of human awareness occurred in layers, like an iceberg, with our conscious representing the very tip and interaction with the outside world, the preconscious, just below the surface of our conscious, and our unconscious, where much of our repressed desire, hostility, and forgotten trauma may lie. We are who we are, in terms of personality, by the age of five, because, Freud postulated, we learn early on how to deal with our sexual urges (not so much sex as our need for physical pleasure) and go through various stages where our erotic energies are focused at certain periods of time. Freud thought that these stages (oral,

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where the main source of erotic stimulation is the mouth, anal, where pleasure is obtained from expulsion or retention of feces), phallic (where 'penis envy' may derive from) and latency/genital stages leave an indelible mark on who we become as adults. Carl Jung and analytical psychology held that the unconscious actually was comprised of dual layers, the personal unconscious, not dissimilar to Freud's unconscious, and the collective unconscious, latent memory traces from peoples' ancestral past (archetypes) and something that all humanity shares. Dream analysis was also very important to Jung, as he felt that dreams could contain messages from one's unconscious. Alfred Adler felt that personality was driven by a basic need to adapt, improve oneself and master life challenges, or striving for superiority. He used the example of children feeling weaker in comparison to older children adults, and therefore being motivated to learn more and do better, which is something I get to see in action daily with my five year-old. When we think that we cannot overcome certain challenges, we learn to compensate and develop the ability anyway. However, psychodynamics are not without flaw. Some of the ideas presented are not testable, there is inadequate evidence to support them, and there is a tendency towards gender bias within the school of thought. In earlier chapters of Weiten, behaviorism, or the idea that scientific psychology should concern itself solely with what can be physically observed was discussed. When we apply theory to personality, we can again look to B. F. Skinner. According to him, we cannot see the id, ego, nor superego, so how can we even give those concepts consideration? Instead, Skinner held that our observable behavior is shaped by external environmental factors, and experiencing certain things consistently creates stable response tendencies, and that this is what human

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personality is. In keeping with behaviorist theory, our responses are shaped by operant conditioning, with reinforcement, punishment and extinction determining those responses. Bandura theorized that one cannot overlook cognitive processes as a part of personality, but that rather than be passive sponges for experience, we actively seek out new experiences and information about our environments in the hopes of producing favorable outcomes. He also described observational learning, where an organism's response is influenced by watching others, yet also stated that self-efficacy, or the belief that one can perform tasks or behaviors necessary to facilitate a certain outcome, also plays a role in personality. Walter Mischel thought that people's behavior was far less consistent than others believed, as they are prone to act differently in different situations in order to produce favorable outcomes. A classic example is that if I believe that working hard will get me a raise, then I will work hard. However, if I don't believe that working hard will get me anywhere, I am more prone to loaf in my office all day. This would have us think that not only is the person important in determining personality, so is the situation. Humanism placed emphasis on the uniqueness of human qualities, especially our freedom and potential for personal growth. This concept is where Carl Rogers' self-concept theory and Abraham Maslow's self-actualization theories stem from. Rogers' theory says basically that personality is what happens as a measure of incongruence (self-concept versus actual experience), and the higher one's incongruence is, the more likely they are to experience anxiety behaviors. Maslow's hierarchy of needs stated that human beings must meet basic needs before less basic ones, and that we all need to self-actualize, or fulfill our potentials. He was even able to come up with a 'snapshot' of what psychologically

healthy people presented as, which was illustrated in the Weiten text (395). The main flaw with the humanistic approach is that it appears to be too optimistic. From a biological standpoint, Eysenck felt that heredity influenced personality traits, with physiological traits being a determining factor of how we acquire conditioned behaviors. As we also saw in earlier chapters, twin studies seem to show that identical twins are more alike in their personalities than fraternal twins, which evidences some aspect of heritability. Surprisingly, family environment and whether or not individuals share it does not have much to do with personality. David Buss (1991, 1995, 1997) theorized that human beings may be good enough at recognizing Big Five traits in each other that we use them as part of our mate selection process, contributing to reproductive fitness of the species. While there is some genetic evidence being compiled in favor of personality shaping, the issue with this is that there is no real model to illustrate just how physiology does this. In more contemporary times, terror management theory holds that human beings, in their drive for self-preservation, have developed cognition that makes us keenly self-aware and terrified when faced with the very idea of our own deaths. This, known as self-esteem, acts as a sort of buffer for the constant anxiety I am certain I'd experience if I walked around constantly aware that I was living on borrowed time. Personality trait structure, when measured in terms of the Big Five, seems to be universal, but some traits figure more prominently than others across cultures. Western society also focuses more on individuality, self-reliance, and feeling good about oneself, whereas non-Western culture promotes interdependence, and the connections we have to one another as human beings. As I am learning about the science of psychology itself, personality is sociohistorically diverse

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and deeply insightful. These theories still persist today, in our popular cultural and literary references.