Psychology 305A Lecture 3

Research Methods in Personality Psychology
Reminder

• Research Assistant Positions available!
  – Emotion and Self Lab needs your help!
  – Email jeff.emoselflab@gmail.com for information about projects, positions, etc.

• Some Directed Studies positions available too
  – Earn course credit and get research experience
Personality Descriptions:

Pick the set of adjectives that best describes your personality:

Set A: Pioneering, enthusiastic, courageous
Set B: Stable, stubborn, organized
Set C: Intellectual, adaptable, clever
Set D: Sensitive, nurturing, sympathetic
Set E: Extroverted, generous, authoritative
Set F: Critical, exacting, intelligent
Set G: Harmonizing, just, sociable
Set H: Secretive, strong, passionate
Set I: Honest, impulsive, optimistic
Set J: Ambitious, hard-working, cautious
Set K: Original, open-minded, independent
Set L: Kind, sensitive, creative
It’s in the stars!
Astrological Personality descriptions

Set A: Pioneering, enthusiastic, courageous [Aries]
Set B: Stable, stubborn, organized [Taurus]
Set C: Intellectual, adaptable, clever [Gemini]
Set D: Sensitive, nurturing, sympathetic [Cancer]
Set E: Extroverted, generous, authoritative [Leo]
Set F: Critical, exacting, intelligent [Virgo]
Set G: Harmonizing, just, sociable [Libra]
Set H: Secretive, strong, passionate [Scorpio]
Set I: Honest, impulsive, optimistic [Sagittarius]
Set J: Ambitious, hard-working, cautious [Capricorn]
Set K: Original, open-minded, independent [Aquarius]
Set L: Kind, sensitive, creative [Pisces]

**8% (about 11 people) expected by chance**
Percentage of people who believe in Astrology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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Pre-Scientific Methods

- Astrology
  - Personality assessment based on birth date

- Physiognomy
  - Personality assessment based on shape of body, particularly the face

- Phrenology
  - Personality assessment based on morphology (shape) of skull
Contemporary Approaches to Studying Personality

Descriptive Methods

- Self-reports (surveys)
- Observer-reports
- Test Data
- Life History Data
Descriptive Methods

There are 4 major types of descriptive methods

- Life History Data
- Observer-reports
- Test Data
- Self-reports (surveys)

LOTS of data!
Descriptive Methods

**Self-Report**

- Asking people questions about their beliefs and behaviors

- Provided by the subject
- Responses to questionnaires
Ten-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI)

• You will be reading a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

• Use the following scale:

1---------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
Disagree Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree A little Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree A little Agree Moderately Agree Strongly
I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.
Scoring the TIPI

- Extraversion
  - Reverse your score on #6 [1=7, 2=6, 3=5, 4=4, 5=3, 6=2, 7=1]
  - \((#6R + #1)\) divided by 2 = E score

- Agreeableness
  - Reverse your score on #2
  - \((#2R + #7)\) divided by 2 = A score

- Conscientiousness
  - Reverse your score on #8
  - \((#8R + #3)\) divided by 2 = C score

- Neuroticism
  - Reverse your score on #9
  - \((#9R + #4)\) divided by 2 = N score

- Openness to Experience
  - Reverse your score on #10
  - \((#10R + #5)\) divided by 2 = O score
How do you compare?

• The average undergraduate student
  – Extraversion: 3.25
  – Agreeableness: 3.64
  – Conscientiousness: 3.44
  – Neuroticism: 2.97
  – Openness to experience: 3.48

\[N = 2,249 \text{ undergrads}\]
Self-Report Data

• **Advantages**
  – Allows study of difficult-to-observe behaviors, thoughts and feelings
    • Who knows better?
  – Easy to distribute to large groups

• **Disadvantages**
  – Respondents may not be representative (convenience sampling is tempting)
  – Responses may be biased or untruthful
Descriptive Methods

Observer Report

Observing behavior of others
Example:
Why did they want to be a leader?
Observer reports of their personalities may provide answers
Rate Obama and Harper’s Personalities

1-------- 2 ------- 3 -------- 4 -------- 5
Not at all  Somewhat  Very much

• Extraversion: sociable, outgoing, talkative
• Agreeableness: friendly, nice, easy to get along with
• Conscientiousness: goal-oriented, hard-working, diligent
• Neurotic: unhappy, anxious, stressed
• Open to Experience: open-minded, creative, flexible
1--------- 2 -------- 3 -------- 4 -------- 5
Not at all Somewhat Very much

OBAMA __________________________ HARPÉR
• E
• A
• C
• N
• O
Observer Reports: Who are the Observers?

• Parents, friends, teachers
  – Usually collected by questionnaire or rating form
• Trained observers
  – Systematic observations of behavior
• Untrained, participant-observers
  – Class ratings of Harper and Obama
Observer-Report Data

- **Advantages**
  - Capture spontaneous behaviors
  - Avoid bias of self-reports

- **Disadvantages**
  - Researcher interference
    - How naturalistic (vs. artificial) is the observation?
  - Rarity of some behaviors
    - Research on criminality
  - Observer bias & selective attention
  - Time consuming
Descriptive Methods

Test Data

Assessing an individual’s abilities, cognitions, motivations, or behaviors, by observing their performance in a test situation.

Tests may be written, physical (e.g., cardiogram), experimental, or physiological.
Kinds of Test Data

- Questionnaire tests
  - E.g., IQ

- Experimental tests
  - Megargee (1969) study of dominance
    - Does trait dominance (high vs. low) or gender predict leadership?
    - Paired high and low dominant men and women in “box repair” task
    - 4 kinds of groups:
      (1) high dom ♀, high dom ♂
      (2) high dom ♀, low dom ♂
      (3) low dom ♀, low dom ♂
      (4) low dom ♀, high dom ♂
Megaruee’s Results

• Same sex
  – Male pairs?
    • High dom was leader (75%)
  – Female pairs?
    • High dom was leader (70%)

• Co-ed pairs
  – High dom male, low dom female?
    • Male was leader (90%)
  – High dom female, low dom male?
    • Male was still the leader! (80%)

• Why did this happen? Would it happen today?
Information Derived from Tests

• Physiological
  – Individual differences in biological responses (i.e., heart rate, startle, blood pressure, etc.) to stimuli
    • E.g., startle reflex to loud noise
Information Derived from Tests

• Projective techniques
  – E.g., the Rorschach
    - Perception of the stimulus reveals something about mental state or personality
What do you see?
Next Class

• Wrap up Methods
• Begin Psychoanalytic Approaches: Freud
• Homework: Larsen & Buss: Chapter 9