

Personality

What makes us who we are?

Psychology 305A: Lecture 11

Wrap Up Self-Esteem

Begin Trait Approach

Exam 2 Results

- Mean = 71%
- Range = 30%-97%
- Question 28 issue*

Problem Items

2. According to Erikson, personality development involves coping with the following internal struggle(s):

- a. autonomy vs. trust
- b. initiative vs. guilt
- c. identity vs. isolation
- d. a and b
- e. a and c

Problem Items

12. All of the following characterize the differences between a grandiose and fragile narcissist, EXCEPT:

- a. A fragile narcissist is more likely to become depressed
- b. A fragile narcissist experiences feelings of inadequacy
- c. A grandiose narcissist is typically controlling and blames others for failures
- d. A grandiose narcissist feels privileged and entitled
- e. All of these are differences between the two

Problem Items

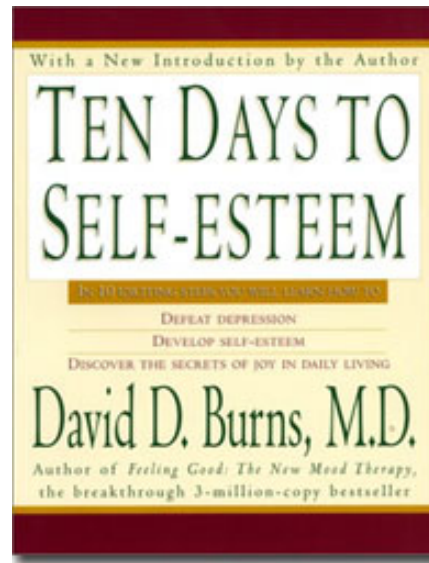
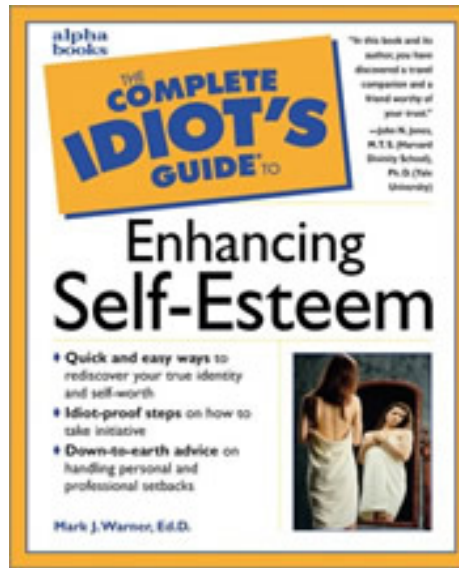
13. The Strange Situation Procedure used by Ainsworth is a good example of:

- a. Self-report
- b. Observer report
- c. Test data
- d. B and C only
- e. All of the above

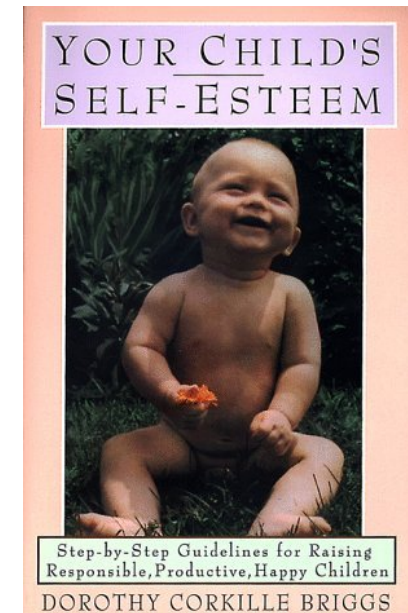
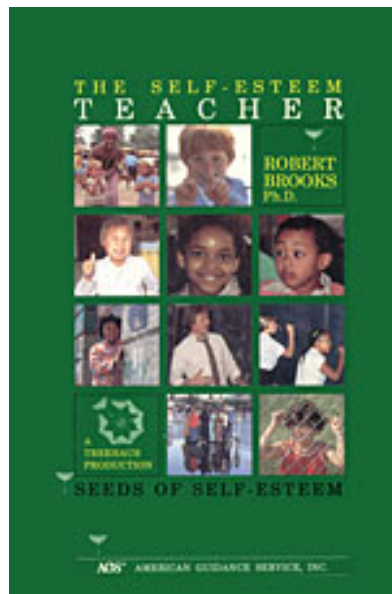
Problem Items

29. According to Murray's theory, all of the following are true of needs EXCEPT:

- a. Needs vary across time
- b. Needs vary between people
- c. Needs are most strongly activated in the context of a press
- d. The most important needs are achievement, power, and affiliation
- e. All of the above are true of Murray's theory



Should people seek high self-esteem?



20/20 video



What did they mean by “high self-esteem” in the 20/20 video?

- Noise-blasting study
 - People high in NARCISSISM, not self-esteem, became aggressive after ego threat
 - Test was NPI
- High self-esteem isn't problematic; but narcissism can be!

Self-Esteem Programs for Kids: Positive Illusions

- Are we creating a generation of narcissists?
- “I know I am good because everyone keeps telling me so.”
- Origins of narcissism
 - Unrealistic, idealized positive feedback
 - Positive feedback without actual accomplishments

Can Positive Illusions Be Harmful?

- “Threatened egotism”: Inflated pride is easily wounded
- High self-esteem has a “dark side”
 - New York Times
- Media reports of adolescent killers suggest that killers felt humiliated by peers, suffered from wounded pride and powerlessness
- Shame-rage spiral; shame may be brought on by excessive pride

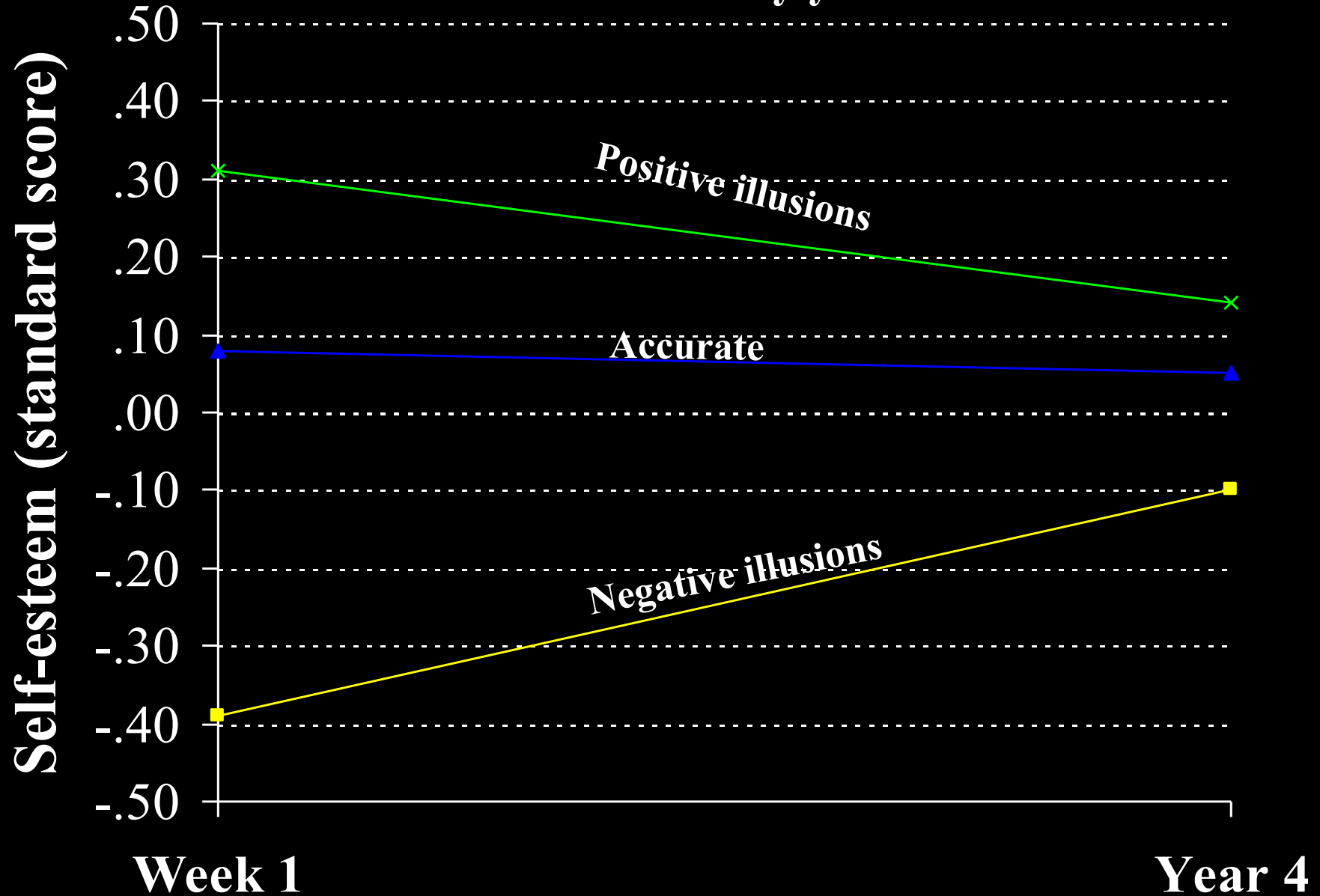
What's the Process?

- When we are insulted and humiliated, we feel shame – a painful emotion that we want to avoid feeling at all costs
- Narcissists are so dependent on their inflated high self-esteem, they externalize blame
 - Convert shame into anger, expressed as aggression

What about positive illusions in undergrads?

- Research study identified students who entered university with overly positive beliefs about their academic ability (i.e., positive illusions)
- Compared to students with more accurate beliefs, students with positive illusions:
 - Generally happier but less happy over the course of college
 - Did not perform better in school, despite thinking they would
 - More likely to disengage from school (e.g., say “grades are not important to me”)
 - More likely to drop out of university

POSITIVE ILLUSIONS AND SELF-ESTEEM CHANGE Across University years



Research suggests... Positive Illusions are a “Mixed Blessing”

- In the short term, positive illusions are associated with:
 - Psychological well-being and self-esteem
 - Better performance on experimental tasks
- In the long term, positive illusions are associated with:
 - Decreasing levels of well-being and self-esteem
 - Disengagement from school and increased likelihood of dropping out
 - Being less liked by one’s peers
 - Higher levels of aggression

Trait Taxonomies

What is a trait?

- Almost any adjective (or sometimes a noun) that describes the way some people are and others aren't

Traits are the Basic Building Blocks of Personality

- Shy
- Happy
- Organized
- Punctual
- Talkative
- Creative

Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')

Key Elements of Traits

- Chuck and Lyndie
 - INTERNAL traits vs. EXTERNAL situation

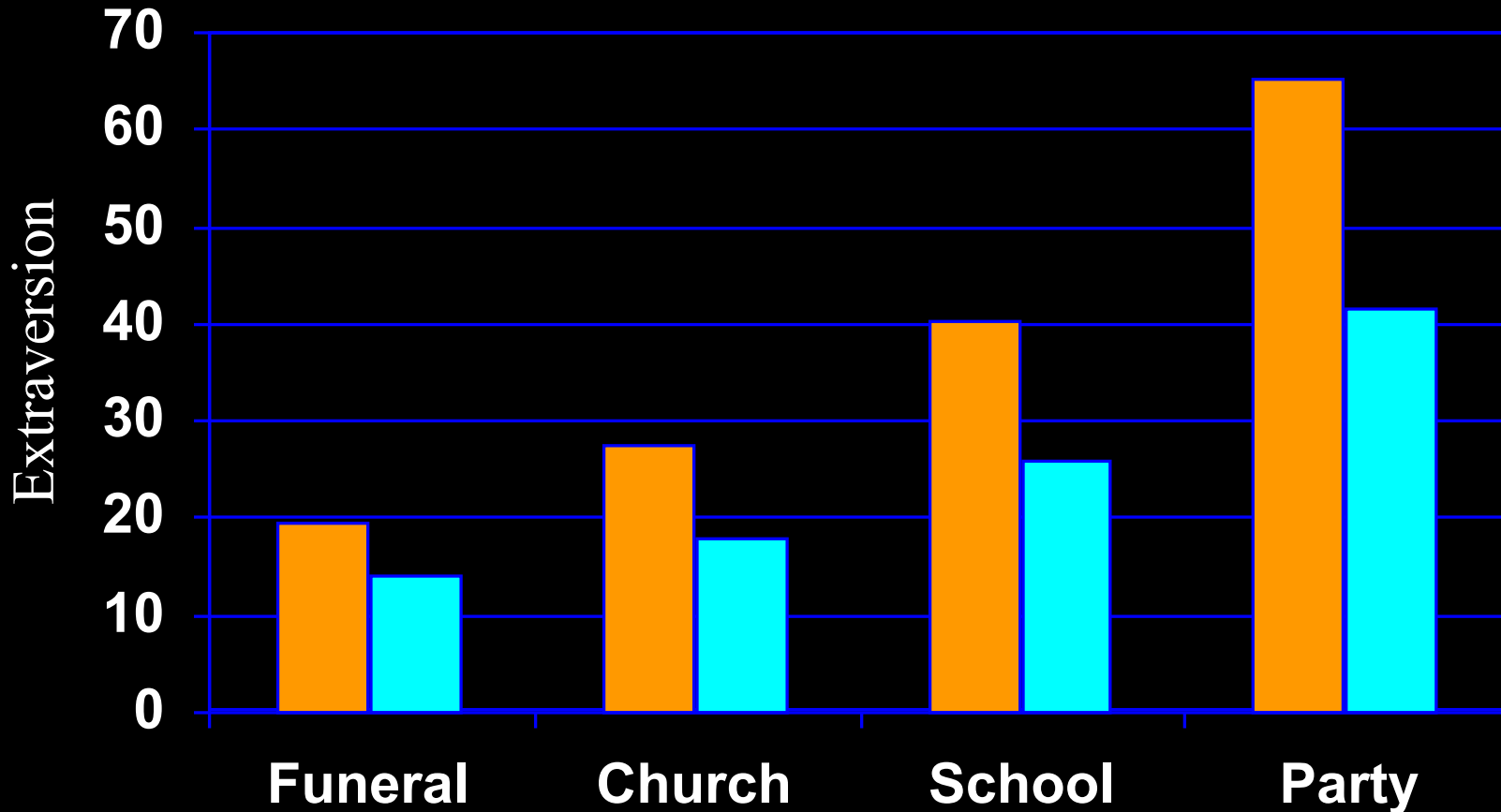


Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
 - People who are friendly at school also tend to be friendly at home, at work, when they meet new people, etc.
 - But, situations also influence behaviour

Extraversion Across Situations

■ Jane the Extravert ■ Jim the Introvert





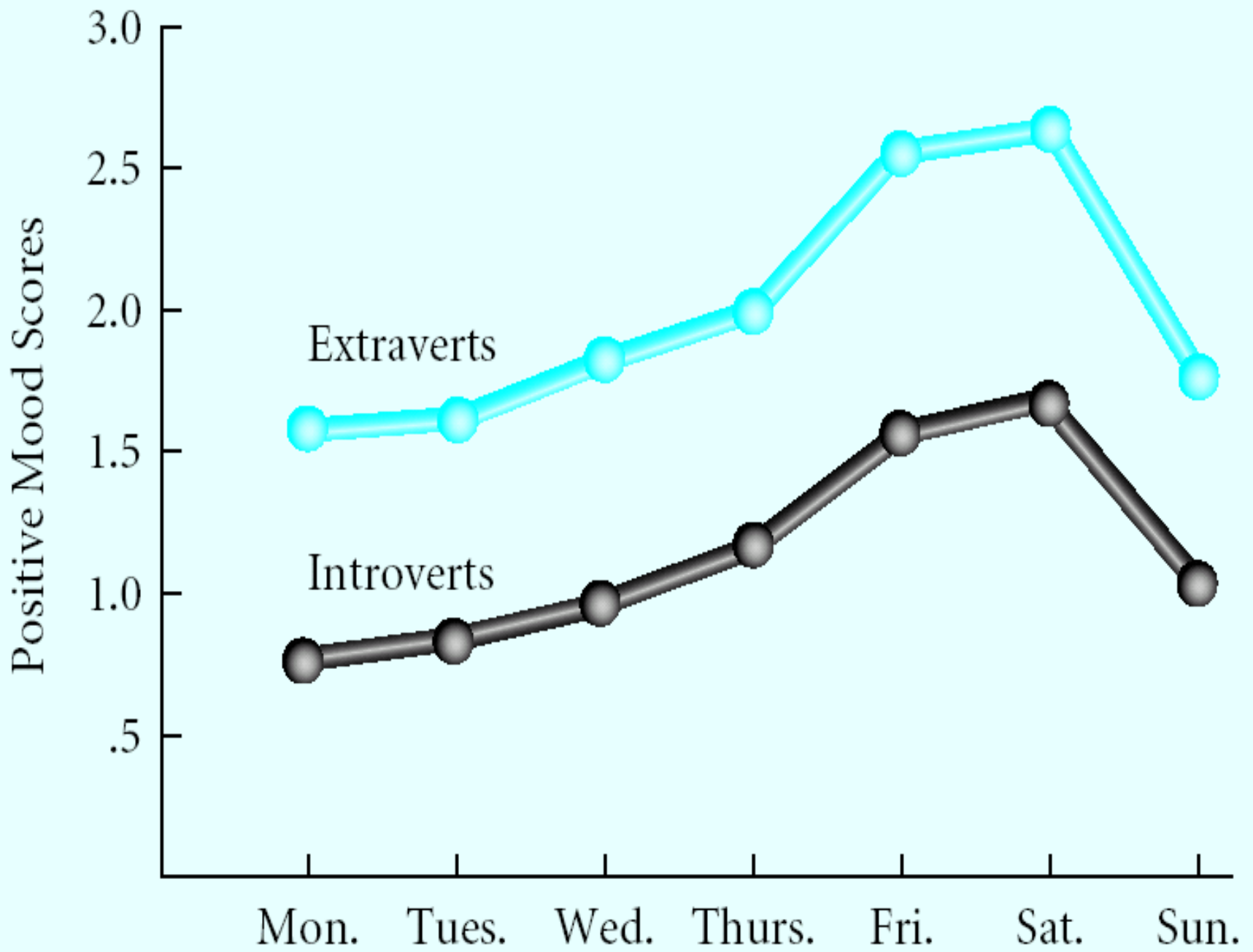
Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time

Key Elements of Traits

- Traits are stable across time



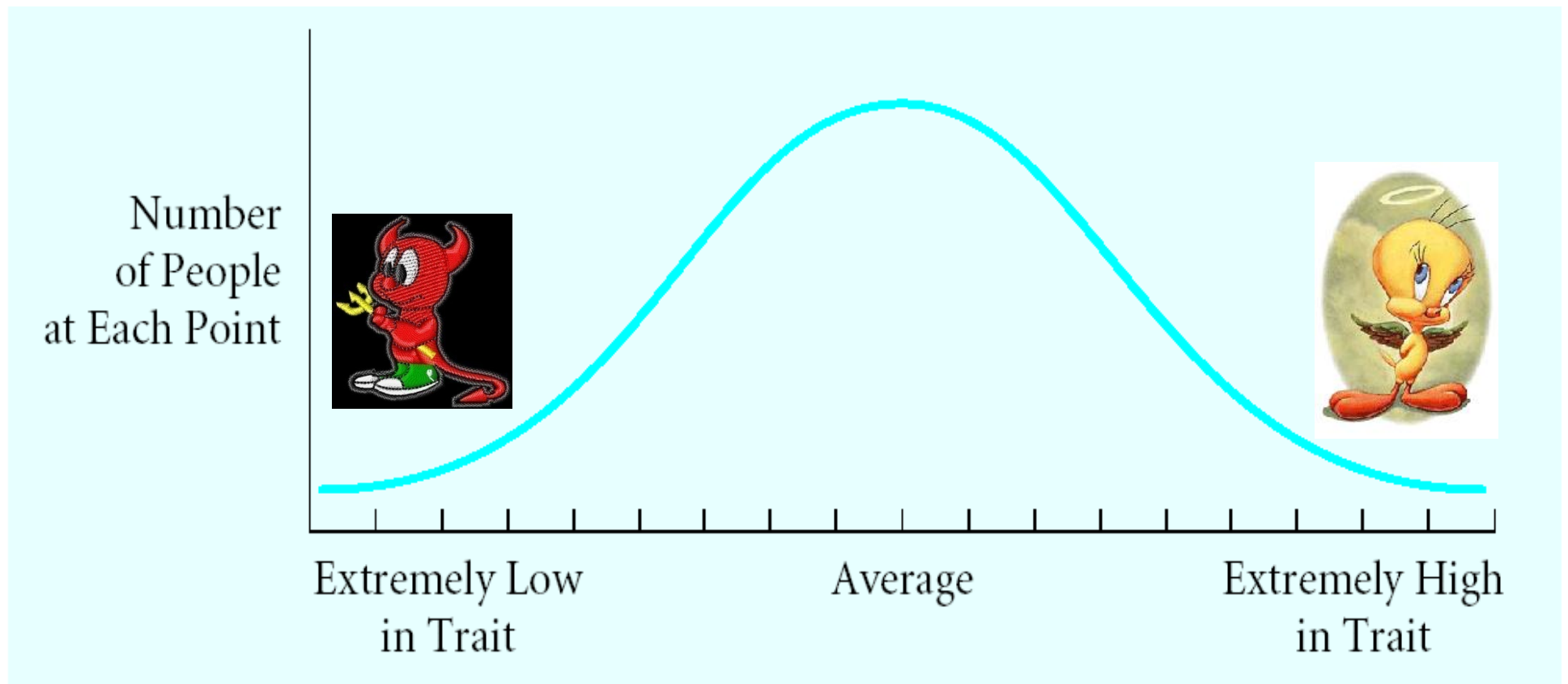


Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time
- Universal dimensions: Individual differences (across people)
 - Useful way of describing and comparing personality differences in all people

Key Elements of Traits

- Compare people across a continuum



Key Elements of Traits

- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time
- Universal dimensions: Individual differences (across people)
 - Useful way of describing and comparing personality differences in all people
- Descriptive, not explanatory
 - Why did he talk a lot? Because he's extraverted
 - (but some argue for a causal view- see textbook)

What Aren't Personality Traits?

- Temporary states (e.g., embarrassed)
- Attitudes (e.g., sexist, liberal)
- Cognitive ability (e.g., GRE scores)
- Physical attributes (e.g., tall, short, thin)
- Social categories (e.g., bully, wimp, jock)

How can we figure out which traits are most important?

- Lexical Approach
 - We can learn about personality by studying *language*
 - If a trait is important, people everywhere will have a word for it
 - cross-cultural universality
 - If a trait is very important, there will be many words for it
 - Synonym frequency

Fundamental Lexical Hypothesis

- “the most important individual differences in human transactions will come to be encoded as single terms in some or all of the world’s languages”
-Goldberg, 1990

Trait Taxonomy

- Comprehensive system that includes all of the major traits of personality
- Traits in a taxonomy are organized in some systematic manner
 - Hierarchical system
 - Some traits more important (or “basic”) than others

Trait Hierarchy

Extraversion

outgoing friendly social

Many clubs Likes parties
Club Many friends
president

Lexical Class Exercise

- What slang words do you use to describe a person?

Next Class

- Wednesday: Trait Taxonomies & Personality change and stability
 - Guest Lecture! Aaron Weidman
 - Larsen & Buss Chapter 5