Personality
What makes us who we are?

Psychology 305A
Lecture 12

Trait Taxonomies
Personality Change and Stability

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Trait Taxonomies: Organizing Personality

▫ Theoretical approach: Hans Eysenck
  ▪ Personality taxonomy should be rooted in biology
▫ 3 major traits of interest: "**PEN**"
  ▪ **P**sychoticism (related to testosterone level)
  ▪ **E**xtraversion (related to physiological arousal)
  ▪ **N**euroticism (related to fluctuations in autonomic nervous system)

Eysenck's 'Big Two': Neuroticism and Extraversion

Circumplex taxonomy

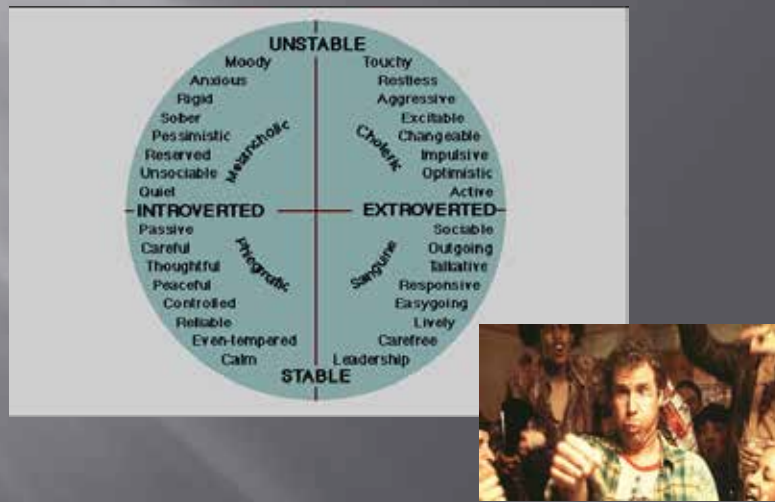3

Circumplex Taxonomies

- Broad level factors are statistically independent
  - Your level on one factor does not have any relation to your level on another factor
  - Possible to be high N + high E, high N + low E, low N + low E, or low N + high E

Frank the Tank: Low N, High E
Low N: Not concerned about anything
High E: High energy, party animal

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Eysenck's 'Big Two': Neuroticism and Extraversion

Circumplex Taxonomies

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Cameron Frye: High N, Low E
High N: Anxious about germs, social life
Low E: Does not have many friends

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Problems with PEN

- ▫ Not all-inclusive
  - ▪ Other empirical studies found more than 3 factors
- ▫ Other traits show heritability
  - ▪ e.g., conscientiousness
- ▫ Other taxonomies developed to address issues
  - ▪ Wiggins' theory of interpersonal traits
    - ▫ Agency + Communion
  - ▪ Cattell's 16
  - ▪ The Five Factor Model (FFM)

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The Five-Factor Model (FFM) or "Big 5"

Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1981

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) or "Big 5"

- **O**penness
  - Curious and unconventional
- **C**onscientiousness
  - Ordered and persistent
- **E**xtraversion
  - Exuberant and sociable
- **A**greeableness
  - Caring and considerate
- **N**euroticism
  - Emotional and anxious

Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1981

FFM: Factor Analysis

▫ Lexical studies of the dictionary

▪ Started with 17,953 trait terms (Allport & Odbert)

Artistic
Curious
Cultured
Imaginative
Refined

Conventional
Cautious
Industrious
Orderly
Responsible

Assertive
Enthusiastic
Energetic

Altruistic
Caring
Modest
Tender
Trusting

Anxious
Angry
Depressed
Self-Conscious
Vulnerable

Gregarious
Warm

Openness
Conscientiousness
Extraversion
Agreeableness
Neuroticism   11

FFM: Strong Empirical Support

▫ Factor analysis repeatedly finds five factors

▪ Cross-cultural replication

▪ Genetic links

▪ Cross-species replication

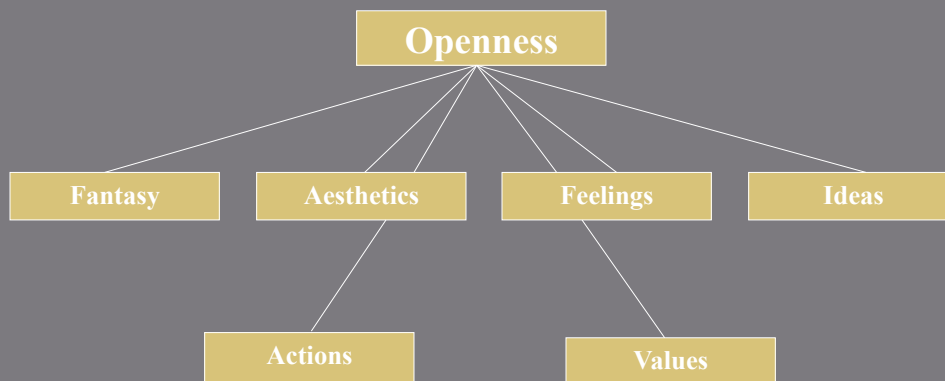▫ e.g., dogs, hyenas, monkeys

Extraverted chimp   Introverted chimp   12
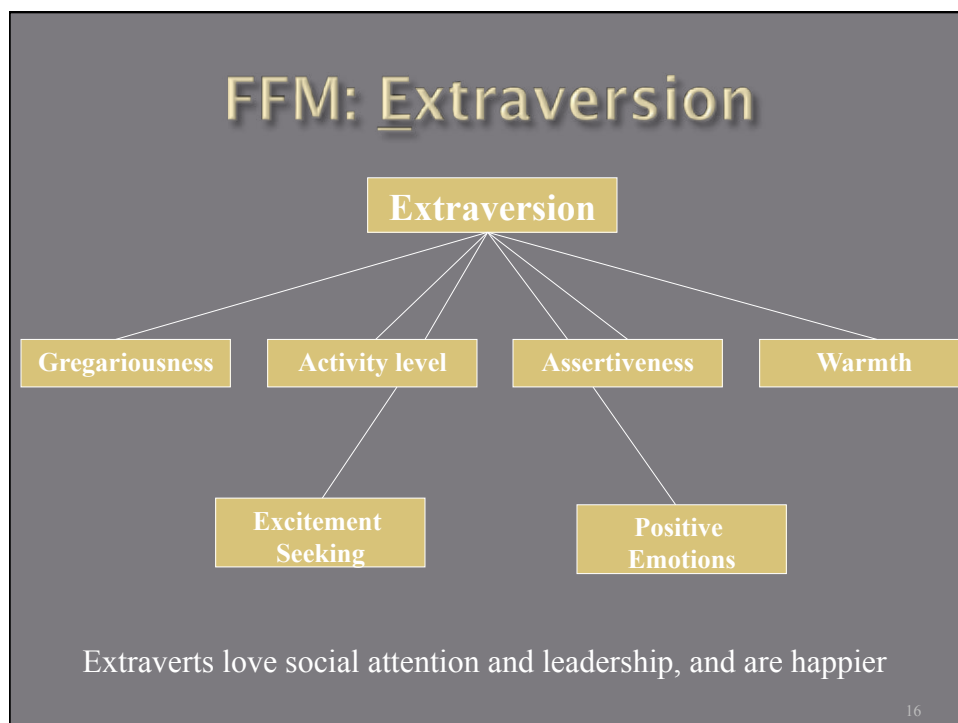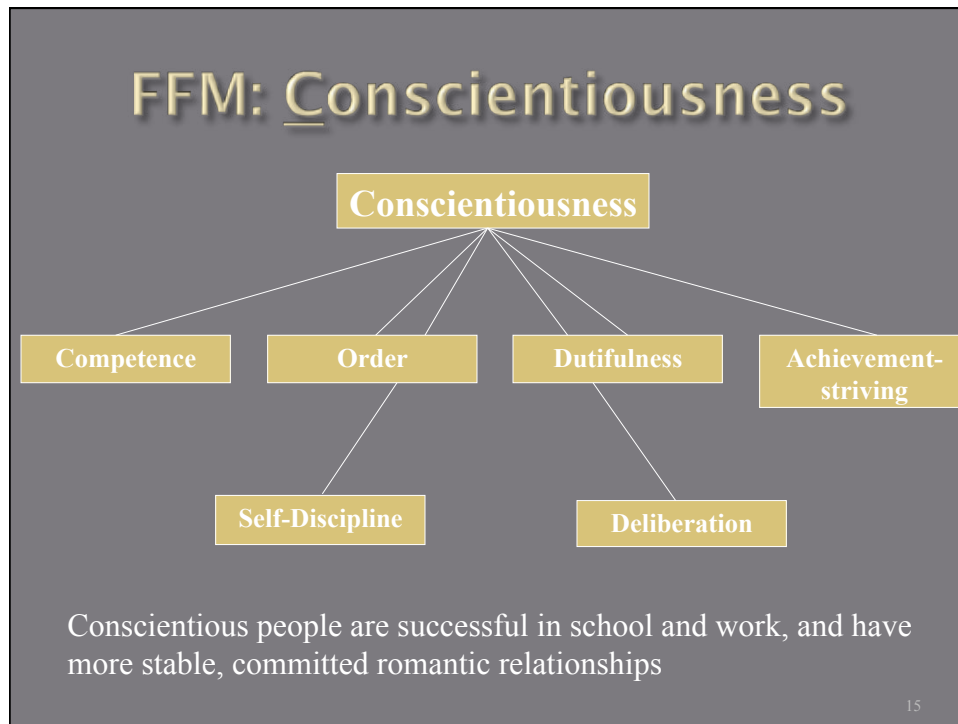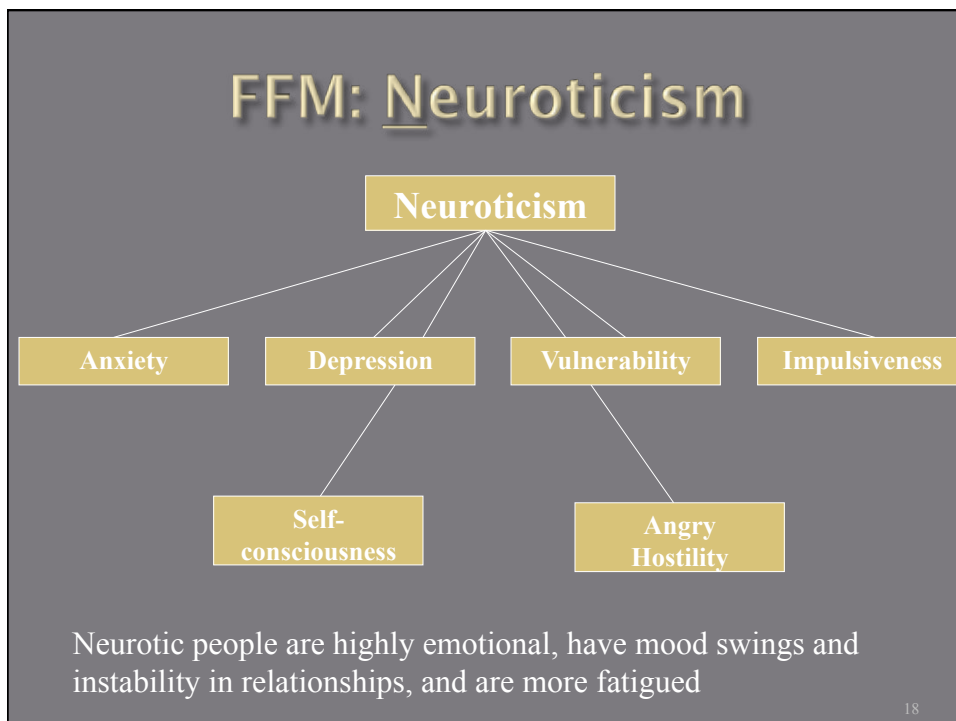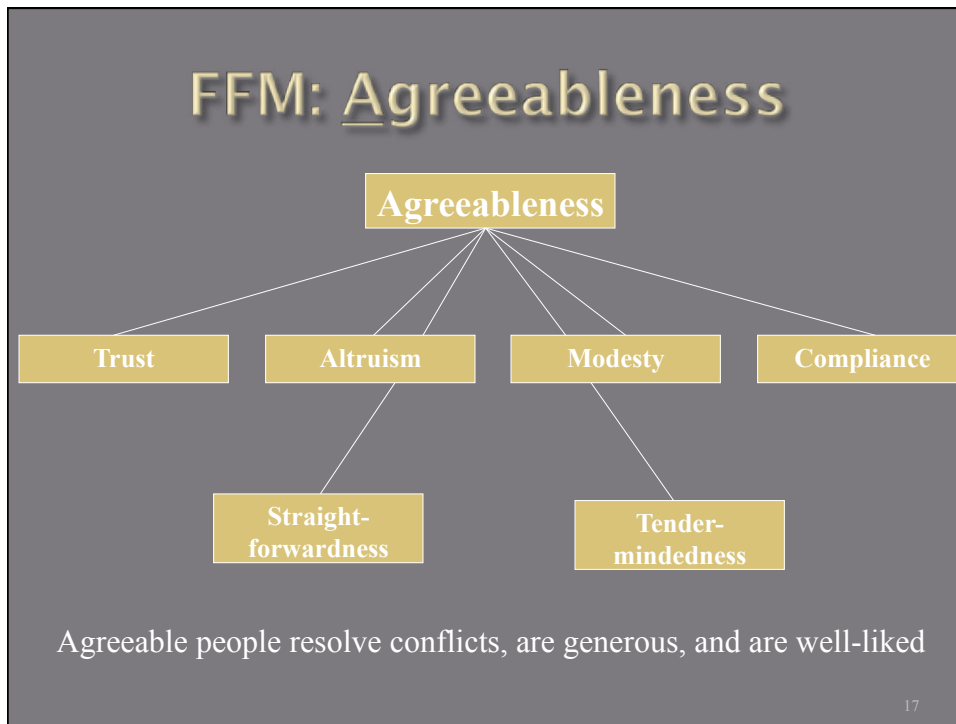
FFM: Traits have Sub-Facets

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FFM: Openness to experience

Openness

Fantasy   Aesthetics   Feelings   Ideas

Actions   Values

Open people remember dreams better, are more creative, and enjoy novel experiences

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FFM: Agreeableness

Agreeableness

Trust **Altruism** **Modesty** **Compliance**

Straight-forwardness **Tender-mindedness**

Agreeable people resolve conflicts, are generous, and are well-liked

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FFM: Neuroticism

Neuroticism

Anxiety **Depression** **Vulnerability** **Impulsiveness**

Self-consciousness **Angry Hostility**

Neurotic people are highly emotional, have mood swings and instability in relationships, and are more fatigued

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What's Missing from Big 5?

- Physical attractiveness and promiscuity
- Positive evaluation and negative evaluation
  - "Big 7"
- Honesty/humility
  - HEXACO model
- Religiosity/spirituality

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FFM and PEN

- Extraversion
  - PEN Extraversion
- Neuroticism
  - PEN Neuroticism
- Agreeableness
  - PEN Psychoticism (low)
- Conscientiousness
  - PEN Psychoticism (low)
- Openness to Experience
  - PEN?

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Personality Stability and Change

This is somebody famous. Who is it?

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Stability of Personality

- By definition, traits are stable dispositions across:
  - Situations
  - Time
- Traits are NOT completely "set like plaster"

1970 & 1980s---------------------------------------2006   22

Two Types of Change

- Mean-level change: People's average level of a trait at different ages
- Are people on average more extraverted when they are younger or older?

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## Mean Level Change Across Lifespan

- Cross-sectional study
  - Sample of approximately 130,000 adults reported Big 5 personality traits
  - Representative of population in US and Canada
  - Childhood to old age

Srivastava, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2003

Lifespan Cross-Sectional Study

Lifespan Cross-Sectional Study

Lifespan Cross-Sectional Study

Lifespan Cross-Sectional Study

Lifespan Cross-Sectional Study

9-12 13-17 18-22 23-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71-80
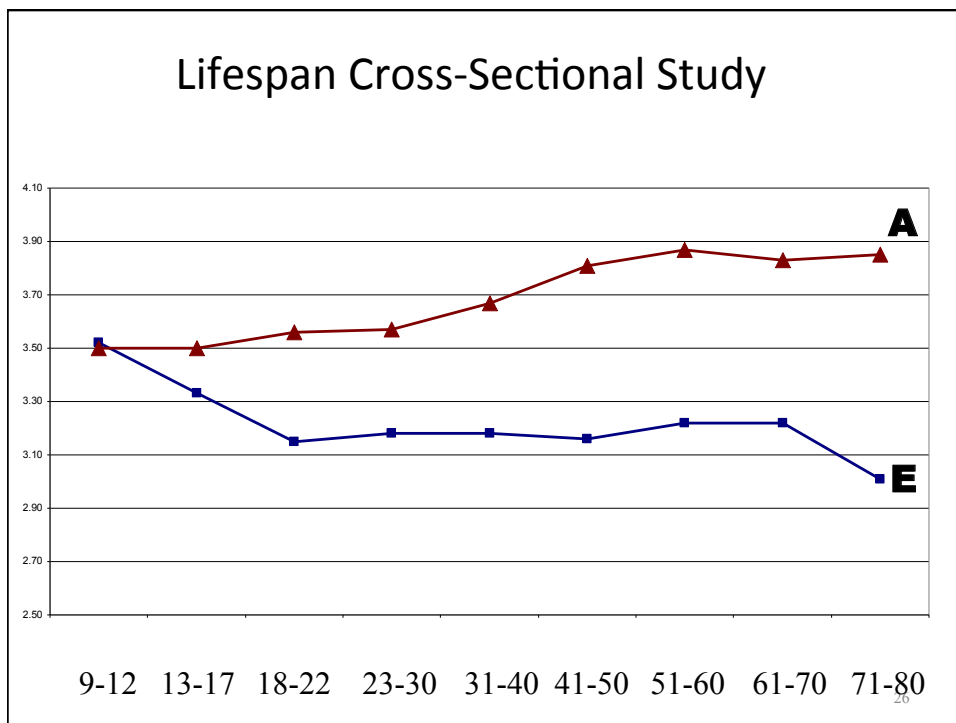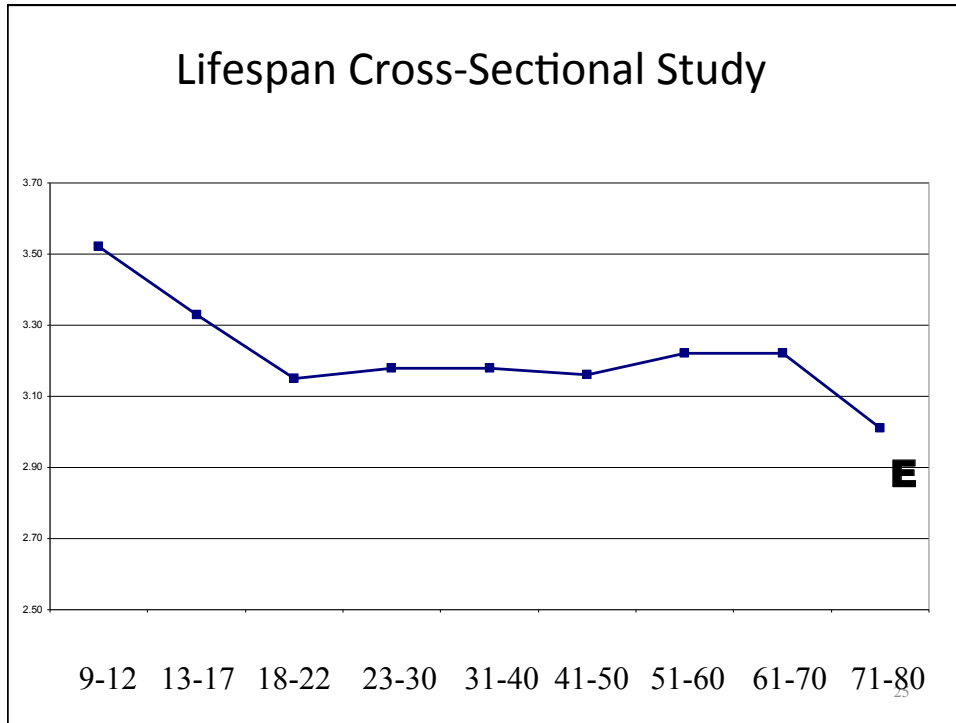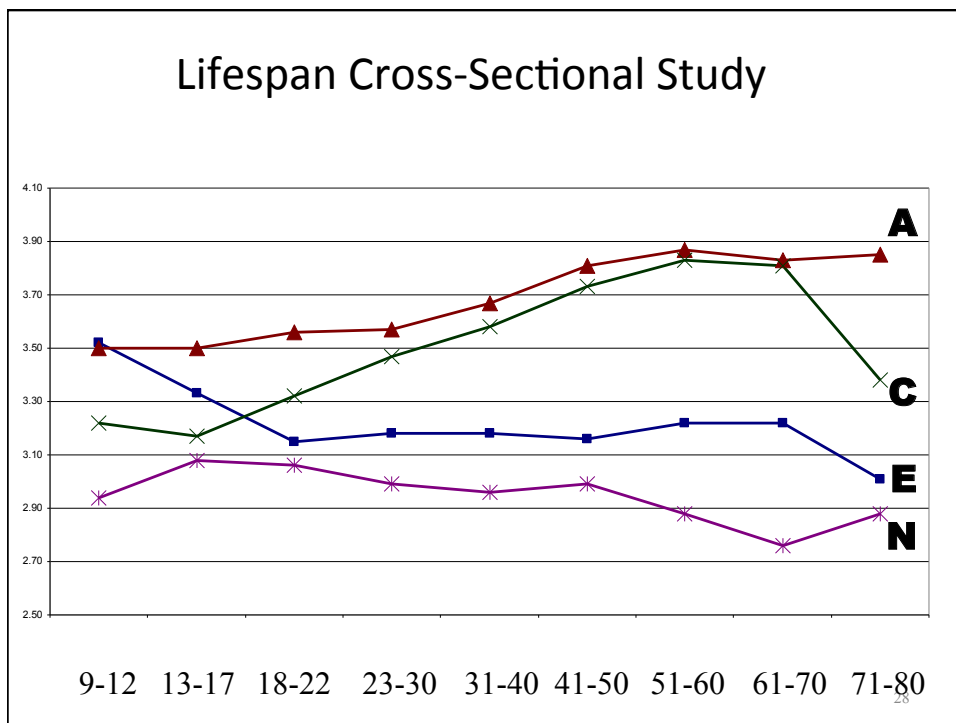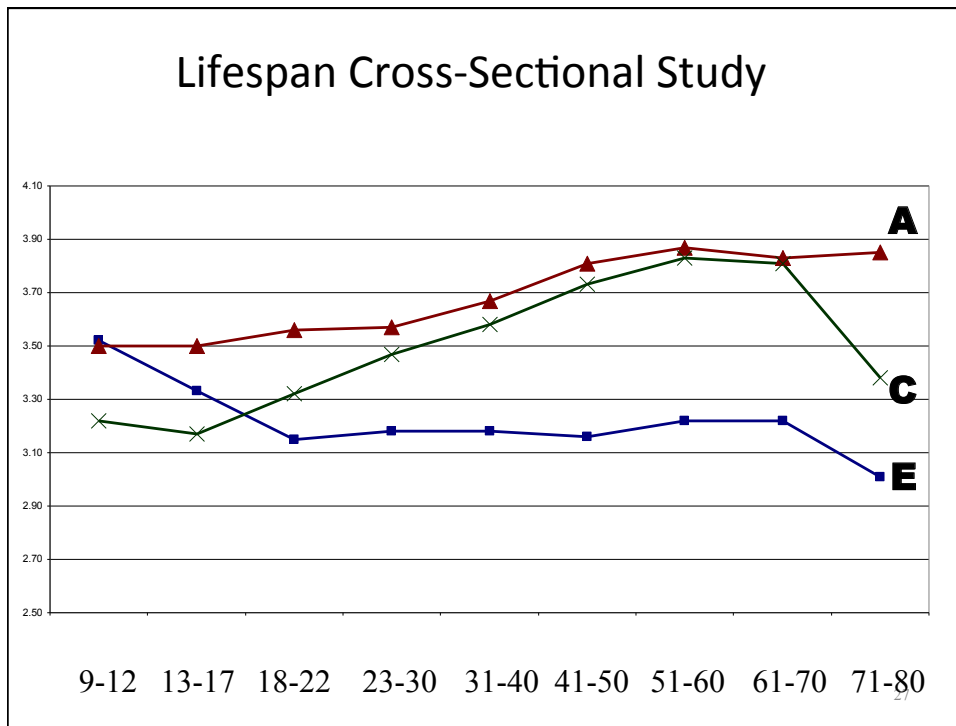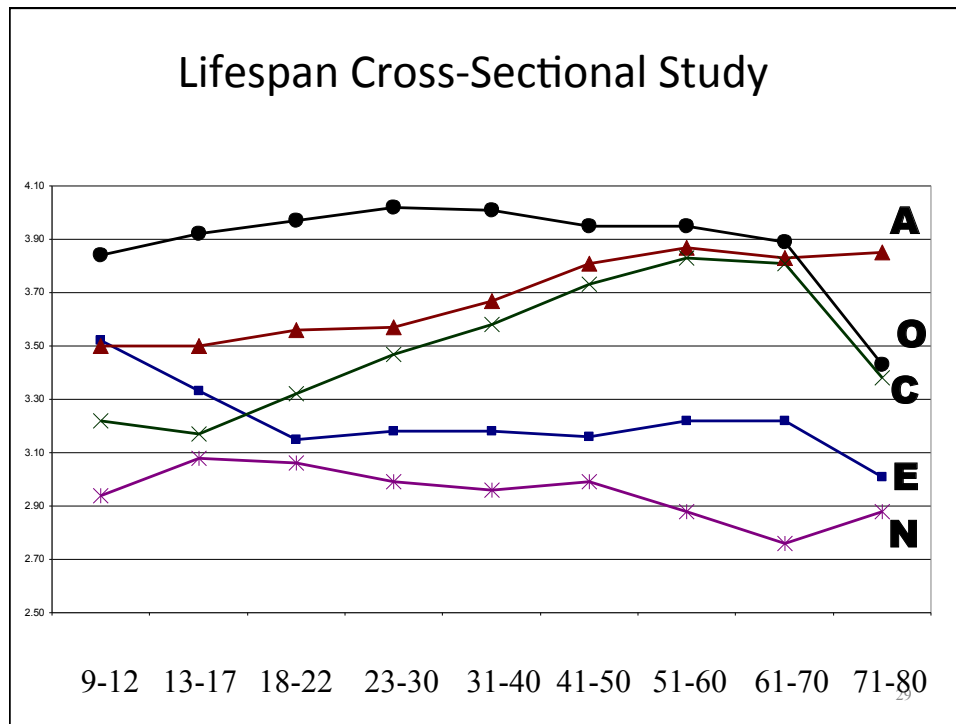
Personality Change in College

▫ Study compared personality scores at beginning and end of university among 270 students

<u>Two Assessments</u>
- Year 1 (beginning of first year)
- Year 4 (end of senior year)

▫ Which traits do you think increased? Decreased?

Robins, Fraley, Roberts, & Trzesniewski, 2001

Longitudinal University Study

Big Five Dimension	Change during university
Extraversion	0
Agreeableness	+
Conscientiousness	+
Openness	+
Neuroticism	-

Maturity principle: People tend to increase on traits that promote optimal behavior in adult social roles, and decrease on less socially desirable traits

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Two Types of Change

- ▫ Mean-level change
- ▫ Rank-order stability
  - ▪ Consistency of individual differences on traits
  - ▪ Is the most extraverted child still the most extraverted adult?
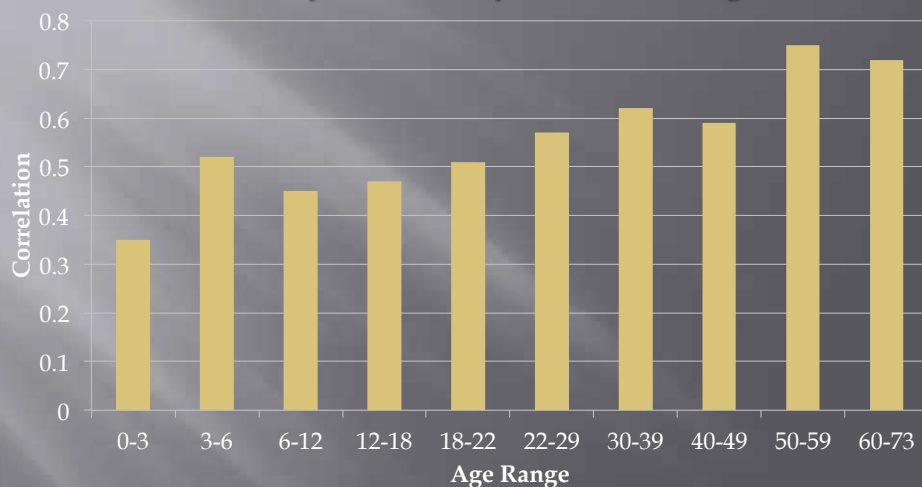 - ▪ Is the least agreeable college student still the least agreeable 40 year-old?

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Stability at Different Ages

▫ Meta-analysis

▪ Compiled results from all studies ever done on personality change and development

▪ Compared "personality consistency" across ages

▫ At which ages was the correlation between personality at T_1 and personality stable at T_2 highest?

▫ Correlation: Same group of people measured at two ages

▪ e.g., 3 & 4, 23 & 29, 55 & 72

▪ High correlation implies high personality consistency

Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000

Personality Consistency at Different Ages

Age Range	Correlation
0-3	0.35
3-6	0.52
6-12	0.45
12-18	0.47
18-22	0.51
22-29	0.57
30-39	0.62
40-49	0.59
50-59	0.75
60-73	0.72

Personality is somewhat inconsistent in childhood and young adulthood
Personality becomes increasingly stable throughout middle age
Personality is extremely stable in old age

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Two Types of Change

- Mean-level
- Rank-order

- Why does personality change or stay stable?

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Why do We Change or Stay Stable?

- Person-environment transactions
  - People select situations based on their personalities
    - e.g., a conscientious individual enrolls in an honor's class
  - Situations in turn influence people's personalities
    - e.g., an honors student becomes more conscientious

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Personality → Life Events

Trait	High levels lead to	Low levels lead to
O		Becoming unemployed
C		Getting divorced
E	Moving in with partner	
A		Getting divorced
N	Living at home Getting divorced	Getting married

Sample of ~ 15,000 German adults, followed over four years

Specht, Egloff, & Schmuckle, 2011; 2012

Life Events → Personality Change

Trait	Events lead to increases	Events lead to decreases
O	Getting divorced	Getting married
C	Starting first job	Retiring
E		Getting married
A	Having a baby	
N	Moving out of parent's home	

Sample of ~ 15,000 German adults, followed over four years

Specht, Egloff, & Schmuckle, 2011; 2012

Stability and Change: Summary

- Personality **changes** across the lifespan
  - Mean-level shifts
- Personality is **consistent** across the lifespan
  - Different levels of consistency emerge in childhood, adulthood, and old age
- Change and consistency is dictated in part by **person-environment transactions**
  - Who we are leads us to take on certain roles
  - Our roles in turn shape who we are

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Next Class

- Trait approach (wrap-up)
- Genetics (begin)

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