

Personality
What makes us who we are?

Psychology 305A: Lecture 13

Person/Situation Debate

Begin Biological Approach

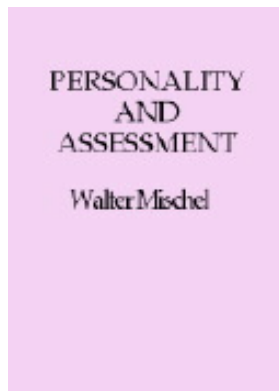
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**Theoretical and Measurement
Issues in Trait Research:
Person-Situation Debate**

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1968



What was going on in '68?

- Changes in Field of Personality:
 - End of the era of mega-theories (Freud, Jung, Maslow, Murray, etc.)
 - Era of middle-level theories
 - Domain-specific
 - Personality traits used to describe and predict certain types of behavior
 - $B = f(P)$
 - Behavior is determined by personality

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What was going on in '68?

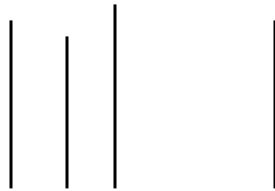
- Rise of Social Psychology
 - *Lewin's Interactionism*
 - Behavior as a function of person and situation
 - $B = f(P \times S)$
 - *Festinger's Situationism*
 - Reduced to $B = f(S)$
 - Personality = error variance, irrelevant

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Situationism

- Emphasis on the *power of the situation* to shape people's behavior

- Asch's conformity study



- Milgram's obedience study

- Zimbardo's prison study



Mischel's Critique



- Personality does not predict behavior
 - $B = f(P)$ is wrong
- People act differently in different situations
- Knowing a person's level on a particular trait does not allow you to predict their behavior on any specific occasion

The result of Mischel's critique

- Personality psychology suffered!
 - Fewer grad programs
 - Currently, almost no solely P programs in the US or Canada, and possibly more pure S programs than combined S-P
 - Fewer researchers in the area
 - Fewer jobs

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The Result of Mischel's Critique

- Social Psychology blossomed
 - Huge area of research
 - Many grad programs, researchers, and jobs
- But, over time, personality psychology fought back... and became stronger

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Personality's Response

1. Personality traits predict behavior, but over the long-term

- Your level of Extraversion is
 - a good predictor of the total number of times you will go to parties this quarter
 - but, a weak predictor of whether you will go to a party this Friday night
- Like batting average; seasonal weather
- To predict behaviors, use *aggregation*
 - Averaging/summing together a set of behaviors

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Personality's Response

2. Broad traits predict broad behaviors, narrow traits predict narrow behaviors

- Conscientiousness → academic performance
- Punctuality → showing up to class on time

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Personality's Response

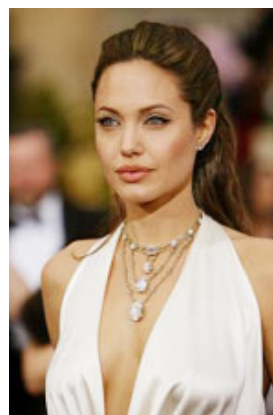
3. People may differ in how they behave across situations, but are consistent relative to other people

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Brad and Angelina



Moderate Extraversion



High Extraversion

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Brad and Angelina in Different Situations

- At Church

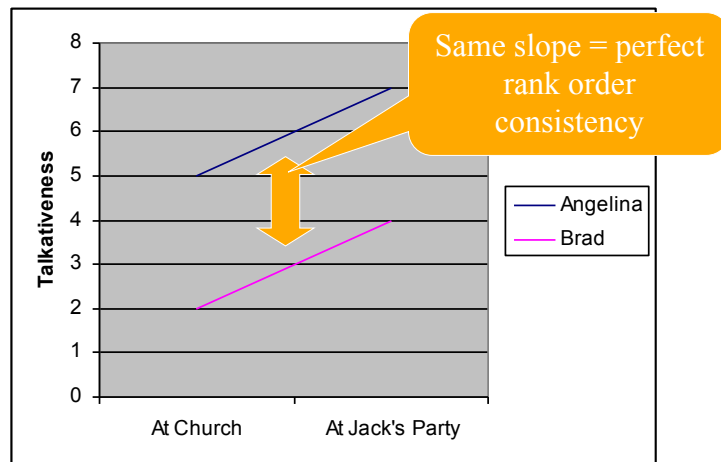


- At Jack's party



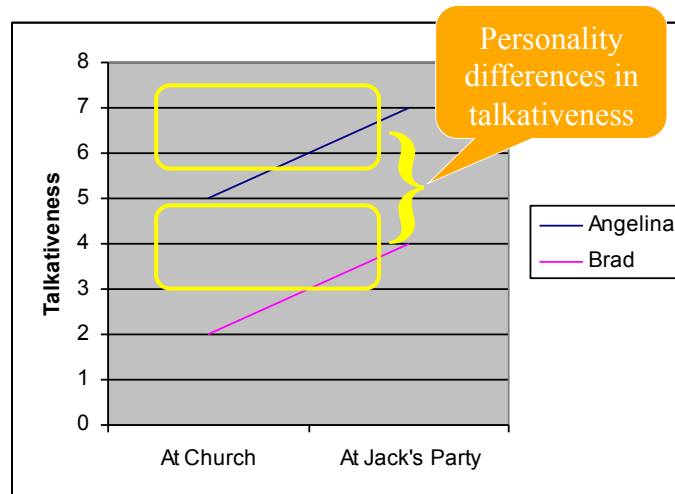
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Rank-order consistency



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Rank-order consistency



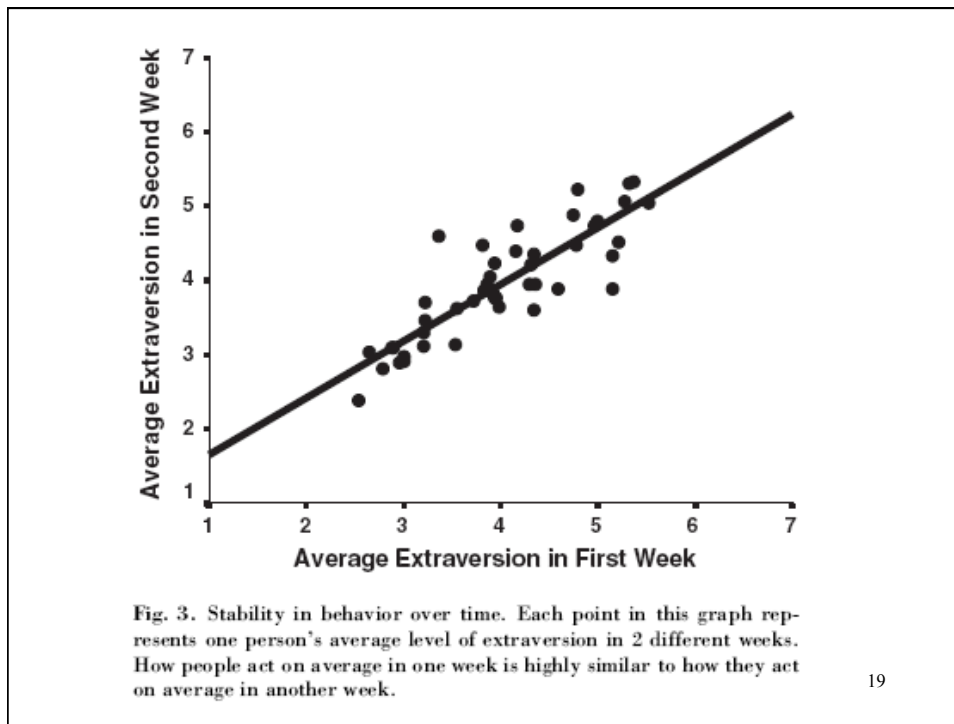
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Personality's Response

4. Personality traits are stable over long periods of time

- The degree to which a person is shy, organized, creative, friendly, etc. tends to be consistent from week to week, year to year, and even across the entire lifespan

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Adult Personality is Linked to Child Temperament

Temperament
Dimension

- Activity level
- Sociability
- Emotional reactivity
- Attention level
- Orienting sensitivity

Big Five
Dimension

- Extraversion
- Extraversion, Agreeableness
- Neuroticism
- Conscientiousness
- Openness

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Resolution of Person-Situation Debate: Interactionism

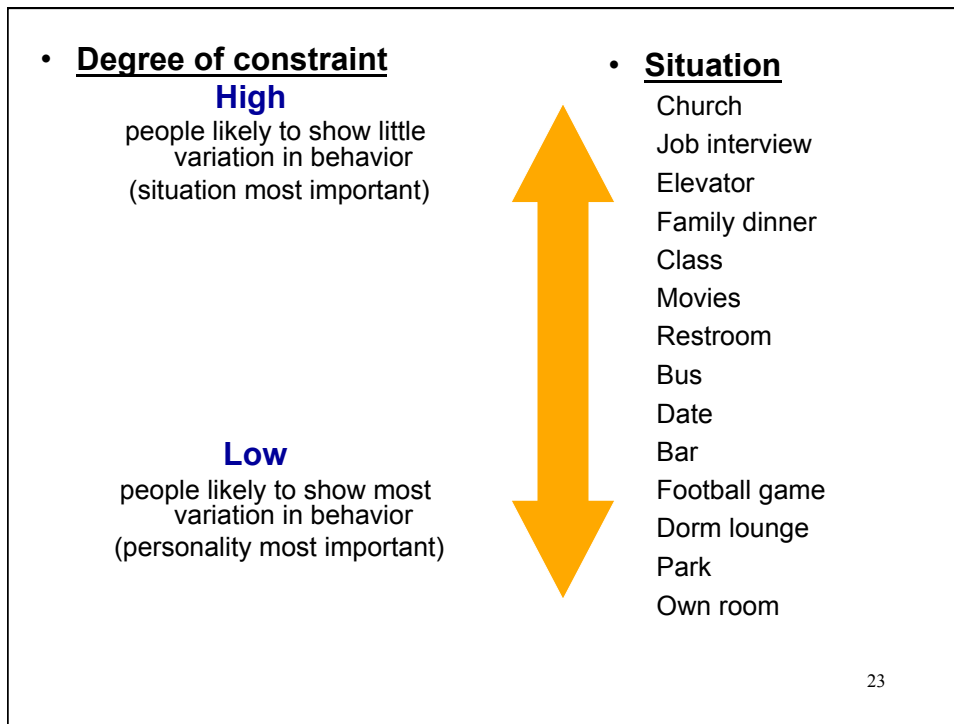
- Both personality and situation are important predictors of behavior

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So how do we know which matters, when?

- **Situational characteristics** are better predictors of behavior
 - when situation is strong—with a **high** level of constraint
- **Personality traits** are better predictors of behavior
 - when situation is weak—with a **low** level of constraint

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Biological Approach to Personality

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Biological Perspective and Personality: Basic Assumptions

- Personality traits:
 - Reflect physiological differences
 - Are largely genetically determined
 - Are rooted in our evolutionary history

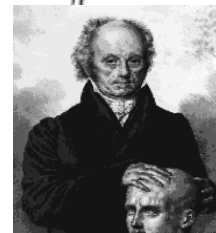
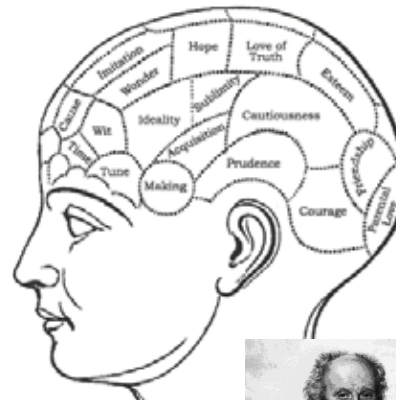


Pre-Scientific Approach: Phrenology

Regions of the brain are associated with certain functions (e.g., sloping forehead = criminal prone)

Modern view:

- 1) it's in the brain, not the head
- 2) it's not that specific



Galen's four humors

GALEN: Ancient Greek physician (C.130-200 A.D.)

Thought personality was a reflection of the four humors (fluids) that (he thought) make up our bodies.

Yellow Bile - bad temper, irritability (Choleric)

Black Bile - gloomy, pessimistic (Melancholic)

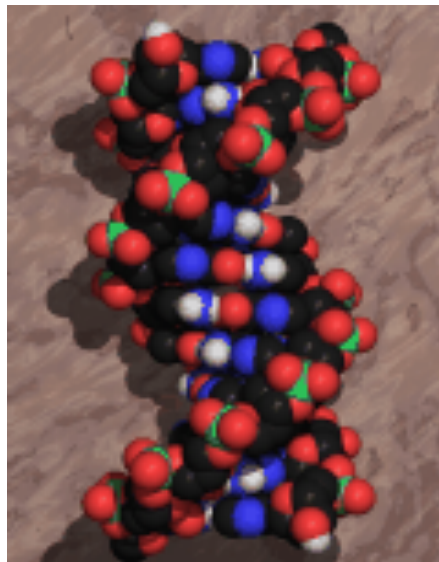
Phlegm - sluggish, non-excitabile (Phlegmatic)

Blood - cheerful, passionate (Sanguine)

If one of these fluids was dominant, the personality associated with that fluid would be observed

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Modern Biological Approach: Genes



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Genetic Approach to Personality

- Genes are the building blocks of personality
 - Inherited through evolutionary processes
 - Shape personality and behavior by shaping physiological responses
 - Behavioral genetics = the study of how genes shape behavior

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Assumptions of Behavioral Genetics

- Nature ~~vs.~~ Nurture
 - Behavior (i.e., personality) is shaped, in part, by genes we inherit
 - Behavior is also shaped by the environment
- NO traits are caused entirely by nature or nurture; it's always both

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Basic Assumptions of Genetic Approach

- *Genotypes* are genetic potentialities
 - E.g., genes for eye color, height
- *Phenotypes* are manifest characteristics.
 - E.g., actual eye color and height; influenced by mix of genes and environment
- *Genetic determination*
 - If gene, then phenotype, irrespective of environment
- *Gene-environment interaction*
 - If gene and a particular environment, then a particular phenotype

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Genetic Heritability

- Heritability is the extent to which individual differences in a trait, *within a group of people*, are due to differences in genes
 - Heritability can only apply to groups → based on individual differences
 - Does NOT mean how much of a trait within a single person is due to genetics

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Behavioral Genetics

- Used to identify genetic differences between individuals within a group
- Allows researchers to determine the extent to which individual differences in a trait are due to genetics and to the environment

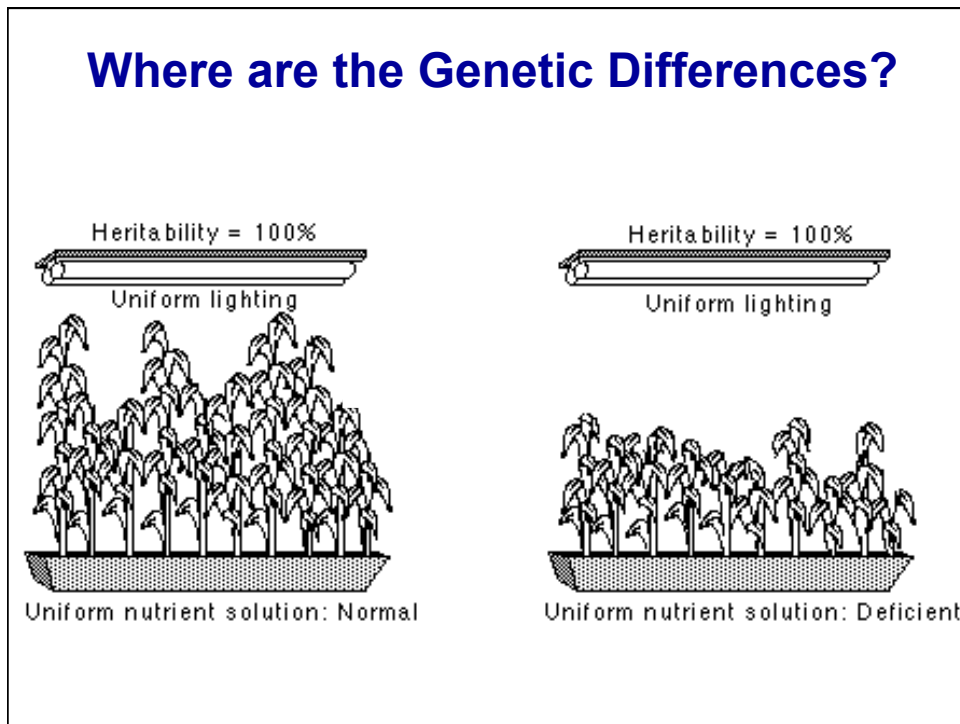
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Misconceptions about Heritability

- Group differences are (most typically) NOT explained by genetic differences
 - E.g., African-American vs. Caucasian IQ scores
 - Numerous studies have found that *average* IQ for U.S. African-Americans is 10 to 15 points lower than for U.S. Caucasians
 - This difference has been assumed, by some, to be due to genetics
 - What is wrong with this explanation?

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Where are the Genetic Differences?



Group differences due to environmental differences between groups

- The difference in average racial IQs decreases when environments are matched on SES
- Average IQ for U.S. African-Americans adopted into white middle-class households is 110
 - 25 points higher than average African-Americans, 10 points higher than average Caucasians

Group Differences Due to Different Environments

- Race differences in IQ differ by age
 - No difference in infancy
 - 4 point difference at age 4
 - From ages 4-24 years African Americans lose 6/10th of a point per year

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What's the environmental difference?

- African American children more likely to be raised by single parent
 - Single parent homes less cognitively complex
- Attend schools with lower average IQ, so high achievers don't need to achieve as high

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Behavioral Genetics

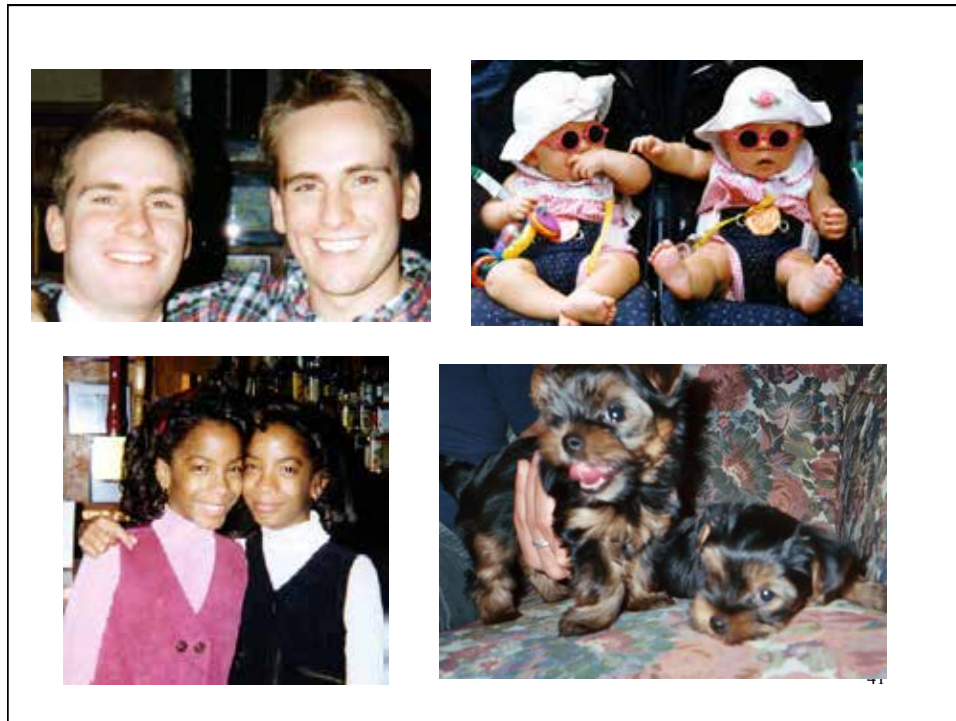
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Research in Behavioral Genetics: Twin Studies



- Twin studies help us understand the importance of genetic and environmental influences on social development
 - Identical (MZ) vs. Fraternal (DZ) twins
 - Reared together vs. reared apart

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Shared Traits in Identical Twins

- Who has an identical twin?
- What personality dispositions do you and your twin share?
- Why do ID twins share traits?

Twin Study Research Diagram

	Monozygotic (MZ) Twins	Dizygotic (DZ) Twins
Environment	same	same
Genetics	same	different

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Behavioral Genetics Methodology

- Twin Studies: compare concordance (similarity) of trait in MZ vs. DZ twins
- Adoption Studies: compare concordance of trait between parents and biological vs. adopted kids
- MZ Twins Raised Apart
 - Best Design: Simply look at the concordance of the trait → that's its heritability

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Table 10.3 Within-Pair Extraversion Correlations for MZ and DZ Twins

	<i>MZ Twins</i>	<i>DZ Twins</i>
Swedish sample	.47	.20
Finnish sample	.46	.15

Source: From Floderus-Myrhed et al. (1980) and Rose et al. (1988).

Is Extraversion more heritable in Swedes or Finns?

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Next Class

- Next Week: Biological Approach
 - Monday: BC Family Day- No class!
 - Wed: Genetics Approach
 - Fri: Physiology, Begin Evolutionary approach
 - Read Larsen & Buss Chapter 6 for Wed.

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