

Personality
What makes us who we are?

Welcome to Psychology 305A

PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

Instructor: Professor Tracy

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Introductions (again)

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On-Line Class Resources

- Lectures and syllabus available on-line at:

<http://ubc-emotionlab.ca/psyc305a-personality/>

- Password to get in: **personality**

Reminder: No laptops in class, please.

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Defining Personality

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ORIGIN OF THE WORD

Greek word
'*persona*' (mask):
character represented in a
play



In Ancient Greece, the actors (all men) wore masks so that they could play multiple roles, including female parts. Facial expressions on the masks (happy, angry, sad, etc.) helped convey the essence of the character, as well as the sex, age, and social class.

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What do you think of when you think of personality?

- 'He has a rigid *personality*'
– strongest quality
- 'He has a lot of *personality*'
– social impact
- 'She's got a good *personality*'
– social skills; likable

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Using Personality in Everyday Life

- “Jen” talking about her last date
 - “It’s not his looks or his athletic ability, and it’s certainly not his intelligence—it’s his *personality* that I like”
 - **evaluation**
- “Peter” talking about an old friend from high school
 - “He is a real *outgoing* person. He is *friendly*, but he’s not the type who goes along with the crowd all the time, so he’s kind of *independent* also.”
 - **description**
- “Alex” complaining about his partner
 - “She always does something that she knows will annoy me. I have told her a million times that I don’t like it, and she keeps saying she will change but never does.”
 - **continuity**

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Defining Personality

- Thoughts (beliefs, values, expectations)
 - I think that relationships are more important than school
 - I think that most people can be trusted
- Feelings (emotions, passions)
 - I feel happy most of the time
 - I feel nervous when I first meet someone
- Behaviors (actions; what you do)
 - I go to a lot of parties
 - I’m always late
 - I like to go skydiving

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Scientific Definition

- Consistent and enduring patterns of:
 - thoughts, feelings, and behaviors...
 - that influence a person's interactions with, and adaptations to, the environment

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The Field of Personality Psychology

- Personality psychologists carry out *research*, make *assessments*, and develop and test *theories*.
- Ultimate goal is *understanding* and *explaining* behavior
- Personality psychologists try to understand:
 - All aspects of the person – their biology, thoughts, feelings, motives, and behavior
 - In all contexts in which personality is expressed – family, work, schools, relationships, etc.

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Where Do Personality Psychologist Work?

- Universities and colleges
- Research institutes (RAND; NIH)
- CIA, FBI, and CFIA
- Organizational consulting firms
 - Hiring decisions
- Test publishing companies
 - Assessment expertise
- Advertising/marketing
 - What sells, to whom

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Personality Theories

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*“Every person is in certain respects:
like all other people,
like some other person,
like no other person.”*

(Kluckhohn & Murray, 1948)



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What do Personality Researchers Study?

- Human nature (how we are “like all others”)
 - What are all people like?
- Individual differences (how we are “like some others”)
 - How are people different from each other
 - Ritchie vs. Chazz in *Royal Tannenbaums*
- The unique life of a single person (how we are “like no others”)
 - How is each person like no one else?

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Three Levels of Personality Analysis

Every human being is...

...like all others = Human nature level (all people are similar in some ways; we all need other people)

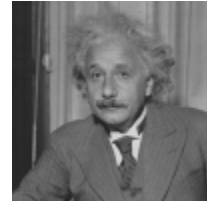
-Albert enjoys a good meal

...like some others = Group level (people vary on common dimensions; e.g., some of us are more sociable than others)

-Albert is good at math

...like no others = Individual level (each person is unique)

-Albert discovered relativity and developed quantum physics



Personality Theories

- Formal assumptions and propositions about:
 - Human nature
 - Universal aspects of personality
 - “People need to feel included by others”
 - How and why people differ from each other
 - “Men are more aggressive than women, because they have higher levels of Testosterone”
 - “People with a high need for power are popular, because they use their charm to get their way.”
 - What makes an individual unique
 - “Her father’s harsh criticism of her play at age 8 led Margot to lead a life of secrecy and marry an older and kindly man.”

Application of Theory: Aggression

Theoretical question: Why do people act aggressively?

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Aggression (universal case)

- All people will respond aggressively if their life is being threatened and they cannot escape
 - “fight or flight” response

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Aggression (individual differences)

- In the same situation, some people respond aggressively whereas others do not
 - Someone cuts you off on the road. What do you do?

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Aggression (unique case)

- Some acts of aggression can only be understood from the particular individual's perspective
 - On Sunday evening December 23, 1888, Vincent Van Gogh, then 35 years old, cut off the lower half of his left ear and took it to a brothel, where he asked for a prostitute named Rachel and handed the ear to her, asking her to 'keep it carefully'.

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A Second Example: Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal



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Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal



- Why did U.S. Army prison guards abuse the prisoners at Abu Ghraib?
 - Was it about human nature, individual differences, or unique case?

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Let's study the personalities of the guards who did it.



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Are they like all others, some others, or no others?

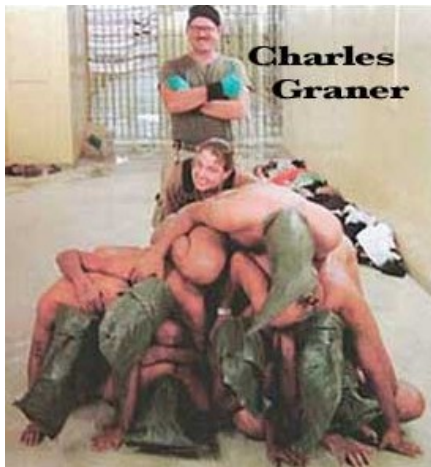


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**Private Lynndie England (age 21)
[court-martialed and 3-yr prison sentence]**



**Specialist Charles (“Chuck”) Graner, Jr. (age 36)
[court-martialed and 10-yr prison sentence]**



Abu Ghraib Prison Abuse

- Dr. Phil Zimbardo: “Anyone in their situation would have done the same!”
- Former US President George Bush: “this is not American!”

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Were Chuck and Lynndie “not like Americans”?

- Or, were they like any other person placed in that situation?
 - “You could put virtually anybody in that situation and you’re going to get this kind of evil behavior.”
 - Prof. Phil Zimbardo, Stanford University
 - Famous “Stanford Prison Experiments” in the 1960s found the same thing!



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What caused abuse at Abu Ghraib?

- “Rotten barrel” (situation)
- “Rotten apples” (people)

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- Humans have a “sadistic impulse that will dominate”
 - “banality of evil”
- But, how many people are truly evil, even in wartime?

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- But, only 7 guards received prison sentences (and only a few of the participants in Zimbardo’s research were abusive)

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- But, how many people are truly evil, even in wartime?
- But, only 7 guards received prison sentences (and only a few of the participants in Zimbardo’s research were abusive)
- “They’re probably loving husbands and fathers when they go on leave”
- Is this really true? Aggressive tendencies generally stable over time and across situations

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Charles (“Chuck”) Graner, Jr.

- At Whittier High School, Graner was known as a "desperate virgin"
- After joining the Marines, had the Marine eagle emblem and the letters “USMC” tattooed on his buttocks
- County prison job
 - Multiple allegations of abuse; described as “violent, abusive, arrogant and mean-spirited”
 - Mace in another guard’s coffee
 - Razor blade in a prisoner’s food; punched, kicked, and slammed the prisoner on the floor
 - When prisoner screamed, "Stop, stop," Graner told him, "Shut up before we kill you."

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Charles (“Chuck”) Graner, Jr.

- History of domestic violence
 - Graner entered the room where his wife was sleeping and attacked her, banging her head against a wall.
 - Later that year, wife stated that Graner “yanked me out of bed by my hair, dragging me and all the covers into the hall and tried to throw me down the steps.”
 - Graner admitted to some of these allegations
- Graner is not a “loving husband” and seems unique in many ways

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What about Lynndie England?

- "They were just doing stupid kid things, pranks. My daughter was just following orders." – Lynndie's mom
- England said she felt "weird" when an officer asked her to give the thumbs up and smile, but felt that she was doing "nothing out of the ordinary".
- A psychologist at her trial called Lynndie "An overly compliant personality in the face of perceived authority"



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Abu Ghraib Prison Abuse

- Human Nature Perspective
 - All people are capable of evil; the circumstances at Abu Ghraib unleashed the dark side of human nature
 - Even the Dalai Lama might have felt a little hostile at Abu Ghraib
- Individual differences
 - Some people are more aggressive, or inclined toward anti-social behavior, than others
 - Some people are more compliant to authority than others
- Unique case
 - Graner's personal history suggests a unique predisposition toward violence

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Another Example: Stanley Cup Riots



- On June 16th, 2011, rioting occurred throughout downtown Vancouver after the Canucks lost Game 7 of Stanley Cup
 - Break-ins, destruction of property, drunk & disorderliness
 - 268 suspects identified, 100 arrests
 - “Thousands” cheered them on

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What caused the riots?

- Situation
 - Anger about the game, drunkenness, desire to witness history (human nature)
- Personality
 - 155,000 people downtown
 - Only .06% arrested (unique cases)
 - If 10,000 contributed to mayhem by cheering, that’s still only 6% (individual differences)

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Next Class

- Research Methods in Personality
 - Homework: Larsen & Buss, Chapter 2

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