

Personality

What makes us who we are?

Psych 305A: Lecture 4

Self II: Self-Esteem Trait Approach

1

Class Updates

- **Next week: Thanksgiving Break**
- **Monday Oct. 19:**
 - 5 pm- 6:20 pm: Midterm 1
 - 6:20- 6:35 pm: Break
 - 6:35- 7:30 pm: Guest Lecture on Trait Taxonomies & Personality Change and Stability
 - AND DON'T FORGET TO VOTE BEFORE CLASS!

2

Today

- **Wrap up Self & Self-Esteem**
- **Begin Trait Approach**
 - What are traits?
 - Development of Trait Taxonomies
 - Theoretical & Measurement issues in Trait Research; Person-Situation Debate
- **Overview of Midterm 1**

3

**What happens to self-esteem
across the lifespan?**

4

Cross-Sectional Internet Study

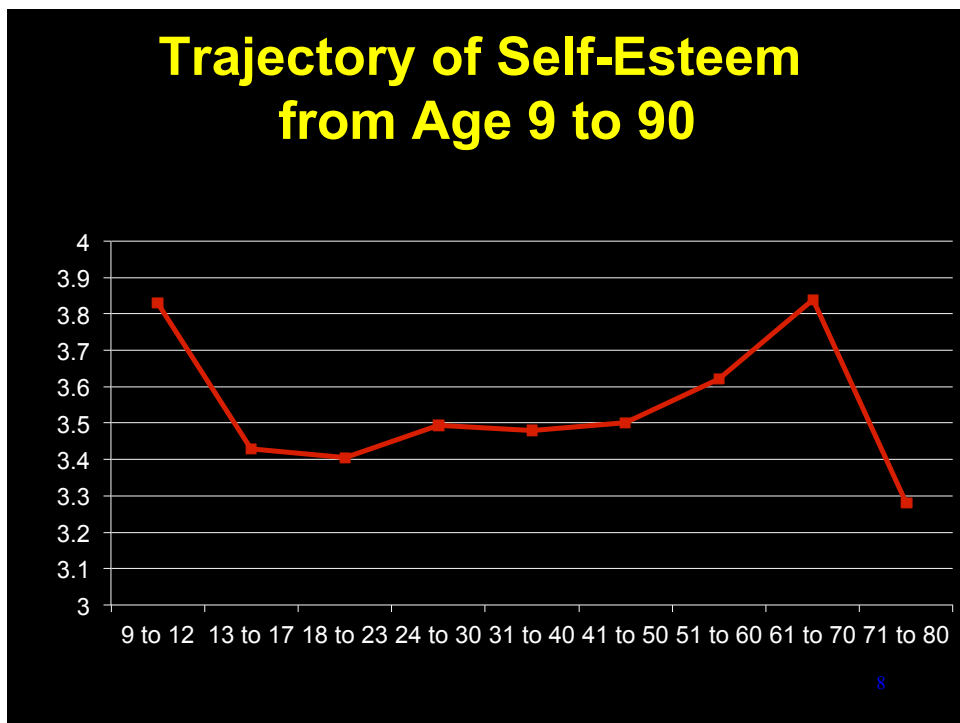
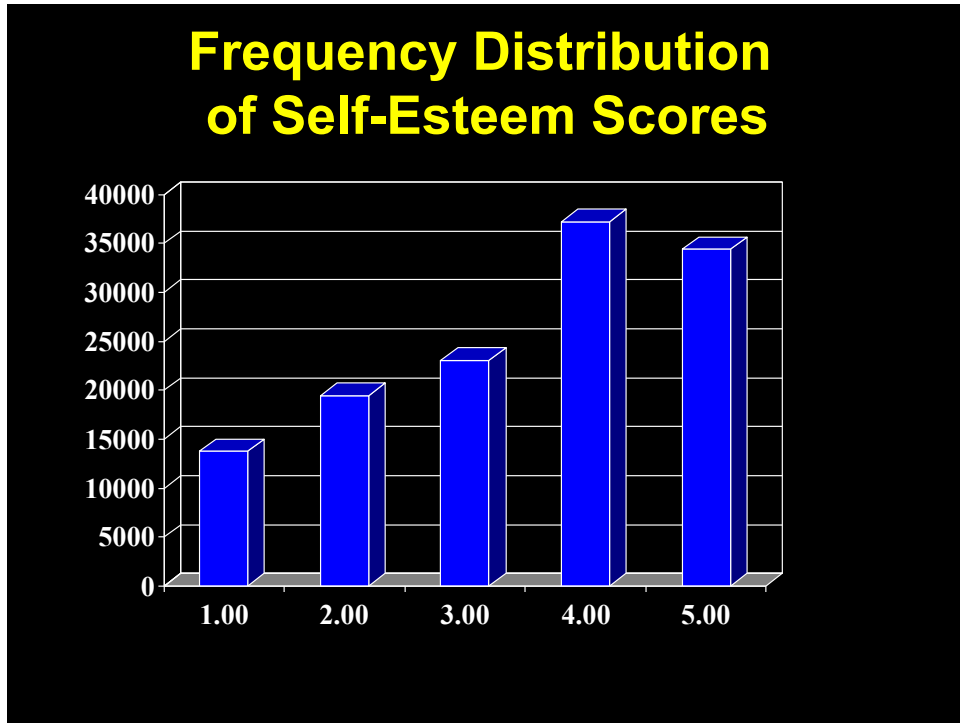
- On-line questionnaire
- Many links to other sites; ratings used to generate personality feedback to user
- Self-Esteem assessed with item:
 - Rate the extent to which you agree vs. disagree with this statement: “I have high self-esteem”

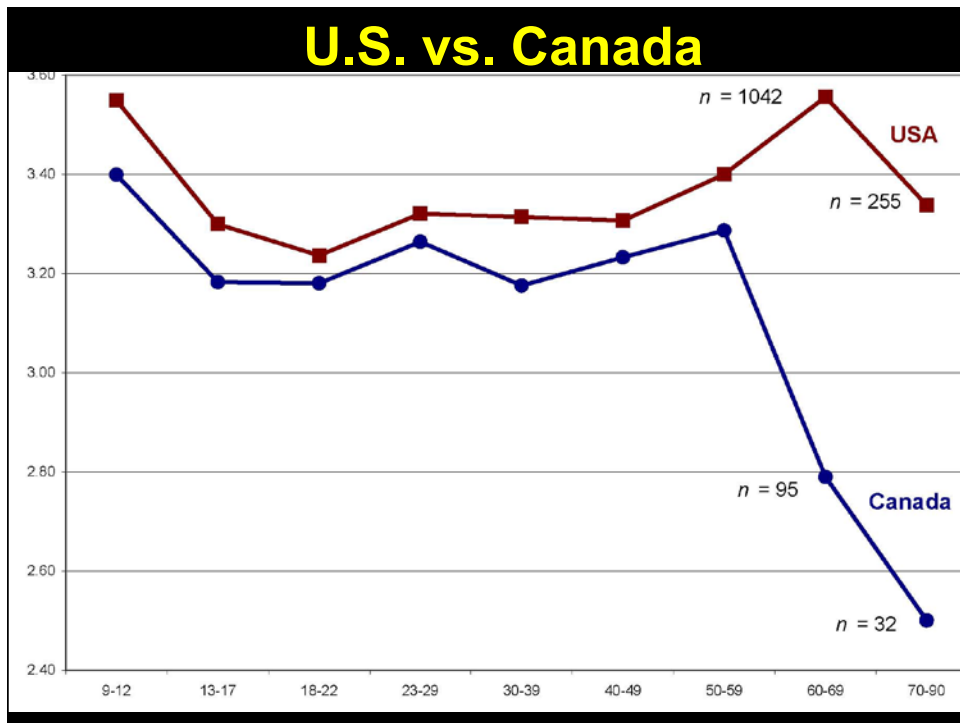
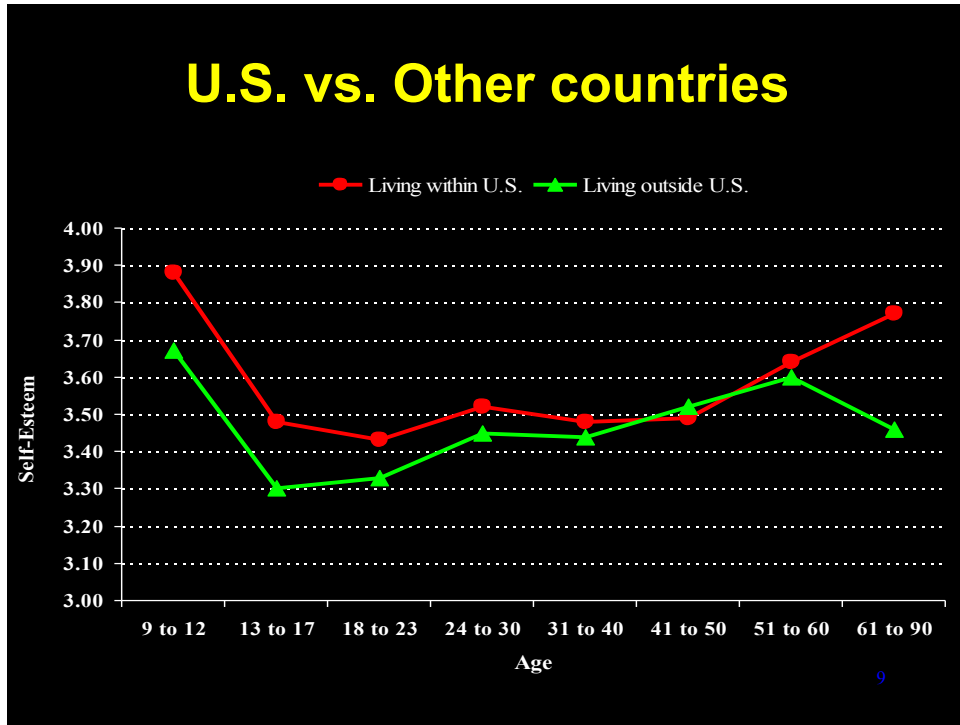
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
 1-----2-----3-----4-----5

5

Cross-Sectional Study

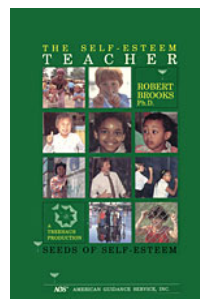
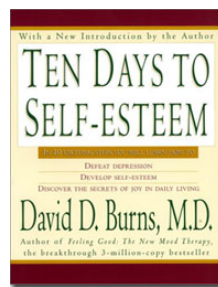
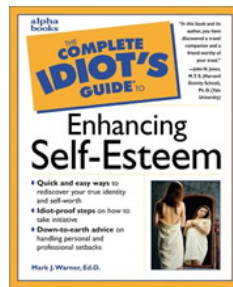
<i>Age</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total (% of total)</i>
9 to 12	1,825	1,571	3,439 (2.7)
13 to 17	10,075	18,258	28,625 (22.4)
18 to 23	18,075	17,417	35,963 (28.1)
24 to 30	19,835	14,131	34,571 (27.0)
31 to 40	7,750	7,774	15,850 (12.4)
41 to 50	2,415	4,018	6,566 (5.1)
51 to 60	819	1,352	2,228 (1.7)
61 to 70	197	224	430 (.03)
71 to 90	94	69	166 (.01)
Total	61,085	64,814	127,838





Limitations with Internet Study

- Sample selectivity
 - Are internet users a select sample?
- Cross-sectional design
 - Cohort effects
 - Selective mortality



20/20 video



13

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!**

14

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

15

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**

16

What's the Process?

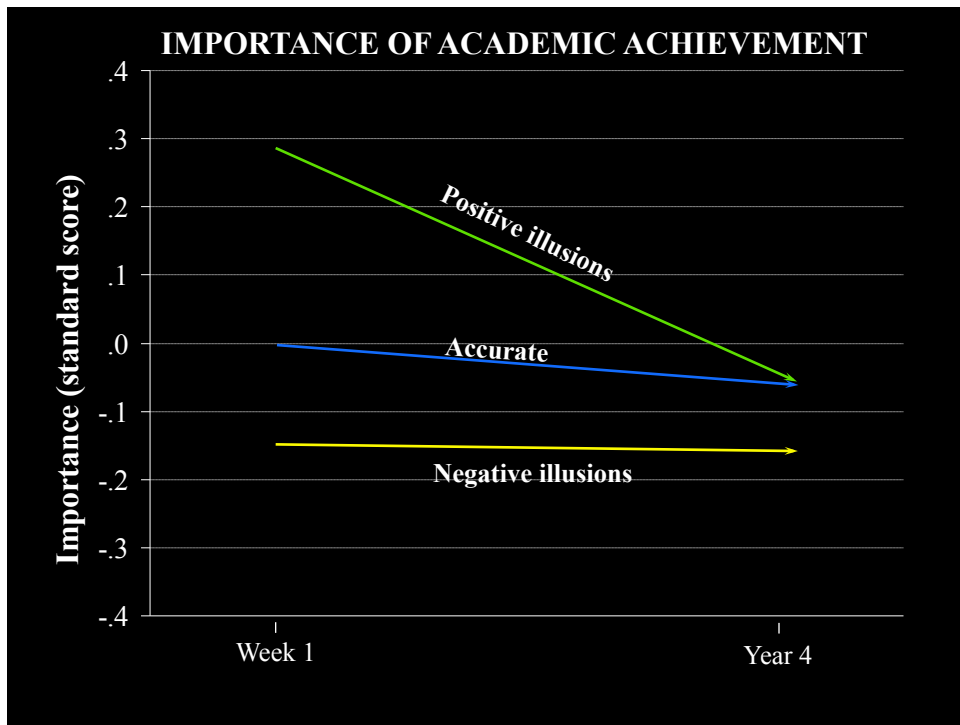
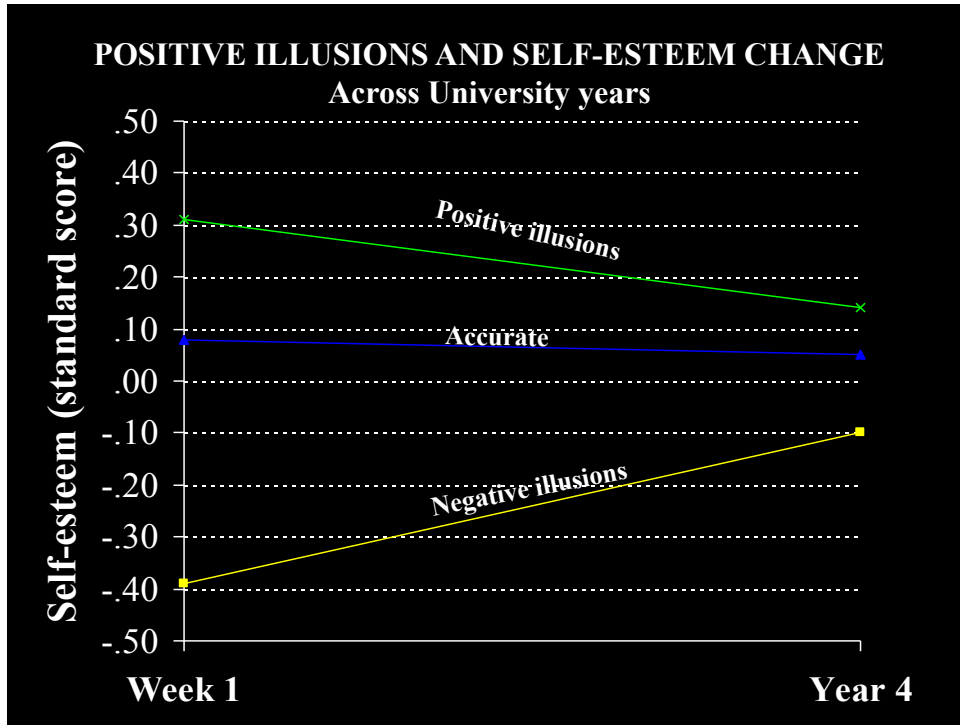
- **When we are insulted and humiliated, we feel shame – a painful emotion that we want to avoid feeling at all costs**
- **Narcissists are so dependent on their inflated high self-esteem, they externalize blame**
 - Convert shame into anger, expressed as aggression

17

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

18



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

21

Assessing the Self with Narrative

Dan McAdams:

To truly know someone, you must know their life story

22

Self-Narratives: Key Components

- Self-defining memory = single episode in your life
- *Life chapters*: “Think about your life as if it were a book. Please divide your life into its major chapters and briefly describe each chapter”
- *Key events*: peak experience; nadir experience; turning point; earliest memory; important childhood, adolescent, and adult memory; other important memory”
- *Significant people*: “Each person’s life story is populated by a few significant people who have a major impact on the narrative.”
- *Future script*: “As your life story extends into the future, what is your script or plan for what is to happen next in your life?”

23

Self-Narratives: Key Components

- *Stresses and problems*: “All life stories include significant conflicts, unresolved issues, problems to be solved, and periods of great stress.”
- *Personal ideology*: “Your fundamental beliefs and values are an important part of your life story”
- *Life theme*: “Looking back over your entire life story as a book with chapters, episodes, and characters, can you discern a central theme, message, or idea that runs throughout the text? What is the major theme of your life?”

24

Self-Defining Memories

- A memory that helps people define who they are
- The recounting of the memory serves to inform the self (and others) about the self's important life concerns and conflicts.
- Emotionally charged and intense
- Vivid
- Linked to other similar memories
- Related to enduring concerns or unresolved conflicts

25

Example of Self-Defining Memory

- “I remember my father telling me when I was 17 that on the day of their wedding he thought my mother was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. This for some reason lit up a spark in my heart and made me want to cry. I remember wishing that my mom could hear my dad saying that, and I remember wishing that he still felt that way. This incident made me realize that feelings change over time. It shaped my view of relationships as a whole.”²⁶

Trait Taxonomies

27

What is a trait?

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

28

Traits are the Basic Building Blocks of Personality

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

29

Key Elements of Traits

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

30

Key Elements of Traits

- Chuck and Lyndie
 - INTERNAL traits vs. EXTERNAL situation

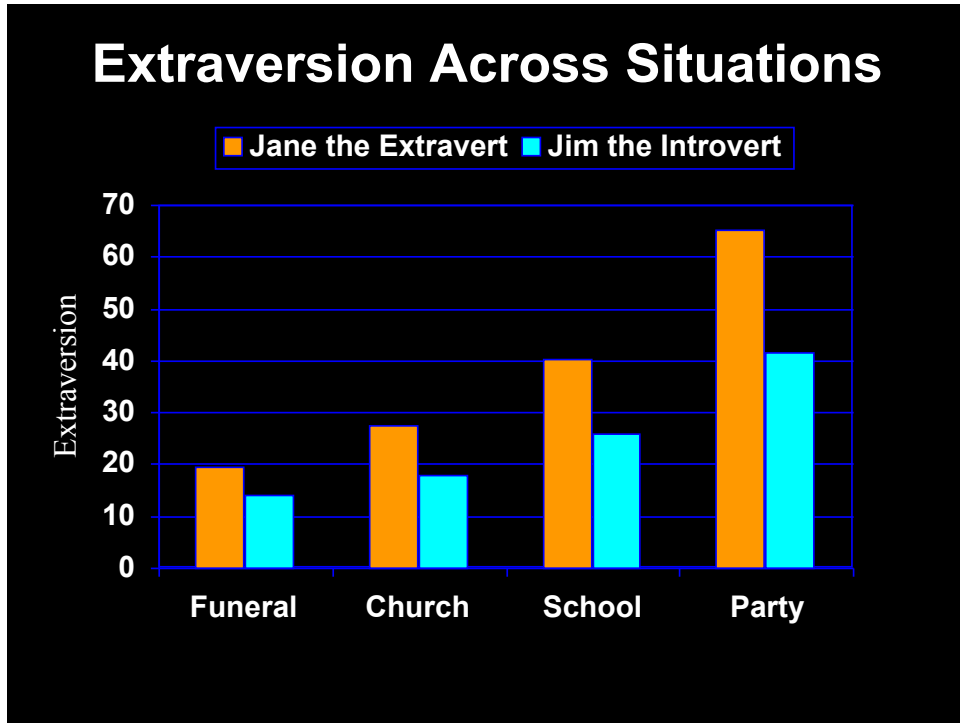


31

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

32



Key Elements of Traits

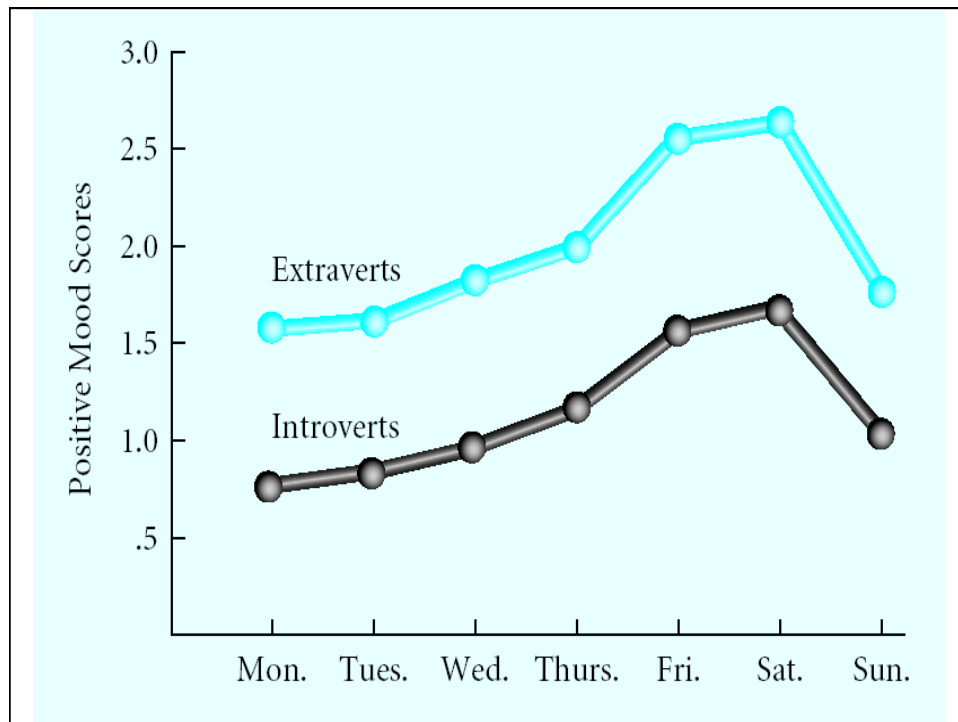
- Personal ('internal') rather than situational ('external')
- Consistent across 'similar' situations
- Stable across time

35

Key Elements of Traits

- Traits are stable across time



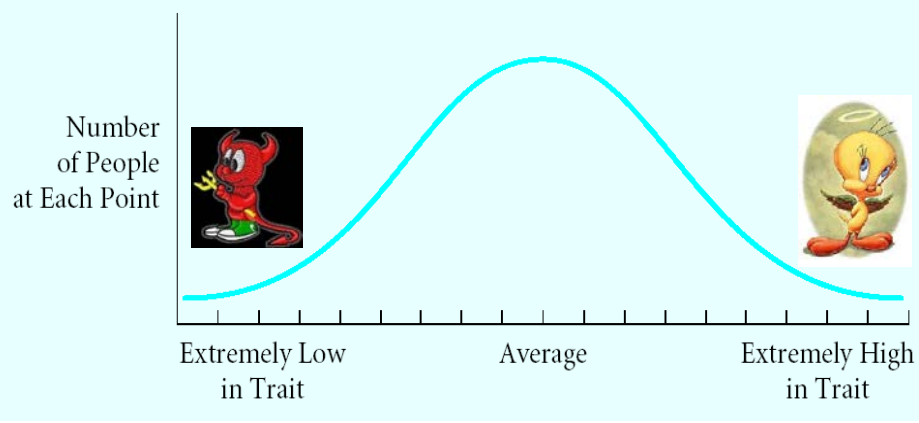


Key Elements of Traits

- 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

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)

41

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

42

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

43

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

44

Trait Hierarchy

Extraversion

outgoing friendly social

Many clubs Likes parties
Club Many friends
president

45

Lexical Class Exercise

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

46

Research Study: The Lexical Approach to Pride

- Research Procedure (Step 1)
 - Asked participants to “list words that characterize what you think, feel, and do when you feel pride”
 - 205 participants listed a total of 795 different words
 - 65 words were listed by at least 2% of the sample (i.e., 4 people)

47

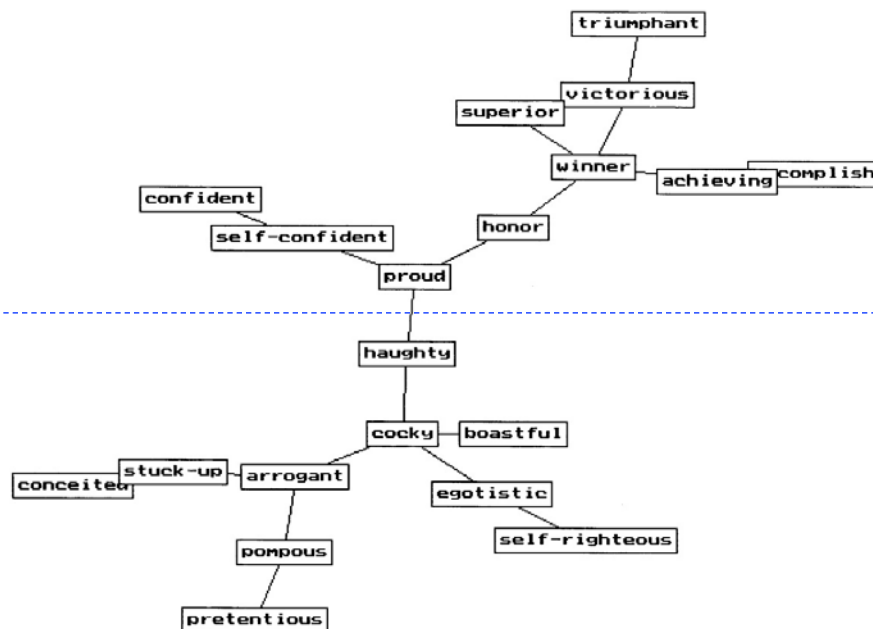
• Happy 64%	• Superior 9%	• Independent 4%
• Confident 64%	• Boastful 8%	• Overwhelming 4%
• Strong 34%	• Fulfilled 8%	• Perseverant 3%
• Accomplish 30%	• Courageous 7%	• Pleased 3%
• Smile 29%	• Cocky 6%	• Positive 4%
• Proud 24%	• Relief 6%	• Relaxed 3%
• Excited 20%	• Head held high 6%	• Reward 3%
• Egotistic 20%	• Honor 6%	• Self-assured 3%
• Joy 18%	• Determined 6%	• Self-confident 3%
• Satisfied 17%	• Stubborn 6%	• Special 4%
• Arrogant 15%	• Hard-working 6%	• Support 3%
• Energetic 15%	• Laugh 6%	• Talkative 4%
• Powerful 13%	• Love 6%	• Tall 4%
• Self-esteem 13%	• Intelligent 5%	• Worth 3%
• Show-off 11%	• Self-worth 5%	• Ability 4%
• Stand up straight 11%	• Knowledgeable 5%	• Encourage 4%
• Success 10%	• Great 5%	• Conceited 3%
• Content 10%	• Winner 5%	• Enthusiasm 3%
• Achieve 10%	• Winner 5%	• Fearless 3%
• Good 9%	• Haughty 4%	• Friendly 3%
• Better 9%	• Important 4%	• Goal 3%
• Motivated 9%	• Self-centered 4%	
• Respect 9%		

Pride Lexical Study

- Step 2: Figure out how words group together
 - Are there coherent sub-groups of words within the pride domain?
 - How are all the words related to each other?
 - Some should be more similar to each other than others

49

Lexical Structure of Pride



Developing a Trait Taxonomy Part 2

- Statistical (Experiential) Approach
 - Factor analysis
 - Step 1: Ask participants to rate the extent to which each trait describes them
 - Step 2: Enter ratings into *factor analysis* program, which tells you how traits “hold together” in people’s experiences

51

Statistical Approach to Pride

- “To what extent do you generally tend to feel...”
 - Each of the 65 pride words (e.g., arrogant, happy, conceited, accomplished, etc.)
 - Rated on the following scale:

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4 ————— 5
Not at all Somewhat Very Much

Statistical Structure of Pride: Results from Factor Analysis

Factor 1

- Accomplished
- Achieving
- Confident
- Happy
- Head held high
- Goal-fulfilled
- Self-assured
- Self-esteem
- Triumphant

Factor 2

- Arrogant
- Boastful
- Cocky
- Conceited
- Egotistic
- Haughty
- Self-centered
- Self-righteous
- Snobbish

Developing a Trait Taxonomy Part 3

- Theoretical Approach
 - Think about how many traits *should* matter, based on some pre-articulated theory

Two Facet Theory

- **Authentic pride**
 - Promotes social investments
 - Fosters genuine self-esteem
- **Hubristic pride**
 - Related to aggression, hostility
 - Narcissism
- **If findings from conceptual study and factor analysis study converge with theoretical perspective, then we've probably found the structure of pride**

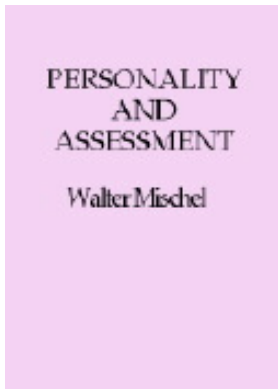
55

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

56



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

59

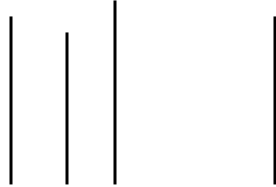
What was going on in '68?

- 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

60

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

63

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

64

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

65

Personality's Response

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

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

66

Personality's Response

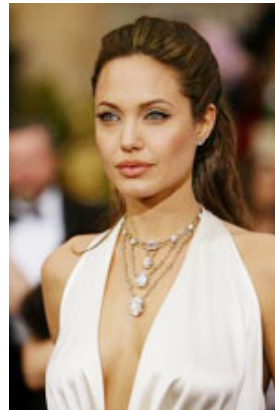
3. People may differ in how they behave across situations, but are consistent relative to other people

67

Brad and Angelina



Moderate Extraversion



High Extraversion

68

Brad and Angelina in Different Situations

- At Church

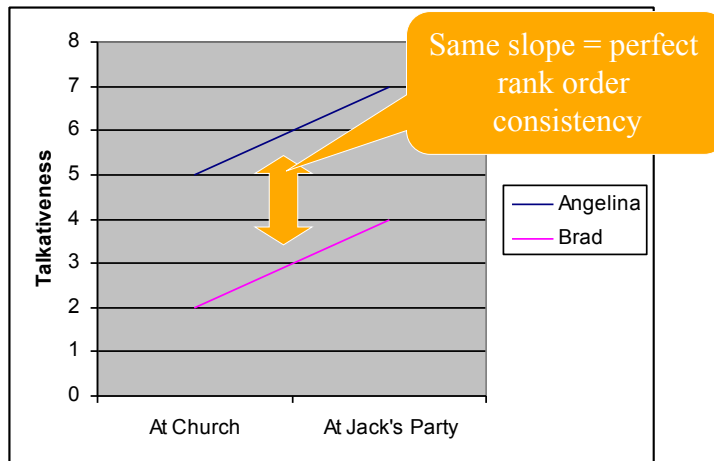


- At Jack's party



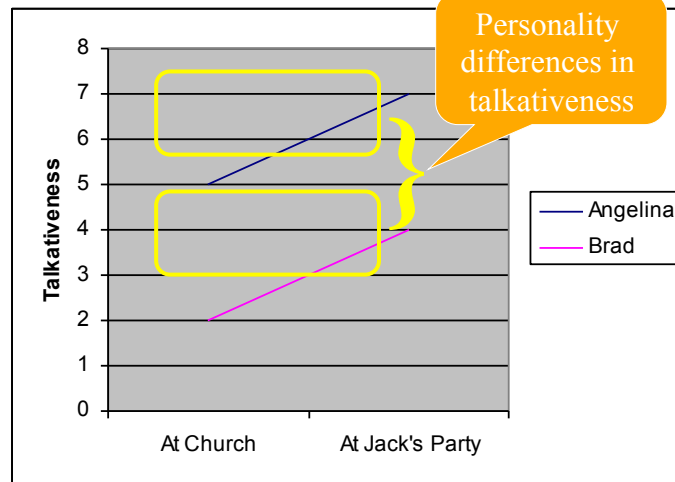
69

Rank-order consistency



70

Rank-order consistency



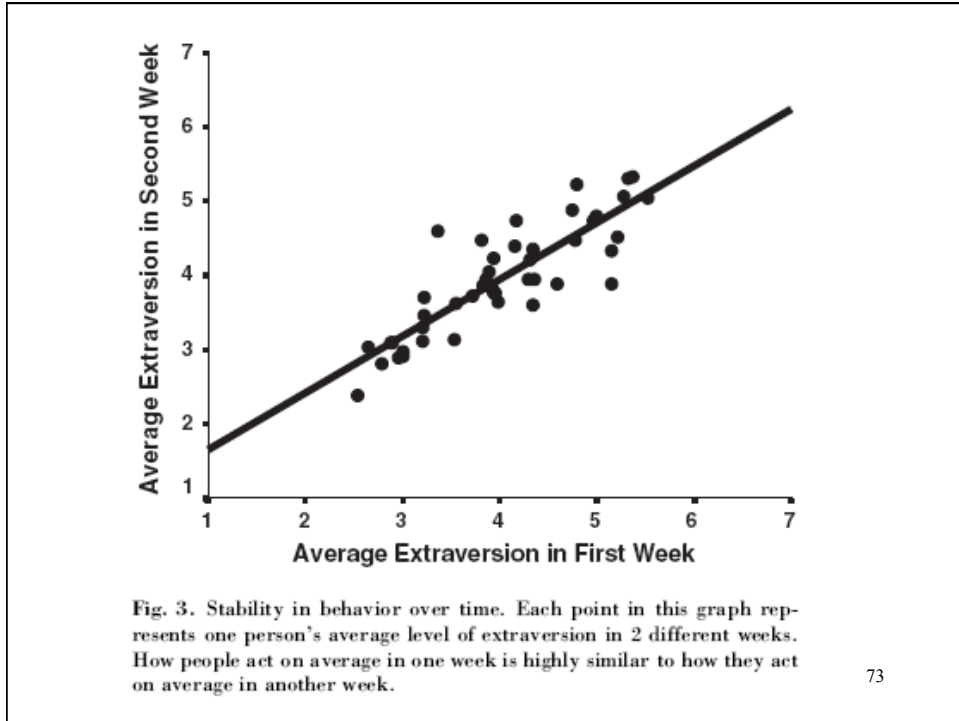
71

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

72



73

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

74

Resolution of Person-Situation Debate: Interactionism

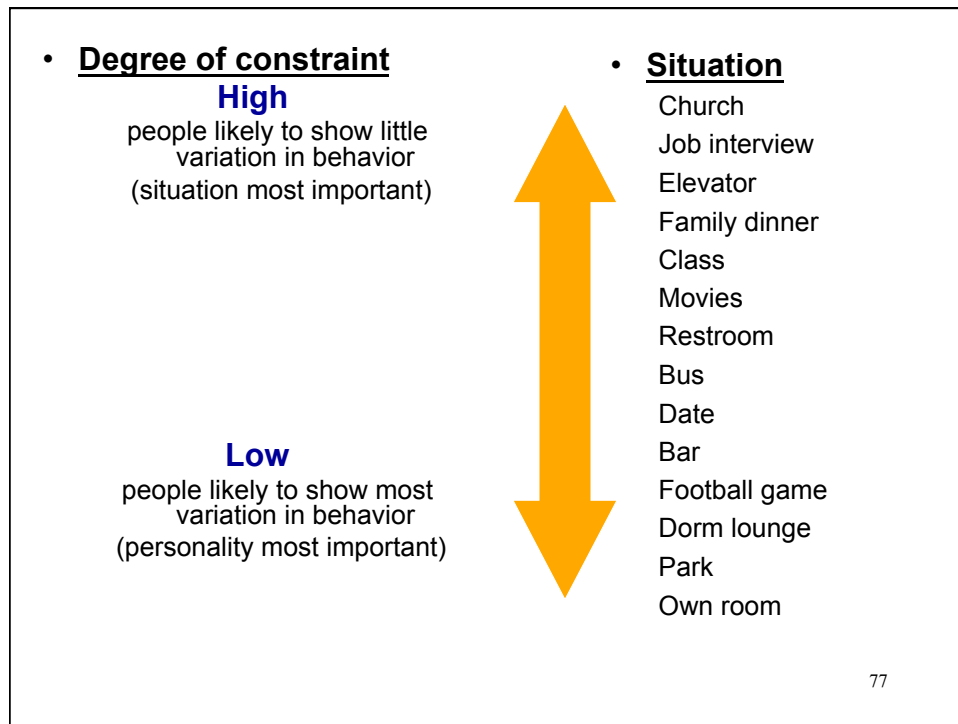
- Both personality and situation are important predictors of behavior

75

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

76



Midterm Exam 1

- Approx. 45 Multiple Choice items (worth about 70-75% of total exam score)
- 1 essay question (worth about 25-30% of total exam score)
- Be sure to bring a No. 2 Pencil!

Midterm 1 Topics

- Class introduction; What is personality?
- Methods in personality research
 - LOTS of methods!
 - Validity & Reliability
- Psychoanalytic Approach
 - Origins of theory, Freud's Basic Principles
 - Contemporary Psychoanalytic Approaches

79

Midterm 1 Topics

- Phenomenological Approach/Motive Theories
 - Motive Theorists (3 Ms)
 - Humanistic Approach: Maslow, Rogers
 - The Self
 - Self-Esteem
- Trait Approach
 - What are traits, development of trait taxonomy
 - Person-Situation Debate & Resolution

80

Midterm 1 Coverage

- Emphasize lectures & lecture notes
- Textbook chapters covered:
 - 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 14, 3, & 4
- For material that's in textbook and lectures, know it well!
- Material that's in the textbook and not even touched on in lecture will not be targeted in exam questions
 - But could be used in your essay response ⁸¹