

Personality Development & Stability

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PSY 249

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Announcements

- ❖ Radical Honesty statement grading
- ❖ 24hr grace period reminder
- ❖ Assignment 2 details to come this week

Question

Do you believe your personality has changed throughout your life? If so how? If not why?

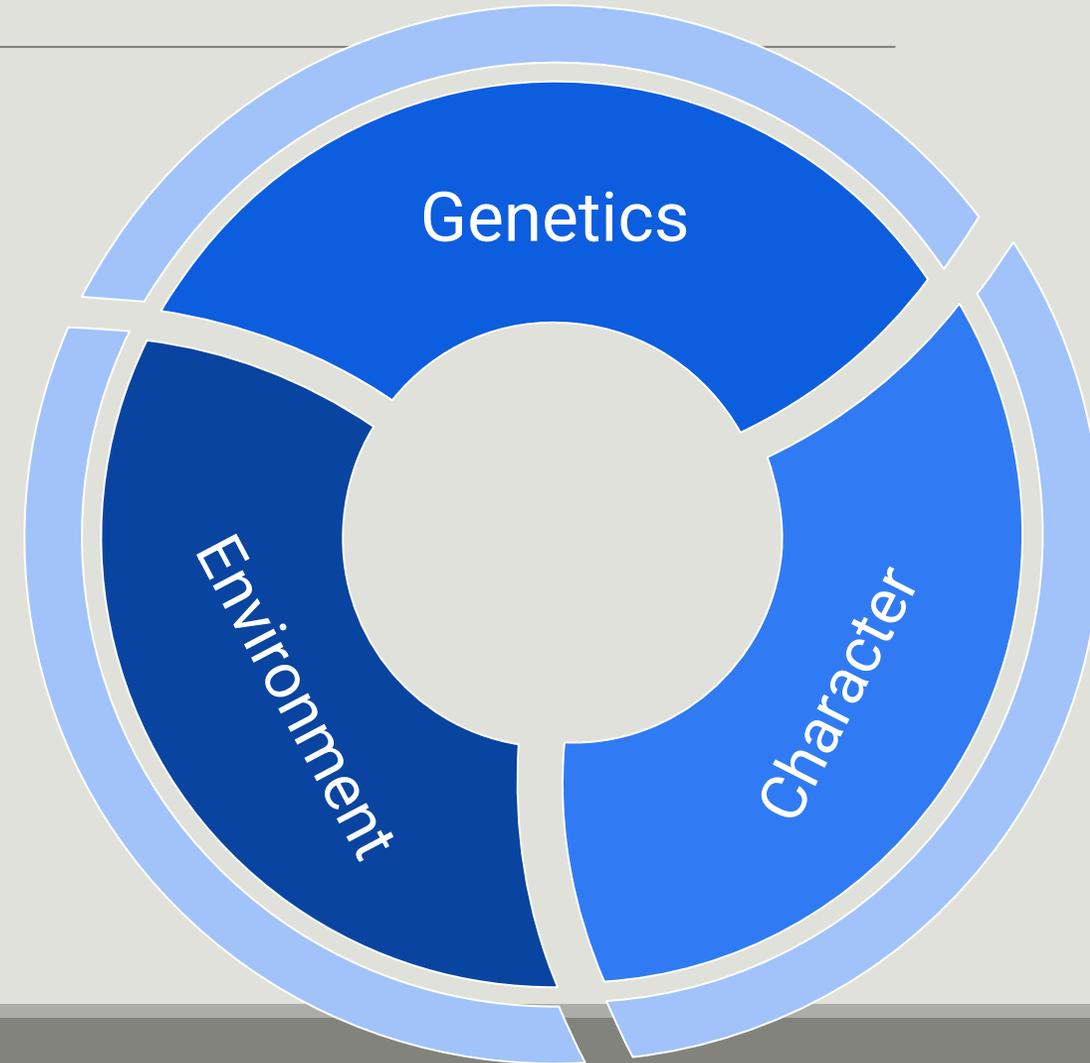
Follow up questions to think about:

What would you say caused this change or consistency?

Was it an experience, event, environment, person, or something else?

Personality Development

- ❖ Personality development is complex and as you might expect each dominant perspective has a different idea of what's most important.
- ❖ Personality doesn't just manifest on its own without influence (even in the strictest of the biological theories)
- ❖ Personality is developed through the many intricate interactions between genetics, experience, cognition, morality, learning, relationships, culture, language etc.
- ❖ These factors are grouped into three overarching categories



Genetics

- ❖ Genetics refers to aspects of one's personality that have some link or proven tie to genetic inheritance.
- ❖ It has been proven that children are much more similar personality wise to their family members thus lending some credibility to a genetic basis of personality
- ❖ Temperament is something genetic that also has a strong influence on personality development.

Nine Dimensions of Temperament

- Activity
- Regularity
- Initial Reaction
- Adaptability
- Intensity
- Mood
- Distractibility
- Attention Span
- Sensory Threshold

Character

- **Learned and applied** emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns based on one's own self-concept, goals, and values.
- Character is very subjective and more difficult to understand because it is made up of a person's individual interpretations of foundational human principles like: Morality, Truth, Knowledge, Etc.
- Example of one's character can be found when asked moral or value based questions like such as the dollar on the floor scenario or the scenario we discussed last class.
- Character is different from Genetics because these are aspects of personality that are meant to adapt and change throughout time as we learn and grow. They have been proven to be more connected to nurture than nature.

A Moral Dilemma

You're involved in a two-car crash on your way to work one morning in which you accidentally hit and kill a pedestrian. As you get out of the car, you are intercepted by a tearful woman who seems to think that she hit and killed the pedestrian. You're not sure why she thinks she hit the person, but she is convinced. There's only you, the woman, and the person you hit on the road; there are no witnesses. You know that whoever is deemed responsible will probably be sent to jail. What would you do?

- What if you knew the woman personally?
- What if you knew the pedestrian personally?

Environment

- The many relationships between the person and the physical, social, and sociocultural landscapes that require the person to act, think, or feel.
- The influence of the environment is two ways. Personality can influence their environment/how it is perceived and the environment can influence the personality
- Environment differs from character and temperament because it exists outside of the person one's environment can influence the expression of genes (epigenetics/ Gene environment interactions) and tells a person which values are most important (culture/tradition/norms)

Person Environment Transactions

- The interplay between a person and the context in which they live that ultimately have a reciprocal relationship with one another.

Active

When a person seeks out certain environments based on their personality

Ex: An outgoing person will seek out much different situations than a shy person.

Reactive

When people behave differently in the same situation because of their personality

Ex: A more honest person experiences a friend lying much differently than someone less so

Evocative

When someone elicits certain reactions from others because of their personality.

Ex: A humorous person elicits different responses from those around them than a cold person

A few Important Developmental Processes

Psychosocial Development (Erikson)

- Emphasis on individual in relation to their own will and the world around them

Cognitive Development (Piaget)

- Emphasis on a persons ability to think and though patterns

Moral Development (Kholberg)

- Emphasis on a persons understandings and treatment of others/humanity

Language Development (Krashen & Terrell)

- Emphasis on the use of language to engage with others and the world

Sociocultural Development (Vygotsky)

- Emphasis on language and culture influencing a persons general growth

Activity: A role to play

Each group will come up with at least one example for each (if they believe it's possible).

Discuss how individual experiences can shape our personality.

Discuss how ability to think or our thought patterns can shape our personality

Discuss how morals/values can shape our personality

Discuss how language and access to language can shape our personality

Discuss how cultural traditions/customs can shape our personality

Personality Development & Stability pt. 2

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2/9/2023

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Activity: The Personality Lifeline

Draw a line representing your life (From birth to this moment). Let the line go up when it was good times/ positive, down when it was negative, plateau when things remained consistent, loops if things got repetitive, etc.

At each of these moments of transition or consistency answer these two prompts:

1. A few words that describe your social and/or environmental context at the time
2. A few words that describe your personality at the time (prominent personality traits)

After completing the lifeline take a step back and look at it as a whole. Would you say your personality has changed as you've grown older? Do you feel your social/environmental context has shaped you, have you shaped it, or is it a mixture of the two?

Foundational Traits, Measurement & Stability

- Many western psychologists believe that the 5 foundational personality traits are the Big 5. Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism.
- These foundational traits typically exist on a continuous spectrum/distribution rather than individually standing alone.
- Falling along a distribution is what allows these traits to be measured.
- When traits can be measured in such a way **then and only then** can we measure their stability.
- **Stability is how consistently a personality trait stays the same across time, situation, and/or cohort**

Types of Personality Stability

REMEMBER: Absolute and Differential are two different types of Homotypic stability.

Heterotypic Stability

Consistency in the underlying personality trait but potential change in the behavior associated with the trait.

Changing measures accordingly

Ex: Expressing shyness when you're young may look very different than expressing shyness as you get older

Homotypic Stability

Consistency in the underlying personality trait AND its associated behaviors and thus also its measurement over time.

Ex: We typically express compassion with the same behaviors and mentalities throughout our life.

Differential Stability

Maintaining the same rank order measurement results over time.

Absolute Stability

Consistently getting the same exact measurement results over time.

Scenario Example

A Researcher is tasked with researching aggression/aggressiveness across one's lifespan. As they conduct their longitudinal study they use existing research findings detailing observable patterns of aggression in children, in adolescence, and in adulthood to decide what behaviors to focus on and measure. In childhood they decide to focus on emotional outbursts, and acts of physical violence against other people. In adolescence they focus on destruction of property, name calling, and psychological violence. As for adulthood they focus on destruction of property and self-destructive behaviors. What type of Stability are these researcher measuring?

A. Homotypic

B. Differential

C. Heterotypic

Scenario Example

A researcher conducting a longitudinal study on various factors surrounding aging. One of the personality traits that they have chosen to measure is altruism/generosity. Research states that generally all people score higher on measures of altruism as they get older. The researcher looks at the scores of all their participants in order based on their scores across their lifespan and notices that 5 of their participants have remained consistently in the same rank order on the participant list. What kind of stability is this?

A. Heterotypic

B. Differential

C. Absolute

Why stability matters

- ❖ Measuring personality stability allows researchers to filter out and control from some of the noise that comes along with measuring personality
- ❖ Looking at stability helps researchers determine what is personality or personality traits compared to states of mind or moods
- ❖ Measuring stability also allows researchers to determine norms and average fluctuations in personality traits across time and development

Attraction, Selection, Attrition, and Manipulation

- People are naturally more **attracted** to certain situations because they match or fulfill certain personality traits in some way.
- People **select** paths or ways that allow them to be in certain situations more often because they match or fulfill their personality traits.
- On the flipside some situations do not match or fulfill their personality traits OR people find the conflict between opposing personality traits to be too much so they decided to leave these environments. This is **attrition**.
- Often individuals will attempt to **manipulate** their environment and make it fit their personality better before this happens.
- These are the four different ways our personality and environment interact with one another.

How and why can personalities change?

- ❖ Much of why our personalities change is experiential rather than biological
- ❖ Some evidence suggests there are some injuries and illnesses that have been shown to cause personality shifts
- ❖ Environmental shifts
- ❖ Person-Environment transactions (Active, Reactive, Evocative)
- ❖ Attraction, Selection, Attrition, and especially manipulation can play a role as well
- ❖ Trauma & Response (Personal, Familial, Intergenerational, Cultural, Societal)
- ❖ Free will & Maintenance