



PERSONALITY TRAITS PT. 2

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PSY 249

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Check in 2 grading on-going
- Check in 3 available! Due March 31st. Questions?

Question

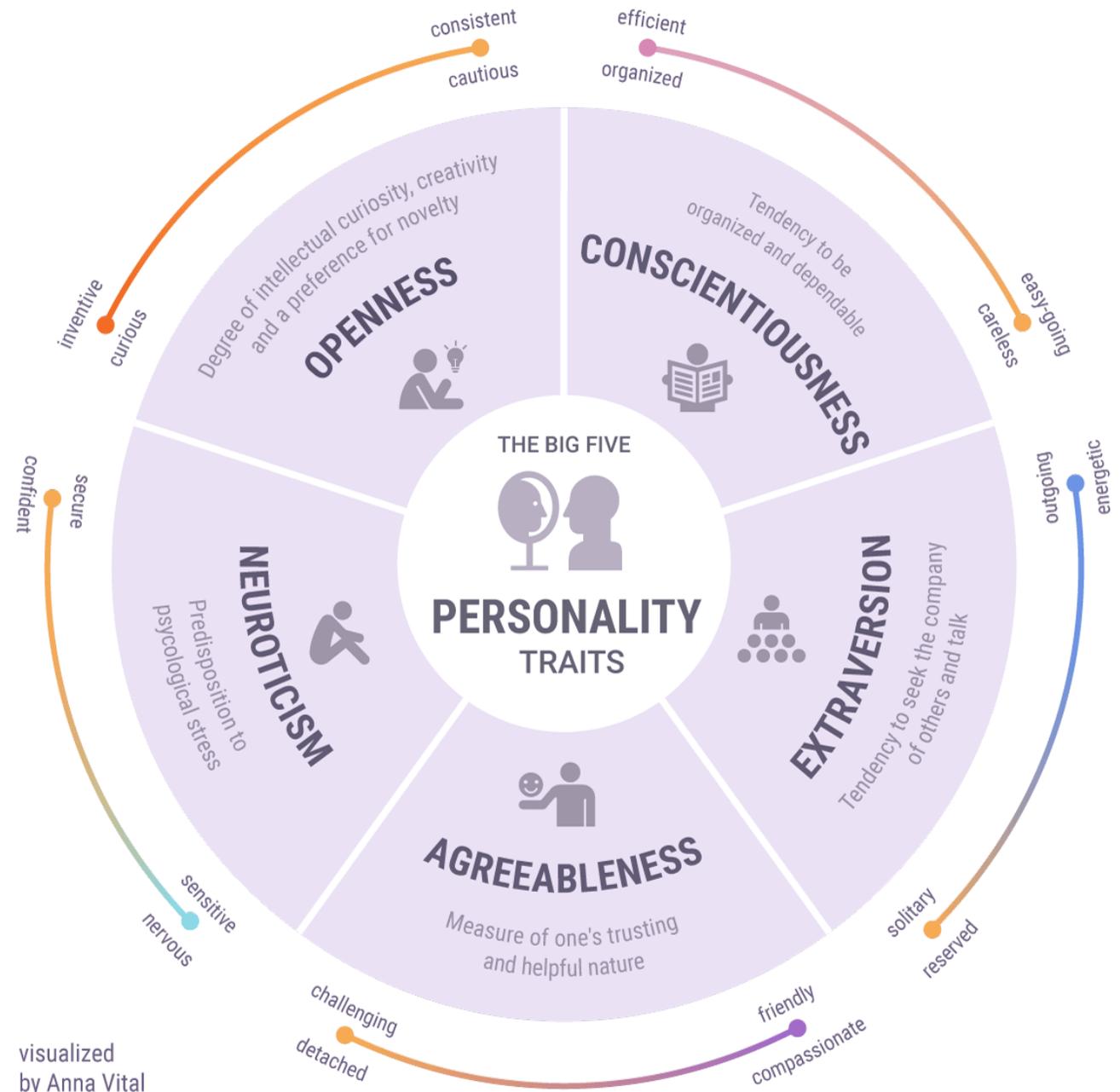
- Are there personality traits you think are more important and/or foundational to human personality than others?
- If so which ones? What criteria are you using to make this choice?
- If no why not? What does this mean for how personality should be understood/studied?

PERSONALITY TRAIT HIERARCHIES

- In all the trait theories they recognize that traits have certain levels and or categories to them.
- For some leading theorists hierarchy of personality traits is vital (Cattell & Eysenck)
- For others sub-traits are just a way to account for individual differences (Goldberg & Centering the Big 5)
- While others believed all traits spoke to the innate complexities of human personalities and should be looked at just as deeply (Gordon Allport & Dispositions)

The Big 5

- The big 5 consists of 5 personality traits thought to be inherent in every human personality.
- Each of the 5 exist on a spectrum with opposite extremes.
- Within each of these 5 traits there is said to be hundreds of sub-traits or facets that influence how these dominant traits show up
- This model is thought to be universally accurate



visualized
by Anna Vital

Source: J. M. Digman
Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model

GORDON ALLPORT'S DISPOSITIONS

Cardinal

- Extremely dominant traits. so much so that a person becomes known for them
- Ex: "Honest" Abe

Personal

- The individual look of any given trait. Seen through the lenses of one person.
- Ex: Nervous

Central

- The more important and stable building block traits of a personality.
- Ex: Ambitious

Secondary

- The more inconsistent or context dependent traits. Preferences & attitudes
- Ex: "He gets sad around children"

Common

- Traits that are part of a culture. Traits that everyone recognizes when they see them
- Ex: Liberal/conservative

PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS (PERSONALITY PROCESSES)

- Psychological Mechanisms or Personality Processes are the situations, mechanisms, happenings that engage ask us to engage our personality traits.
- Personality Processes give a glimpse of how personality traits manifest in people's thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
- Defense Mechanisms are a part of this larger category (Psychoanalytic)
- Often times personality psychologists conducting experimental research will simulate these situations in order to measure personality trait associated behavior

Situation/
Stimuli



Activation
of trait(s)



Behavior/
Outcome

ACTIVITY: WHAT'S YOUR PROCESS? PT. 1

Describe how you would behave/ respond to this situation and which of your personality traits you feel are activated by it. Also be mindful of internal and outside forces/influences that complicate your understanding and response.

Situation

It's a hot summer day in NYC, the temperature somewhere in the mid 80s. You're walking with a close friend to get something cool to drink. During the walk the friend is telling you about how in love with their romantic partner they are. You reach the spot and are preparing to order your drinks when your friend sees their partner whispering in the ear of another person at a 2-seat table. Your friend calmly asks you if you can go somewhere else for the drinks.

ACTIVITY: WHAT'S YOUR PROCESS? PT. 2

In small groups discuss the following questions/prompts:

1. Share your initial responses
2. What were the similarities and differences in how you responded to the situation.
3. What personality traits were activated? Any shared?
4. Talk about the context. What internal or external things did you notice that shaped your own understanding? Does hearing your groups context/opinions change your understanding?

THE PERSON - SITUATION DEBATE

- Prior to the 60's personality psychologists maintained that there were some general personality traits that could be looked at across situations/people (ie. Honesty)
- In 1968 Walter Mischel wrote a book titled *Personality and Assessment* which suggested all general personality traits are illusions and that instead situations tell us more about personality.
- This gave rise to researchers focusing on other context dependent forms of understanding personality. Also gave more credibility to non-trait based theories.
- Some researchers altered their beliefs around personality while some gave up on personality and traits all together.
- A prime example of an altered perspective on traits would be the Big 5 (1990)
- A prime example emphasizing the situation would be the Stanford Prison Experiment (1971)

Pros and Cons of the Trait Perspective

- Simple to understand and research
- Neatly groups human personality into categories with room for individuality
- Makes something as complex as personality easily understood and accessible to everyone not just trained professionals
- Provides a shared language from which to discuss personality

- Traits become categories that become hierarchies
- Limiting in its understanding of people, situations, and complexity of human existence
- Many assumptions made linking behavior and interaction to personality traits.
- Completely disregards internal worlds to focus on what is observable.