Personality

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Personality

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21.1. Chapter overview

This chapter will:

- Outline two main approaches to studying and measuring personality – the nomothetic and the idiographic.

- Highlight some of the key theories for analysing personality in a nomothetic way via the use of traits – the sixteen-factor model, the five-factor model, the HEXACO model, the PEN model, and the BIS/BAS model.

- Analyse the 'darker' and positive sides of personality.

- Explore whether Emotional Intelligence can be seen as a type of personality trait.

- Critique the use of traits in personality psychology by using the situationalist approach and interactionism.

- Apply the psychology of personality to the real-world question of whether some people may be more prone to illness than others.

21.2. Introduction

[Start box]

FRAMING QUESTIONS

- What is this thing called 'personality'? What does it comprise?

- What kind of personality do you have? What influenced its development? Was it your genes or your environment?

- Does your personality remain the same over time and in different situations, or do you think it changes?

- What is a 'dark' personality? What are its defining traits and what does it mean for things like career prospects and personal relationships?

- Can the ability to detect and respond to the emotional experiences of other people and being attuned to your own emotional experiences be a kind of personality trait in itself?

- What are the positive aspects of your personality that makes you feel good about yourself and how you relate to others? How could you enable these positive parts of your personality to emerge more often in a range of situations?

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21.2.1. What is personality?

Although there is variation in how psychologists have defined personality, there are some areas of agreement (Larsen et al., 2020). Personality comprises:

- Individual differences by stressing the uniqueness of individuals but also the importance of being able to categorize, classify or describe this uniqueness along dimensions of personality.

- A combined system of cognitions, emotions, and behaviours.

- Stable, and sometimes predictable, behaviour.

- General dispositions, which are linked to specific needs or drives.

Many things need to be considered when examining personality. Each of us has our own unique personality, and this is evident in everyday life, in what we think about certain aspects of life, how we act around other people, what choices we make, and how we work. For example, if you are reading this chapter, it may be that you are an extremely conscientious student who has decided that you would like to know more about personality and are preparing for an essay that you need to submit in a period that is due many weeks away. However, less conscientious (and organised) students may be reading this chapter after leaving revision for an exam until the last minute. Clearly, people differ along various dimensions of behaviours, feelings, and thought processes; personality traits (such as Conscientiousness) may be one of the dimensions that we can use to differentiate between people. Traits are prevailing behaviour patterns within each of us that generally remain stable across time, as well as across a variety of circumstances. We shall examine the trait concept in the next section.

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Nomothetic and idiographic Nomothetic approaches seek to establish the generalised laws of behaviour and are typified by observable, verifiable and quantifiable

measurements. They are concerned with what we share with other people. By contrast, idiographic approaches concern themselves with what makes us unique and individual.

[End box]

21.3. Trait approaches to personality

One approach to personality is the **nomothetic** perspective, which investigates large numbers of people with a view to finding generalised laws governing behaviour that can be applied to everyone. With this nomothetic tradition to studying personality there are two major units of analysis – **types** and **traits**. The **type** approach to personality categorises people by a number of different classifications, each of which are defined by a distinct collection of personality characteristics. Examples of this are Type A, B, C, or D personalities. The **trait** approach views personality as comprising several durable internal characteristics along which individuals vary. According to personality theorists, traits exist on a continuum and are normally distributed among people. Everyone is presumed to possess all these traits to some extent, but they vary in prominence between individuals; some may be higher in certain traits and lower in others. This allows for a unique pattern of traits that distinguishes individuals from each other. The main questions trait psychologists ask are: How many traits are there and how are they best organised? What are the origins of those traits, their underpinning mechanisms, associations, and consequences?

Numerous personality trait models have been developed over the years and each model has been used to claim that people's personalities have a **hierarchical structure**. These

models include the sixteen-factor model (Cattell, et al., 1970), the three-factor model (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991), the five-factor model (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and the six-factor (HEXACO) model (Ashton et al., 2004). There is also an influential alternative 3-factor biological personality model called Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (Gray & McNaughton, 2000), which has received some popularity in the last few decades. In the following sections, we will look at these models, beginning with the earliest – the sixteen-factor model, and examine some of the main personality traits in each of these models, as well as more recent work that considers the 'darker' and 'lighter' personality traits some individuals display.

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Type This is a cluster of personality characteristics that consistently occur together.

Trait An internal disposition that is durable and causal. Traits describe and explain differences in people's forms of thinking, feeling, or behaving in the world that is relatively stable and predictable over a variety of different situations.

Factor analysis A statistical technique used to determine the underlying structure of the personality traits making up each model. As a method, it helps reduce complex numerical data into a smaller number of psychological concepts, known as 'factors'.

Hierarchical Structure Personality is organised at several levels (Paunonen, 1998). At the highest level is the personality *factor* (e.g., Conscientiousness). The level below is at the *trait level* (i.e., in the case of Conscientiousness, this includes traits of orderliness, ambition, endurance, responsibility, and being methodical). The level below is the *habitual responses* that a person displays to enact each of the traits. At the lowest level

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is the *specific responses* that an individual displays in each situation that eventually may get hard-wired into becoming a habitual response. The personality factor level has been found to be the most powerful level in predicting complex behaviours (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001).

[End box]

21.3.1. The sixteen-factor model

The **sixteen-factor model** was developed by Raymond Cattell in 1949 (Cattell & Mead, 2008). Cattell was committed to using the scientific method and was one of the first psychologists to use the statistical method of factor analysis to explore personality. Cattell's trait hierarchy was three-tiered. He initially extracted sixteen primary traits and termed these **"source traits"** (Cattell, 1957) as he considered them to be the foundations of all human personality. He then factor-analysed these traits further and derived five global second-order factors (extraversion, anxiety, tough-mindedness, independence and self-control). A factor analysis of these provided two third-order super factors (outward engagement domain; internalised unrestrained domain) at the highest, more abstract level of personality structure (Cattell, 1989; Dancer & Woods, 2006; Gorsuch, 2006; Lounsbury et al., 2004). He developed a measuring instrument, commonly known as the 16 Personality Factor (PF) Questionnaire. Cattell's sixteen personality dimensions are listed in Table 21.1, along with descriptors of the high and low ranges for each dimension.

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Table 19.1 The sixteen primary factors developed by Cattell

Descriptors of Low Range	Primary Factor	Descriptors of High Range
Reserved, impersonal, distant, cool, detached, aloof	**Warmth**	Warm-hearted, caring, attentive to others, kindly
Concrete, lower mental capacity	**Reasoning**	Abstract thinking, bright, fast learner
Reactive, affected by feelings, easily upset	**Emotional Stability**	Emotionally stable, adaptive, mature, calm
Deferential, cooperative, avoids conflict, humble	**Dominance**	Dominant, forceful, assertive, stubborn, bossy
Serious, restrained, careful, prudent, introspective	**Liveliness**	Enthusiastic, animated, spontaneous, cheerful
Expedient, nonconforming, self-indulgent	**Rule-Consciousness**	Rule-conscious, dutiful, moralistic, staid
Shy, timid, threat-sensitive, hesitant, intimidated	**Social Boldness**	Socially bold, venturesome, thick-skinned
Tough minded, objective, unsentimental, rough	**Sensitivity**	Sensitive, aesthetic, tender-minded, intuitive
Trusting, unsuspecting, accepting, unconditional	**Vigilance**	Vigilant, suspicious, sceptical, wary, oppositional
Practical, grounded, down-to-earth, conventional	**Abstractedness**	Abstracted, idea-oriented, impractical
Forthright, genuine, artless, unpretentious	**Privateness**	Private, discreet, non-disclosing, shrewd, astute
Self-assured, unworried, complacent, secure	**Apprehension**	Apprehensive, self-doubting, worried, insecure
Traditional, attached to familiarity, conservative	**Openness to Change**	Open to change, experimenting, flexibility
Group-orientated, affiliative, dependent	**Self-Reliance**	Self-reliant, individualistic, self-sufficient
Tolerates disorder, unexacting, undisciplined	**Perfectionism**	Perfectionistic, organised, self-disciplined
Relaxed, placid, patient, composed, low drive	**Tension**	Tense, high energy, driven, impatient, frustrated

Adapted from Conn and Rieke (1994)

[End box]

Cattell's 16 PF model was a landmark in personality research and is still used today, but it has not been without its critics. The major criticism of the theory is that it has never been fully replicated, despite numerous attempts by a variety of researchers (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991). Cattell refuted this on the grounds that his exact methodology was not followed, but a study conducted by Kline and Barrett (1983), using an identical

methodology, only verified four out of the sixteen personality factors in Cattell's model. However, other researchers have replicated the primary sixteen-factor structure (e.g., Burdsal & Bolton, 1979). Notwithstanding the criticisms, it should be recognised that Cattell's pioneering research led to the development of the five- and six-factor models as they also used the **lexical approach**.

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The lexical approach is a bottom-up approach (i.e., it works with how the general population uses language about personality, rather than how experts define personality). This approach assumes that the optimal way to understand and measure personality is through the analysis of language that the general population uses to describe people's personalities. With this assumption, there is also the hypothesis that personality can best be characterised through single words such as 'aggressive', 'sociable', 'punctual', 'irritating' (John, et al., 1988).

[End box]

21.3.2 The five-factor model

The **five-factor model** is arguably the most popular model of personality, which first appeared in 1985 and was developed by McCrae and Costa (see McCrae & Costa, 1997). Initially, McCrae and Costa developed a three-factor model in 1985 which was then developed into the five-factor model that researchers use today. The five-factor model is often referred to by its acronym of OCEAN, which stems from the initial letters of the model's five factors; Openness to experience, Conscientiousness,

Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Matthews, et al., 2003). The five

personality traits are moderately heritable (40-50 %) with the remaining variance

explained by environmental influences (South, et al., 2018; Vukasovic & Bratko, 2015).

The personality traits from this model are measured with the self-report NEO

Personality Inventory Revised (NEO PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992), however, this

measure comprises 240 items. This can often be problematic when conducting research

as participants may get fatigued. Therefore, researchers also use the shorter 60-item

NEO-FFI questionnaire (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

People who score highly on **openness to experience** tend to have an appreciation for

art, are intellectually curious and creative, full of unusual ideas and they display

preferences for novelty and variety. At the opposite end of the scale, people scoring low

on this trait are inclined to be cautious, like following routines, and prefer to have

structure and predictability in their life.

Conscientiousness is characterised by a proclivity for self-discipline, acting dutifully

and committed to hard work, diligence, and thoroughness. People with high levels of

conscientiousness have a need to accomplish goals and possess the right qualities

needed to realize their objectives (Goldberg, 1992). Those low in conscientiousness

may be unreliable, leave things to the last minute, and can be prone to making impulsive

or rash decisions.

Those with high **extraversion** levels (often called **"extraverts"**) are socially outgoing

and focused on the external world. They draw their energy from being around others

and from exciting situations and environments. They also tend to be impulsive. On the

other hand, those with low extraversion levels (often labelled as **"introverts")** are more

introspective, may feel uncomfortable if they are at the centre of social attention, and

usually prefer the quieter life, engaging in pastimes such as reading and writing, rather than seeking excitement. They generally feel less energetic and less optimistic about themselves than do extraverts (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991).

Agreeableness involves characteristics such as trust, kindness, affection, and can 'get on' with other people. People who are less agreeable are generally not concerned about others' well-being and are quite sceptical and suspicious about the motives of others, which leads them to appear unfriendly and potentially manipulative.

Neuroticism is typified by emotional instability, feelings of anxiety, guilt, anger, envy, and depression. Those with high levels of neuroticism are often emotionally volatile and are poor in responding effectively to stressful life events; they will usually view events as very bleak, overwhelming, and difficult. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are emotionally stable people, who have a good mastery of their emotional states and tend to act calm and composed even during stressful situations.

The five-factor model has been tested and validated in numerous studies (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1997) and has been applied cross-culturally (Thompson, 2008), but there are several criticisms of the model. Some psychologists disagree with the model because they think it disregards other personality domains, for example, Machiavellianism, religiosity, and honesty (Paunonen, et al., 2003; Paunonen & Jackson, 2000). A further criticism is that the model was derived mostly from the lexical approach. Block (1995, 2001) argued that using everyday language is inadequate when trying to uncover the in-depth complexity of the basis for people's habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. The extent to which a personality model, developed by using English as the starting point, can translate effectively across all cultures has also been questioned (Boyle, 2008; De Raad & Mlacic, 2015). Despite these criticisms, the

model remains popular and is widely used as a way of measuring the influence of personality on mental health, in personal and social relationships, education, the workplace, and in online settings.

21.3.3. HEXACO: The six-factor model

The most recent of the trait models to be developed from the lexical approach to personality is the **six-factor model** (Ashton, et al., 2004) and it has become increasingly used in a wide range of personality research into dispositions towards guilt and shame, academic aptitude and performance, religiousness, and risk-taking (Ashton, et al., 2014). The six dimensions were derived from findings with lexical studies of personality structure conducted in a variety of European and Asian languages. The acronym HEXACO comes from the initial letters of five of the factors making up the model; **H**onesty-humility, **E**motionality, **A**greeableness, **C**onscientiousness, and **O**penness to experience, with the 'X' derived from second letter of the factor, e**X**traversion. The model builds upon the five-factor model of Costa and McCrae (1992) and from Goldberg's (1993) work.

Each of the six HEXACO dimensions is characterised by high and low levels of the traits making up each factor. Elsewhere, we have introduced you to the traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience, but the remaining two personality traits in the HEXACO model are **honesty-humility** and **emotionality**.

The **honesty-humility** factor is arguably the HEXACO model's most unique addition to the trait approach. The main characteristics of this trait are at one end, sincerity,

faithfulness, trustworthiness, and modesty, and at the other end, pretentiousness, arrogance, greed, and hypocrisy. Those scoring highly on this trait are people who do not wish to manipulate others for their own gain, tend to want to follow the rules of society, have a strong sense of fairness, and shy away from wealth and social status. Conversely, people who score low on this trait are those inclined to try to control others and break rules for personal gain and material profit and have a high sense of self-importance.

Since its inception, the HEXACO model has been used in several studies (e.g., Pletzer, 2021). However, replication of the HEXACO model has been problematic, with some authors (e.g., Bashiri, et al., 2011; McCrae, 2010; Thalmayer, et al., 2011) questioning how different the Honesty-humility factor is from the five-factor model factor of Agreeableness (Larsen et al., 2020) due to the failure of Honesty-humility to emerge as an independent factor in some studies.

Despite these issues, research has found that honesty-humility can be a good predictor of immoral and unscrupulous behaviours in business (Lee, et al., 2008); how much an employee will engage in risky behaviour regarding health and safety (Weller & Tikir, 2011); and to what extent a person will exhibit tendencies toward anti-social acts (Sheppard & Boon, 2012).

Ashton and Lee (2007) have found that the **Emotionality** factor encompasses empathy, emotional attachment to relatives and people who are close, and harm-avoidant/help-seeking behaviours (particularly related to kin); this has led the authors to propose links between this factor and the construct of kin altruism, and further to include a 25th 'Interstitial' Altruism (versus Antagonism) scale to the revised HEXACO Personality Inventory (HEXACO-PI-R). This addition is a composite scale blending the

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Emotionality factor with the Honesty-Humility and Agreeableness factors and assesses a personal disposition to be sympathetic and soft-hearted toward others. Emotionality has also been a consistent predictor of sex differences between men and women (Ashton, et al., 2006), where Emotionality "…is defined most strongly by terms describing femininity versus masculinity" (Ashton & Lee, 2007, p. 159).

Although the Emotionality scale may appear to resemble the Neuroticism factor that is present in other personality trait models, it does differ in some respects. The main characteristics of the Emotionality factor in the HEXACO model are sentimentality, oversensitivity, fearfulness, anxiety, toughness, independence, and stability. A person scoring highly on the emotionality scale is someone who worries a lot, gets anxious in response to life stressors and would be like high Neuroticism scorers in this respect. As opposed to high Neuroticism scorers, high emotionality with the HEXACO model also entails having someone who is empathic and sentimental. Someone with low levels of emotionality would not feel afraid in physically dangerous situations, nor do they worry much in life and respond robustly to life's stresses and threats. They can be emotionally detached from other people and have little or no need to share their emotions with others; clearly, the emotional detachment element of the emotionality scale would appear to be more akin to the tough-mindedness feature that is salient in the Psychoticism scale of the PEN model.

21.3.4. The PEN model

One of the personality models that did not adhere to the lexical approach on personality, but rather focused on the neurobiological foundations of how people habitually think, feel, and act is the PEN model, which was devised by Hans Eysenck. PEN refers to the

three main personality factors of **P**sychoticism, **E**xtraversion and **N**euroticism. Eysenck (1967) aimed to go beyond mere description of personality to provide actual explanations of underlying biological processes. For example, he proposed the arousal hypothesis (later arousability to reflect differences in reactivity rather than in baseline arousal level) to explain why introverts react more quickly and more strongly to stimulation (Eysenck, 1967; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). This was down to higher levels of activity in a region of the brain called the **Ascending Reticular Activating System (ARAS)**, which controls cortical arousal. Conversely, extraverts are constantly seeking stimulation as their levels of arousal in the ARAS are low. Higher levels of neuroticism are linked to a hypersensitivity in the **autonomic nervous system (ANS)** that explains the tendency to react more intensely to stressful or threatening situations (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985).

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Ascending Reticular Activating System (ARAS) A structure in the brainstem that acts as a gate to arousal and is connected to the thalamus, hypothalamus and cortex. The ARAS controls overall cortical arousal and regulates wakefulness, alertness and response to sensory input.

Autonomic nervous system A network of nerve fibres connecting the brain and spinal cord to the body. It regulates the major involuntary functions such as heart rate, digestion, and respiration, and can prepare the body for action or rest.

[End box]

According to Eysenck's continuity hypothesis, psychopathological disorders represent extreme ends of normal personality. For example, neurosis was placed at the extreme end of the neuroticism dimension. Eysenck further refined his model through his knowledge of psychopathology – the emergence that neurosis and psychosis are qualitatively different phenomena. In the mid-1970's, Hans Eysenck, in collaboration with his wife, Sybil, added the third factor in the model - **psychoticism** (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976). People who score highly on psychoticism are inclined to be non-conformists, impulsive, risk takers, tough-minded, impersonal, and unable to empathise with other people. High levels of psychoticism (P) were proposed as a predisposition to criminality, psychopathy, and schizophrenia spectrum disorders (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976; Eysenck, 1992). In terms of biological underpinnings, several mechanisms have been proposed including increased levels of testosterone, dopaminergic activity, and other biological correlates (Eysenck, 1992; Gray, et al., 1994).

Research has confirmed the validity and structure of Eysenck's model and it has been widely used in a variety of clinical and other applied settings (Kline, 2000). For example, research has tested and supported the continuity hypothesis for P across the general, forensic, and clinical populations for schizophrenia (Eysenck, 1992) as well as supporting facets within that dimension that map onto deficits like those seen in psychopathy (Corr, 2010; Heym, 2009; Heym, et al., 2013). However, there have also been criticisms, especially with the psychoticism dimension, arguing that it is less well defined than extraversion and neuroticism, in terms of its proposed biological underpinnings and measurement (i.e., psychometric issues with the P scale). There was also a heavy debate as to whether P is just simply a combination of low Conscientiousness and Agreeableness from the five-factor model (e.g., Costa &

McCrae, 1992), whereas Eysenck (1992) argued that Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are only components of the super-factor as they cover fewer behavioural traits than Psychoticism. In relation to Cattell's theory, it is important to clarify that these two models describe personality at different levels of the hierarchical trait model. Whilst Cattell focused on 16 primary factors, Eysenck focused on broader second-order dimensions; when comparing them both at the higher level, the derived factors show some striking similarities (Eysenck, 1984).

21.3.5. The Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory or BIS/BAS/FFFS model

Jeffrey Gray proposed an alternative biological model of personality called Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST), which was based on animal research (Gray, 1970; 1991). The RST has gradually evolved since, leading to major revisions in 2000 and subsequent refinements (Gray & McNaughton, 2000; McNaughton & Corr, 2004, 2008). Initially it focused on two main brain systems involved in governing emotions, motivation, and behaviour in response to reinforcement, and underpinning trait dispositions. A *reward sensitive system* (the behavioural approach system; BAS) responsible for regulating appetitive motivation and a *punishment sensitive system* (the behavioural inhibition system; BIS) regulating aversive motivation. The BAS directs attention towards appetitive cues and activates behaviour to approach these. Imagine the pleasant sensation and urge to get an ice cream on a hot summer's day. BAS mediates the simple enjoyment and appetitive response to such a reward as well as goal-oriented approach motivation and drive to obtain it. The functioning of this system and was mapped onto the personality traits optimism, reward-orientation, and impulsivity, though the literature suggests a clear distinction between reward sensitivity and

impulsivity (Heym & Lawrence, 2010; Smillie, et al., 2006). Whilst the BIS was originally the punishment sensitive system proposed to respond to aversive stimuli including innate fear stimuli (e.g., snakes), this changed in the revised version of the RST (Gray & McNaughton, 2000). A third (initially less focused on) threat response system became the new *punishment sensitive system* that mediates active avoidance behaviour, that is defensive aggression towards threats, directed escape, or avoidance through inaction (the fight-flight-freeze system; FFFS). The FFFS is seen as the causal basis of fear, rage, and panic, and can be mapped onto the personality traits of fear-proneness and harm avoidance. The BIS, on the other hand, became a *conflict sensitive system* that is responsible for the detection of incompatible goals or ambiguous cues in the environment. It facilitates inhibition of ongoing behaviour to initiate monitoring, risk assessment and appraisal to resolve goal conflicts as to whether we should approach or avoid the situation. The greater the conflict, the more anxiety and worry is being generated, and so this system maps onto traits of anxiety and worry proneness. Those who have an oversensitive BIS might perceive conflicting cues more readily and be hyper-vigilant, even in situations that may not really warrant it. Suboptimal activity of this system can underpin increased risk aversion (high BIS) or risk proneness and impulsive behaviour (low BIS; Heym et al., 2008; Heym & Lawrence, 2010; Smillie, et al, 2006).

The model revisions made a clearer distinction between the brain systems mediating the emotions of fear (governed by the FFFS) and anxiety (governed by the BIS). These fine-tuned distinctions are in line with psychopharmacological evidence of dissociative effects of different drug classes (e.g., anxiolytics versus panicolytics) on the respective

brain systems, and the more contemporary distinction of fear-related clinical disorders that previously had been subsumed under one umbrella term of anxiety disorders. The theory has been particularly useful in studying individual differences of approach and avoidance behaviours (see Standen, et al, 2022), including extensions to explaining underpinning neural mechanisms related to psychopathology (e.g., pathological gambling, mania, phobias, anxiety disorders, psychopathy) and problematic behaviours (e.g., aggression) based on hyper- or hyposensitivity of these systems. For example, hypersensitivity in the FFFS and a deficient BIS makes a person vulnerable to reactive aggression, whilst hyposensitive FFFS coupled with hypersensitive BAS (drive for goal attainment) is proposed as a risk for proactive aggression (Heym & Lawrence, 2010).

Gray's contribution to the field is that he largely shaped the emergence of the neuroscience of personality (Pickering & Corr, 2008). His bottom-up approach is seen as complementary to Eysenck's top-down approach - both explaining processes of personality at different levels of analysis. Research has been conducted into how Eysenck's and Gray's dimensions could be related to each other, and has uncovered that Psychoticism was related to low BIS-Anxiety and high BAS (impulsive aspects in particular), extraversion to high BAS and low FFFS-Fear, and Neuroticism to high BIS-Anxiety and FFFS-Fear (Heym et al., 2008),.

21.4. The 'Sins' & Virtues of Personality

There are several personality models that focus more on the positive or negative aspects of personality – some may call it the dark and light sides or the 'Sins' & Virtues. Some of the facets of our personality could be seen as sinful (not necessarily in a religious sense but more in terms of how others are affected); these facets bring out the worst in us. We are less likely to connect with people in a healthy way and are more likely to see

how we can use people for our own ends. By contrast, the Virtues of personality enable us to flourish and to meet our potential, alongside connecting with people in a more loving and supportive way.

21.4.1. The Dark Triad and the Dark Tetrad

One major criticism of the five-factor model is that it focuses on positive 'bright' personality traits but does not account for socially aversive traits - the 'darker' side of personality. Researchers have also investigated darker personality traits, such as the Dark Triad, which is a cluster of three aversive personality traits: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy. People who score high on **Narcissism** are dominant, feel superior to others, and have heightened feelings of entitlement (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). People who score high on **Machiavellianism** are emotionally detached, cynical, and suspicious of others (Christie & Geis, 1970). People who score high on **Psychopathy** are impulsive, thrill-seeking, and low on empathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Studies of twins have shown that Psychopathy and Narcissism have a larger genetic component than Machiavellianism, which is shaped more by the environment (Vernon, et al., 2008). The Dark Triad traits may evolve as an adaptive strategy in response to experiencing a harsh childhood environment such as insecure attachment and poor maternal care (Jonason, et al., 2014). Cross-cultural research has demonstrated that men tend to score higher than women on the Dark Triad traits, with gender differences being larger in European countries (Aluja et al., 2022).

Although there are different questionnaires available to measure these traits, Machiavellianism is often measured with a questionnaire called the MACH IV (Christie

& Geis, 1970), Narcissism is frequently assessed with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) and Psychopathy is commonly measured with the Self-Reported Psychopathy scale (SRP; Paulhus, et al., 2016). Additionally, researchers also measure all three Dark Triad personality traits using one self-report questionnaire. These 'all-in-one' questionnaires are called The Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010) and the Short Dark Triad (Jones & Paulhus, 2014).

There is debate in the field regarding how much the three traits overlap and what underpins their joint "dark core" (e.g., Heym et al., 2019). Research has shown that the three traits do positively correlate with each other. On average, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy correlate at a level of 0.58, Narcissism and Psychopathy correlate at 0.38 and Narcissism and Machiavellianism correlate at 0.34 (Muris, et al., 2017). Although the correlations reveal some similarity, they also show the traits do not entirely overlap and are somewhat unique and different psychologically.

One way that researchers have tried to address the potential similarity of the Dark Triad traits is through mapping the traits onto other personality models, including the five-factor model. If different individual relationships are found with Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy and other established personality traits then this would suggest the Dark Triad traits are separate personality constructs. A meta-analysis (Muris et al., 2017) demonstrated that Narcissism is positively associated with extraversion (outgoing, talkative, and energetic), whilst Machiavellianism showed the opposite relationship being negatively associated with Extraversion (less outgoing, less sociable, less talkative). Conversely, individuals higher on Psychopathy show low levels of Conscientiousness (impulsive, lack self-discipline, and commitment). However, all

three Dark Triad personality traits score low on agreeableness. Thus, individuals who are higher on Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy are less kind, affectionate, less trusting and are more concerned with their own wellbeing and their own goals (Muris, et al, 2017). This suggests Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy share disagreeableness (scoring low on agreeableness) as a common "dark core", but the three traits are still distinct personality constructs. Researchers have taken the 'common-core' debate further and investigated whether the Dark Triad traits are related to honesty-humility, from the HEXACO model. One study found that all the Dark Triad traits almost fully overlapped with low levels of honesty-humility. This suggested that the dark core of personality traits are essentially the same as scoring low on honesty-humility (Hodson, et al., 2018). Cross-cultural research corroborated these results in a study with 10,298 participants from 18 cultures (Aluja et al., 2022).

Furthermore, researchers have extended the Dark Triad to also include the personality trait of Sadism. **Sadism** is characterised by experiencing pleasure in relation to inflicting pain (physical or emotional) on another person. This cluster of four personality traits is referred to as the Dark Tetrad. Similar to Psychopathy, Sadism is also negatively related to conscientiousness and, like all the three Dark Triad traits, is negatively related to agreeableness and honesty-humility from the HEXACO model (Međedović, & Petrović, 2015). This again raises issues of where Sadism fits within the personality space. Research is continuing to investigate whether the Dark Triad traits (and Dark Tetrad) are different constructs but have disagreeableness as a common core or whether the traits are essentially just low levels of honesty-humility. This issue of the location of the Dark Triad (and Dark Tetrad) within general models of personality is

still being investigated with research starting to focus more on cross-cultural studies

(Aluja et al., 2022; Jonason et al., 2020).

[Start box]

When does personality become disordered?

Although personality traits are an enduring pattern on inner experiences and behaviour, they are flexible and allow us to learn and adapt to new environments. When this flexibility is compromised and experiences deviate markedly from normative expectations, traits can become maladaptive and can cause functional impairment and significant distress. This can manifest in cognition, affect, interpersonal functioning and impulse control. There has been a shift towards understanding personality disorders (PDs) as more multidimensional. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association, 2013) accounts for this in Section III (Emerging Measures and Models), which includes a hybrid categorical/dimensional model of PD classification. The Personality Inventory for the DSM–5 (PID–5; Kruger et al., 2012a; and see Table 19.2) measures maladaptive traits along five higher-order personality trait domains comprised 25 subordinate trait facets (Bach, et al., 2018; Krueger, et al., 2012b). Accordingly, PDs are characterised by configurations of specific maladaptive traits in those domains. For example, schizotypal PD comprises six primary traits of the psychoticism (cognitive and perceptual dysregulation, unusual beliefs and experiences, eccentricity), detachment (withdrawal and suspiciousness) and negative affectivity (restricted affectivity) domains, whereas antisocial PD (ASPD) is characterised by seven primary traits from the disinhibition (risk taking, impulsivity, irresponsibility) and antagonism (manipulativeness, callousness, deceitfulness,

hostility) domains. ASPD can be further specified to include psychopathy with low anxiety and withdrawal, and high attention seeking to reflect social potency and stress immunity.

Table 19.2 The Personality Inventory for the DSM–5 (PID–5)

Disinhibition	Antagonism	Negative Affect	Detachment	Psychoticism
Distractibility	Attention seeking	Anxiousness	Anhedonia	Eccentricity
Impulsivity	Callousness	Emotional Liability	Depressivity	Cognitive & Perceptual Dysregulation
Irresponsibility	Deceitfulness	Hostility	Intimacy Avoidance	Unusual Beliefs & Experiences
(lack of) Rigid Perfectionism[R]	Grandiosity	Perseveration	Suspiciousness	
Risk Taking	Manipulativeness	(lack of) Restricted Affectivity [R]	Withdrawal	
		Separation Insecurity		
		Submissiveness		

[End box]

Key: R = reverse scoring.

21.4.2. The Virtues

As a contrast to identifying potential dark sides and pathologies in people's personalities, the field of Positive Psychology was aimed at uncovering, celebrating, and systematically measuring the character traits associated with higher levels of well-being and flourishing. Martin Seligman collaborated with Christopher Peterson to develop a typology of virtues existing across time and among virtually every culture and country. They flippantly called this typology the 'un-DSM' (Peterson, 2006) as it was an attempt to classify the opposite of pathology, but rather to explore the experiences that made life worth living and full of purpose. The six common virtues that they developed were labelled as: (1) Wisdom and Knowledge, (2) Courage, (3) Humanity, (4) Justice, (5) Temperance, and (6) Spirituality and Transcendence. Underpinning these virtues were 24 character strengths that enabled people to realise these virtues in their everyday lives.

Table 19.3 Peterson and Seligman's (2004) 24 Character Strengths in relation to the six Virtues

Wisdom & Knowledge	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence
Creativity	Bravery	Love	Citizenship	Forgiveness and mercy	Appreciation of beauty & excellence
Curiosity	Persistence	Kindness	Fairness	Humility and modesty	Gratitude

Open-mindedness	Integrity	Social intelligence	Leadership	Prudence	Hope
Love of learning	Vitality			Self-regulation	Humour
Perspective					Spirituality

Seligman and Peterson argued that a character needed to meet several criteria before it can be called a 'strength' (Seligman, 2002). Firstly, it needed to be trait-like by being consistently displayed across a range of situations and at different times. Secondly, it needed to be valued by a range of people, regardless of whether positive or negative results might arise if the strength is being displayed. For example, some strengths could lead to promotion at work or good grades, but this need not always be the case (e.g., feeling a sense of appreciation of beauty and excellence is not necessarily going to lead to a positive evaluation by one's manager at work, but it can often make life feel more enjoyable for the person exercising this strength). Thirdly, the displaying of a character strength is likely to make those witnessing the strength feel inspired. For example, a person who displayed the character strength of persistence and succeeds in achieving a goal, even in the face of intense obstacles, is probably going to be a role model for onlookers who may want to follow in the footsteps of such a person. A compelling example of such a role model can be seen in the film, 'The Pursuit of Happyness' (Smith, et al. 2006) in which the main character struggles to cope with poverty, homelessness, rearing his son, and aiming to be recruited onto a competitive unpaid internship programme.

[Start box]

TRY THIS OUT

Traits of a role model?

Role Models are people whom other people may admire, find inspirational, or try to emulate in some way. They can be forces for good in others, but some have a more negative effect, and are often called "bad influences" by people other than the person who is influenced by these role models.

Now that we have covered the main trait models, try to recall someone (i.e., a teacher, friend, relative or someone in the public eye) who has influenced you in a positive way. List that person's key personality characteristics. Which ones resonate with you? Why do you think that is?

[End box]

To measure these character strengths, the Values in Action (VIA) inventory of strengths (Peterson, et al., 2005) was developed, which is a 240-item self-report questionnaire with 10 items linked to each of the 24-character strengths. The VIA has been validated in a wide range of settings and countries and has been translated into Italian (Feraco, et al., 2022), Urdu (Anjum & Amjad, 2020), and Russian (Stavtsev, et al., 2021). Character strengths have been found, in one international study of almost 60,000 people from 159 countries, to be extremely powerful in connecting individuals to a greater sense of purpose and a range of health-related outcomes (Weziak-Bialowolska, et al. 2023).

21.5. How Emotional Intelligence can be seen as a personality trait

Emotional Intelligence has become more commonly conceptualized as a constellation of personality trait-like dispositions, rather than a form of mental abilities (Petrides, et al., 2007; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) has been measured with self-report scales; two are particularly widespread, namely the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue; Petrides, 2001; Petrides & Furnham, 2003) and Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002).

Petrides et al. (2007) found evidence supporting the correlated nature of TEI with facets of the PEN model and the Five Factor Model, particularly Neuroticism and Extraversion, concluding that TEI "is distinct (because it can be isolated in personality space)" and "compound (because it is partially determined by several personality dimensions)" (p. 283). They also found evidence to show that TEI could be associated with life satisfaction, rumination, adaptive, and maladaptive coping.

Applications of TEI theory are wide-ranging. High TEI scores were found to be positively associated with children's prosocial behavior and negatively with antisocial behavior (Petrides, et al, 2006). In adults, links were found between TEI, internal working models of attachment (Iliceto, et al., 2020) and positive interpersonal relationships (Schutte, et al., 2001). A meta-analysis by Jardine et al. (2022) found significant correlations between TEI and intimate relationship satisfaction, although these were moderated by differences in the measurement of EI. On the other hand, research has found inconsistent evidence as to whether TEI predicts academic success

(Parker, et al., 2004), with TEI effects varying across educational levels and subjects. TEI was also found to positively correlate with self-rated physical health (Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2005), whereas negative correlations were found with depressive thoughts and somatic complaints (Mavroveli, et al., 2007). A meta-analysis by Zhang and colleagues (2022) found a negative association between TEI and eating disorders, although the effect of this association was relatively small. Interestingly, in this same meta-analysis, the theoretical model (i.e., measuring trait EI vs. ability EI) was one that determined the variation in results, with TEI being more connected with disordered eating than ability measures of EI.

Although these applications highlight the potential role of TEI in a range of life outcomes, there is no consensus around how TEI can be conceptualised and what it can predict. This debate centres around the relatively low size of the effects observed across a large number of studies and domains, which has been attributed in part to the difficulty in evaluating such effects due to the wide variety of assessment tools used to measure TEI. It has even been argued (Ashton, 2017) that established personality taxonomies should be used, in preference to this new concept of TEI, until there is a more consistent way of conceptualizing and assessing TEI and its impacts on predicting a variety of behaviours and outcomes.

21.6. The situationalist critique of trait psychology

Traits can offer us a useful vocabulary for comparing between individuals to understanding and measure individual differences. This vocabulary can be particularly promising as it helps us to understand that someone with high levels of Extraversion is

likely to have similar tendencies and is likely to resemble others who are equally extraverted. The issue arises when we start to look at variations *within* a person's everyday personality expression rather than when comparing *between* individuals. There are several problematic issues that trait approaches cannot seem to address adequately, particularly in helping us to comprehend why we might respond in ways that are uncharacteristic to our normal ways of being. Certainly, there might be situations that force us to act in particular ways (e.g., displaying anxious behaviour prior to an exam) but sometimes we might want to act differently through purely arbitrary motives. The nomothetic perspective and the language of traits, according to some theorists, are fundamentally flawed as it cannot tell us about what is happening when "a person…is affable with peers, deferent to superiors, and nasty to individuals of lower rank" (Block, 1995, p. 196).

Some psychologists, like Mischel (1968), have been called situationalists in their approach to personality and behaviour because they have argued that often the power of a situation may reign supreme and make us feel like we must behave in a certain way. Although Mischel's work is now several decades old, it was seminal and controversial and led some psychologists to question whether personality even exists (Roberts, 2009). However, Mischel upholds the view that this was not what he meant (Mischel, 2009); rather, his criticism was about how too much was being read into personality test scores (Burger, 2015). Mischel conducted a meta-analysis of many studies to see how strongly personality traits were correlated with specific behaviours. He found that, on average, correlations between traits and a given behaviour over time were rarely higher than 0.30. This correlation coefficient was termed by Mischel as being a **personality coefficient** and was used as a method for examining the extent to which personality can

explain how variable people's behaviours could be by a certain percentage; this was

calculated as being about 10 per cent as the variance in behaviour was obtained by

multiplying the correlation coefficient by itself (0.30 x 0.30 = 0.09) and then

multiplying that result by 100 to get a percentage. As this approximated to just under

10 per cent, Mischel saw personality as accounting for a small percentage of

behavioural variation and argued that 90 per cent of behavioural responses could be

explained by other, more powerful influences. Overall, Mischel argued persuasively that

personality traits cannot offer a complete explanation of how and why people act in

each situation, especially as the demands of a situation might also be highly influential.

21.6.1. Responding to the situationalist critique

Some psychologists (e.g., Buss: 1989) have refuted Mischel's criticisms of how crucial

personality is in determining how people will act. The first of these rebuttals was that

Mischel's original analysis was based on an incomplete review of existing personality

literature. Additionally, Mischel was criticised for selectively including studies, some

with major methodological flaws that mostly reported unimpressive results at the

expense of studies that reported more impressive findings, and were conducted more

robustly (Funder, 2010). Furthermore, at the time of Mischel's criticism, psychologists

were measuring behaviour with what amounted to one-item only tests (Burger, 2015).

Arguably, tests today are more robust, with multi-item instruments to assess behaviour

more reliably. A second important criticism lies with the 'magical' 0.30 correlation

coefficient that Mischel used to support his assertion that personality traits have little

influence in determining behaviour. Some authors, such as Funder and Ozer (1983),

have suggested that a correlation of 0.30 is not as small as some believe it to be and can

explain quite a lot of variability in people's behaviour. The counterargument here is that this figure was derived from studies conducted within laboratory settings with little ecological validity to real-life behaviours. It may be that traits are generally poor behavioural predictors in laboratory situations, but they may be more stable at predicting behaviours that occur in the diverse range of naturally occurring situations (McAdams & Pals, 2006). In fact, Allport (1961) suggested that the influence of personality is likely to be greater in real-life situations that are personally important and meaningful. A further implication of this criticism is that with advances in research methods and better designed studies, statistically better outcomes should follow.

Overall, most personality researchers have reached a consensus that a person's behaviour is generally the product of both situational and personality factors. In specific scenarios, the role of situational factors is likely to compel certain behaviours, particularly in a situation that is public, formal, and novel (Buss, 1989). Traits, on the other hand, are better explanations for patterns of behaviours occurring across situations (Fleeson, 2001), particularly those that are relaxed and private. Some researchers have suggested that personality traits can be developed and shaped through the aggregation of short-term goals, which are driven by meaningful situational factors such as social roles (Heller, et al., 2009).

The contemporary perspective psychology has on this debate is termed **interactionism**, which adopts the viewpoint that there is a reciprocal influence between personality, situations, and environments. Situations and surroundings may play an important role in determining our goals and personalities, yet in many circumstances we take a dynamic role in shaping an environment to reflect our personalities (Buss, 1977).

21.7. An example of applying of personality theory and research to the real world: Can your personality make you ill?

Understanding personality psychology can give us useful insight into the detrimental influence our personalities have regarding our health, particularly when it comes to how susceptible we are to becoming ill. Two main perspectives have been developed to explain the potential influence of personality on a person's health: 1) the **specificity approach** and 2) the **generality approach** (Ferguson, 2013). The specificity approach stipulates that our personalities have direct causal effects on our health and our proneness to disease and illnesses, for example, hypertension, ulcerative colitis, and rheumatoid arthritis (Alexander, 1950/2007). By contrast the generality approach assumes that personality has an indirect effect by influencing how we feel and behave, which in turn will have an impact on our health (Ranchor & Sanderman, 1991).

For example, the concept of **self-efficacy** can potentially govern behaviours related to dieting and weight control. Research has found that people with a high sense of self-efficacy, coupled with an internal **locus of control**, were more responsive to behavioural management for successful weight control than those with low self-efficacy (Chambliss & Murray, 1979).

[Start box]

Self-efficacy Belief in one's own ability to plan and carry out a set of intended actions in order to accomplish tasks and reach one's goals.

Locus of Control A concept used to explain a person's basic motivational orientations with reference to the degree of perceived control they have over daily activities and life

in general. Those who have an internal locus of control believe they can control their lives, those who have an external locus of control believe what happens to them is down to forces beyond their control, e.g., fate or luck.

[End box]

Furthermore, the relationship between self-efficacy and addictive behaviour has been studied intensively. The successful quitting of cigarette smoking, for instance, is more likely if the person trying to give up has an optimistic self-belief level (Baer & Lichtenstein, 1988; Carmody, 1992). These beliefs and motivations can be encouraged in various smoking cessation courses and, following successful completion of the programme, can be powerful factors in long-term resistance to smoking temptations (Kavanagh, et al., 1993), with those displaying the greatest levels of self-efficacy also being the most steadfast quitters (Kok, et al., 1991).

[Start box]

Is there such thing as an 'Addictive Personality'?

We could use the specificity approach for understanding personality types or traits as being direct causes of health and illness and try to connect it to being addicted to all kinds of behaviours, including alcohol, drugs, sex, or even one's smartphone. However, there is a large body of evidence (Griffiths, 2017) to show that the idea of the Addictive Personality is a myth – there is no one personality trait or type that can be used to predict whether someone will become addicted to a behaviour or substance. However, despite this fact, there is widespread agreement that personality does have a role in

making someone vulnerable to addictions by indirectly influencing people's

perceptions, habits, and need for seeking out pleasures to cope with difficult times.

People with high levels of Neuroticism or low levels of Agreeableness and

Conscientiousness have been found to be more at risk of alcohol misuse (Malouff, et al.,

2007). With technological addictions, high Neuroticism levels were linked with

Internet addiction; likewise, high degrees of Extraversion were related to Facebook

addiction and mobile phone addiction. By contrast, having high levels of Openness to

Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness predicted a lower likelihood of being

addicted to using the Internet, mobile phones, or Facebook (Andreassen, et al., 2013).

[End box]

21.7.1. Type A and B personalities

Type A personality has been associated with proneness to stress and coronary heart

disease (CHD). CHD covers a wide range of heart problems, including angina and

myocardial infarction (MI). In the mid-1970s, cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray

Rosenman found in a longitudinal study that some behaviours were associated with an

increased risk of getting CHD (Rosenman & Friedman, 1977). They termed these

behaviours the **Type A behaviour pattern**, or what is often called a **Type A**

personality.

[Start box]

Table 21.3 Common Type A Behaviours

- Highly competitive

- Very self-critical

- 'Hurry sickness'

    - Always seem to be 'up against the clock'

    - Restless, agitated, fast talking, always interrupting others

    - Impatient, easily wound up, quick to anger or become hostile with others

    - Often concurrently active (e.g., eating while working at the computer)

- Tendency to overreact

- Very goal directed but unable to enjoy their achievements

- Significant life/work imbalance with emphasis on the latter

[End box]

Other research has supported the notion of a Type A personality, for example, Haynes and Feinleib (1980) conducted a study that investigated how being a Type A, employment status, and employment-related behaviours were related to incidence of CHD in the Framingham Heart Study and found similar results to Rosenman and Friedman. However, a review of literature by Rozanski et al. (1999) found several studies reporting no correlation between Type A behaviour and the risk of coronary artery disease (CAD).

The Type B personality is the opposite of Type A and characterizes someone who has a relatively low stress lifestyle and who typically works at a steady pace. Type B's find pleasure in their achievements but do not get stressed by lack of achievement; they enjoy competition but are not upset if they don't win. Rosenman and Friedman found

that Type B personalities were less prone to feel stress or have CHD when compared with Type As.

21.7.2. Critique of the Type A/B personality theory

Although Friedman and Rosenman (1974) emphasised that the Type A behaviour pattern is not a fixed quality of a person's character, it has since become popularised as such (Pickering, 2009; Powell & Thoreson, 1987). Questionnaires that claim to measure Type A personality do have good internal reliability scores. However, there remains a lack of cross-cultural research that limits the reliability and cross-cultural applicability of this theory. There are still questions to be answered regarding the relative contribution that the various Type A personality characteristics make to CHD-proneness. For example, some research findings suggest Type A characteristics like cynicism and hostility may contribute more to CHD than others (Tindle, et al., 2009), with the hostility characteristic being a main risk factor (Williams, 2001). Most of the research on Type A personality is correlational, which does not imply a causal relationship. The correlations themselves are statistically significant but small, which could also mean a reduced behavioural importance. Since Rosenman and Friedman's research was published, research has been carried out which suggests that there are other personality types that are also linked to illness and disease. These are Type C personality, which has been linked with cancer, and the Type D or 'distressed' personality.

21.7.3. Type C personality and cancer

Cancer is one of the major causes of death in developed countries globally. In 1990, Hans Eysenck described the 'cancer-prone personality' (Eysenck, 1990). These were people who, when faced with stressful situations, responded with a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and tended to repress their emotional reactions. This can lead to unresolved emotional unrest (John & Gross, 2004) and subsequently can make this type of person more vulnerable to depression (Schlatter & Cameron, 2010). This was not an entirely novel finding as Kissen (1966) had reported finding a link between personality factors and cancer in a study conducted with smokers who had lung cancer and exhibited repressed emotions. In 1984, Temoshok and Fox published a paper in which they outlined the Type C or 'cancer prone' personality (also called Type or Pattern C behaviour; Rymarczyk et al., 2020). Type C personality is linked with neuroticism and introversion and characterised as passive, conforming, compliant, appeasing, helpless, and reacting to stress with depression and hopelessness. Conversely, some studies suggest that certain personality characteristics can improve chances of surviving cancer. Classen, et al. (1996) found that patients who demonstrate a 'fighting spirit' tended to fare better than those patients who demonstrated the Type C characteristics of passive acceptance. However, Hansen, et al. (2005) have been critical of many of the studies done on Type C personality and its proposed link to cancer, citing major flaws in the design of studies that support such a link (e.g., observation bias, interviewer bias, use of small samples, and failure to control for confounding or intermediate factors). When Hansen and colleagues conducted a large-scale prospective study of 29,595 individuals, they found no significant associations between Neuroticism

and Extroversion for any given cancer site. Thus, the link remains tenuous and somewhat controversial.

21.7.4. Type D personality: A 'distressed' personality

The Type D personality is a medical psychology concept developed by Johan Denollet. The concept emerged from a lack of consistency of Type A correlating with illness and was based on clinical observations, empirically gathered evidence, and personality theories existing at that time (Denollet, et al., 1996). The Type D personality is characterised by a combination of negative affectivity (e.g., feeling gloomy, anxious, irritable) across both time and different situations, and social inhibition (e.g., feeling reticent and fear of rejection) (Lodder, 2020). Research has shown that Type D personality has been linked to CHD. Denollet and Brutsaert (1998) found that patients who have Type D personalities had a poorer chance of recovery following a MI than those patients who did not have Type D. Furthermore, people exhibiting Type D personality characteristics were four times more likely to have another MI or fatal heart attack (Denollet, et al., 2000), although more contemporary studies have failed to replicate these findings (Meyer, et al., 2014). This has led some researchers to view the earlier research on Type D as unintentionally producing false or misleading conclusions (Coyne & de Voogd, 2012; Lodder, 2020); also, see Grande, and colleagues (2012) for a meta-analysis into this area. In summary, it seems that personality can play a significant role in affecting a person's risk of becoming ill or in protecting an individual from poor health.

21.8. Chapter summary

We have introduced you to some of the leading theories in the field of personality research and have given you insights into how these theories can be applied in real-world situations. We have examined the personality trait approach and covered trait models that included 16, 5, 6 and 3 factors. These models have either had underpinnings in the language that people use to describe personality or with the neurobiological processes that 'hard-wire' people into reacting to situations in a habitual way. This chapter also discussed the negative and positive sides to people's personalities and even put forward the idea that Emotional Intelligence can be personality trait-like too. We then noted how the trait approach could perhaps be too general and lack power to discriminate how people behave over a diversity of situations and contexts. An alternative explanation for this trend is one that argues human beings are inconsistent in their behaviour and that situations appear to be better predictors of behaviour. Counterarguments to this claim have led contemporary personality psychologists to adopt an interactionist approach in which behaviour can be explained by a combination of situational and personality factors. Finally, we set out the ways in which psychologists have applied personality theories and research to a real-world setting, such as the field of health and illness.

Discussion questions

From the discussions in this chapter, it seems clear that both personality and situational factors have an important influence on we behave. Now you are aware of this, think about how you would answer the following questions about personality:

- How many personality traits do we have? Are three too few and sixteen too many? What does the empirical evidence mainly support?

- How can the Dark Triad of personality explain proneness to mental disorder in ways that other trait models (e.g., the Five Factor model, the HEXACO model) cannot?

- Think about situations that make it hard for people's personalities to shine through. Are there some people whose personality characteristics will still be highly present, even in the face of highly powerful and formal situations?

- Should health professionals screen their patients for certain personality traits that could pose a risk factor for ill-health?

Suggestions for further reading

If you are interested in reading further in relation to some of the leading theories and theorists in the field of personality psychology, here are several very good introductory texts that we would recommend:

Corr, P.J., & Matthews, G. (2020). *The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Larsen, R., Buss, D., Wismeijer, A., Song, J., & van den Berg, S. (2020). *Personality Psychology: Domains of Knowledge about Human Nature* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

[Start box]

KEY RESEARCHER Veena Kumari

[insert image of Veena Kumari here]

Veena Kumari is Professor of Psychology and the Director of the Centre for Cognitive and Clinical Neuroscience (CCN) at Brunel University London. A prolific author of over 300 publications, Professor Kumari has enjoyed great success as an academic and has won national and international honours, including the prestigious Humboldt Award in 2014 in recognition of a lifetime of research achievements. Following on from the theories of Eysenck and Gray, Veena's work has a strong emphasis on the biological basis of personality using neuroimaging to explore individual differences in brain functioning and how these relate to specific psychopathologies. Much of her work has taken a multi-method approach, combining neurological measurements of brain activity alongside assessments of personality by means of standardised questionnaires.

One of the areas in which Veena is internationally renowned is in the field of startle response. In both animals and humans, the startle response is a natural, involuntary defence mechanism that protects the organism from sudden and potentially menacing stimuli (e.g., a flashing light, or unexpected noises or movements). Clinically, disturbances to the startle response can be indicative of neurological problems. Much of Veena's work has focused on prepulse inhibition (PPI) in schizophrenia-spectrum conditions. PPI is a neurological phenomenon whereby the introduction of a weak pre-stimulus (prepulse) decreases the reaction of the person to a more intense startling stimulus (pulse) afterwards (Kumari, et al., 2007). Veena's research has consistently found that sex differences exist in the PPI phenomenon, with women showing less PPI than men (Aasen, Kolli, & Kumari, 2005; Kumari, et al., 2003a, 2004) and that PPI in women is sensitive to menstrual cycle related hormonal fluctuations (Kumari et al. 2008, 2010) and the use of hormonal contraceptives (Naysmith, Williams, & Kumari, 2022). One of her most significant findings was that the early onset of schizophrenia in

males was associated with reduced PPI. This was the first study of its kind to show that age of illness onset may be a moderating factor in disruption of PPI in schizophrenia, which has implications for how patients may respond to specific treatments (Kumari, et al., 2000). Her later research investigated the structural neural correlates of PPI and found that important associations between PPI and several localised brain regions, such as, the hippocampus and parahippocampal gyrus (Kumari, et al., 2003b, 2005), one of the first studies to do so. More recently, Veena and colleagues have begun to investigate the effect of mindfulness on the acoustic startle reflex. Their findings suggest similar startle habituation patterns in those with moderate mindfulness meditation practice intensity (Antonova et al., 2015) and those who are naturally mindful (Kumari et al., 2023). The findings are important when planning for effective treatments with those who are experiencing symptoms of schizophrenia and developing objective measures for evaluating the effect of cultivated (through training) or naturally occurring mindfulness.

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KEY STUDY "Can Psychopaths have empathy?" A seminal study into understanding the novel construct of the 'Dark Empath'

Do you think all psychopaths or narcissists lack empathy? Indeed, people with dark personality traits have been traditionally linked to reduced empathy – particularly emotion-based components of empathy – that is the capacity to know or feel what someone else feels (Heym, et al. 2019). This lack of empathy was thought to underpin psychopaths' or narcissists' tendency towards antagonistic and aggressive behaviour.

However, this long-standing notion has been challenged. In 2021, a large-scale study by Heym and colleagues discovered a novel construct, namely the "Dark Empath" – that is a group of people who score high on both the dark traits (psychopathy, Machiavellianism and narcissism) and empathy! Heym and colleagues used a technique called *latent profile analysis* (see Williams & Kibowski, 2016) to distinguish groups of people who answered similarly across measures on the dark traits and empathy. Across almost 1000 individuals, the researchers identified four distinct profiles: (1) a traditional group of people scoring high dark traits and low empathy (13% of the sample), (2) a typical group of low dark traits and average empathy (34.4% of the sample); (3) a group scoring low on dark traits and very high in empathy called the Empaths (33.3% of the sample); and (4) the surprising, novel profile of individuals who have high dark traits and elevated levels of empathy – the "Dark Empaths" (19.3% of the sample). The resultant profiles were then used in further analyses to examine how they differ across relevant outcome measures such as general personality traits, aggression, other dark trait measures and wellbeing. These analyses showed that the Dark Empaths differed from the traditional Dark Traits group in many ways. For example, the Dark Empaths were more extraverted, open, agreeable, and less aggressive that the Traditional Dark Traits group; however, despite their raised levels of empathy, they were still more antagonistic (i.e., less agreeable, more aggressive) than the Typicals and the Empaths. Thus, whilst empathy protects them somewhat from antagonism, it does not do so completely! Online media has picked-up on the notion of the Dark Empath leading to a highly popular YouTube video entitled '5 Signs of a Dark Empath - The Most Dangerous Personality Type' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tl20Ke2Y58g&t=1s), earning the Dark Empath a reputation as the most dangerous of personality types. However, as

the authors point out, the Dark Empath's aggression was not as high as in the Dark Traits group, who may well be much more dangerous. Nevertheless, the danger of this personality profile is that their empathy, and likely resulting social skills, make their darkness harder to spot – a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing problem. Thus, Dark Empaths still have the capacity to be callous and ruthless, but they may also be able to disguise their aggressive tendencies (see also Heym and Sumich, 2022).

Clearly, this research has theory-shifting importance in terms of the role of empathy in the context of dark traits. It has set the agenda for future studies into examining and characterising this profile further. Firstly, it needs replicating across different samples and demographics to establish its generalisability – one big question is whether such a profile would also exist in forensic populations. Secondly, it needs to be assessed against a range of other outcome measures. For example, Heym et al. (2021) compared those profiled with their propensity for indirect aggression such as malicious humour, guilt induction and social exclusion. The big question is whether these differences would also extend to more direct physical forms of aggression, such as reactive and proactive aggression. Thirdly, this was a purely psychometric study – future research needs to examine cognitive and affective (e.g., empathic) processing differences using experimental paradigms as well as discovering whether there are any unique neurobiological pathways that can be linked to the "Dark Empath".

[End box]

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