

PERSONALITY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN



WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

- In certain respects, each of us is:
 - Like *all other* people
 - Like *some other* people
 - Like *no other* people
- **Personality:** the distinctive and relatively enduring ways of thinking, feeling and acting that characterise a person's responses to life situations
- Three important aspects:
 - Personality is unique
 - Personality is consistent
 - Personality is stable



Extroversion

- Outgoing, candid and accommodating nature
- Easily adapts to given situation
- Sets aside possible misgivings to often venture forth with careless confidence into an unknown situation

Introversion

- Hesitant, reflective, retiring nature
- Keeps this nature to itself
- Shrinks from objects
- Always slightly on the defensive
- Hides behind mistrustful scrutiny

JUNG

Sensing – experience of stimuli with no evaluation

Intuitive – minimum of interpretation and reasoning

Thinking – interpret stimuli using reason and logic

Feeling – evaluating desirability or worth of what is presented

Later – added two other characteristics

Judging – ‘Planners’ focus on one task, strong desire for closure.

Perceiving – Search for options, delaying tasks to get a fuller picture.

‘Sensation tells you that something exists; thinking tells you what it is; feeling tells you whether it is agreeable or not; and intuition tells you whence it comes and where it is going’

(Jung, 1968, p.49)

THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

THE MYERS BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR (MBTI)

16 Personality Types:

- ESTP
- ESFP
- ENFP
- ENTP
- ESTJ
- ESFJ
- ENFJ
- ENTJ

- ISTJ
- ISFJ
- INFJ
- INTJ
- ISTP
- ISFP
- INFP
- INTP

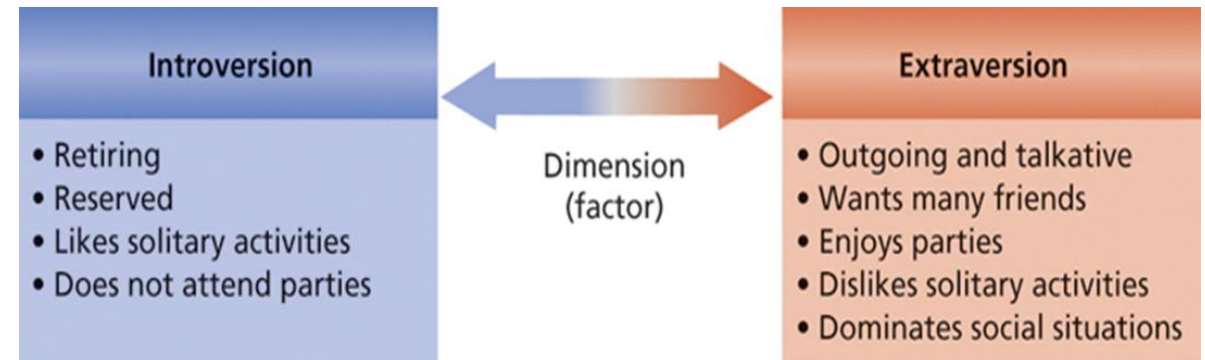
CRITIQUE OF MYERS-BRIGGS

- Not based on scientific research
- Mother and daughter based ideas on Jungian thinking
- But commonly used and accepted without consideration for validity, reliability etc.

THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

Goals of trait theories:

- Describe the basic classes of behaviour that define personality
- Devise ways of measuring individual differences in personality traits
- Use these measures to understand and predict behaviour



■ Personality traits:

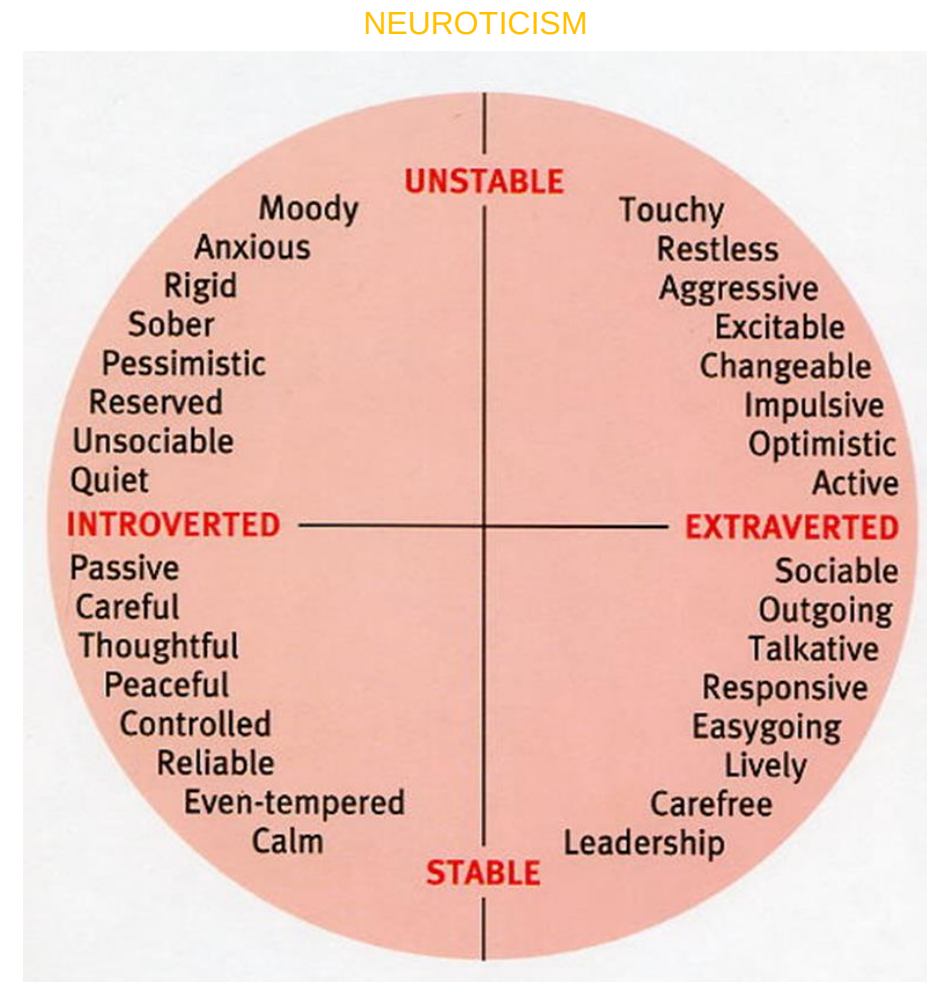
Relatively stable cognitive, emotional, and behavioural characteristics of people that help us establish their individual identities and distinguish them from others

THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

TWO-FACTOR MODEL (EYSENCK, 1965)

Super-traits

- Eysenck (1965) - two-factor model
 - two statistically independent basic dimensions
 - **Extraversion**
 - **Neuroticism**
- Later added **psychoticism**
 - aggressive, cold, egocentric, impersonal, impulsive, antisocial, unempathetic, creative and tough-minded



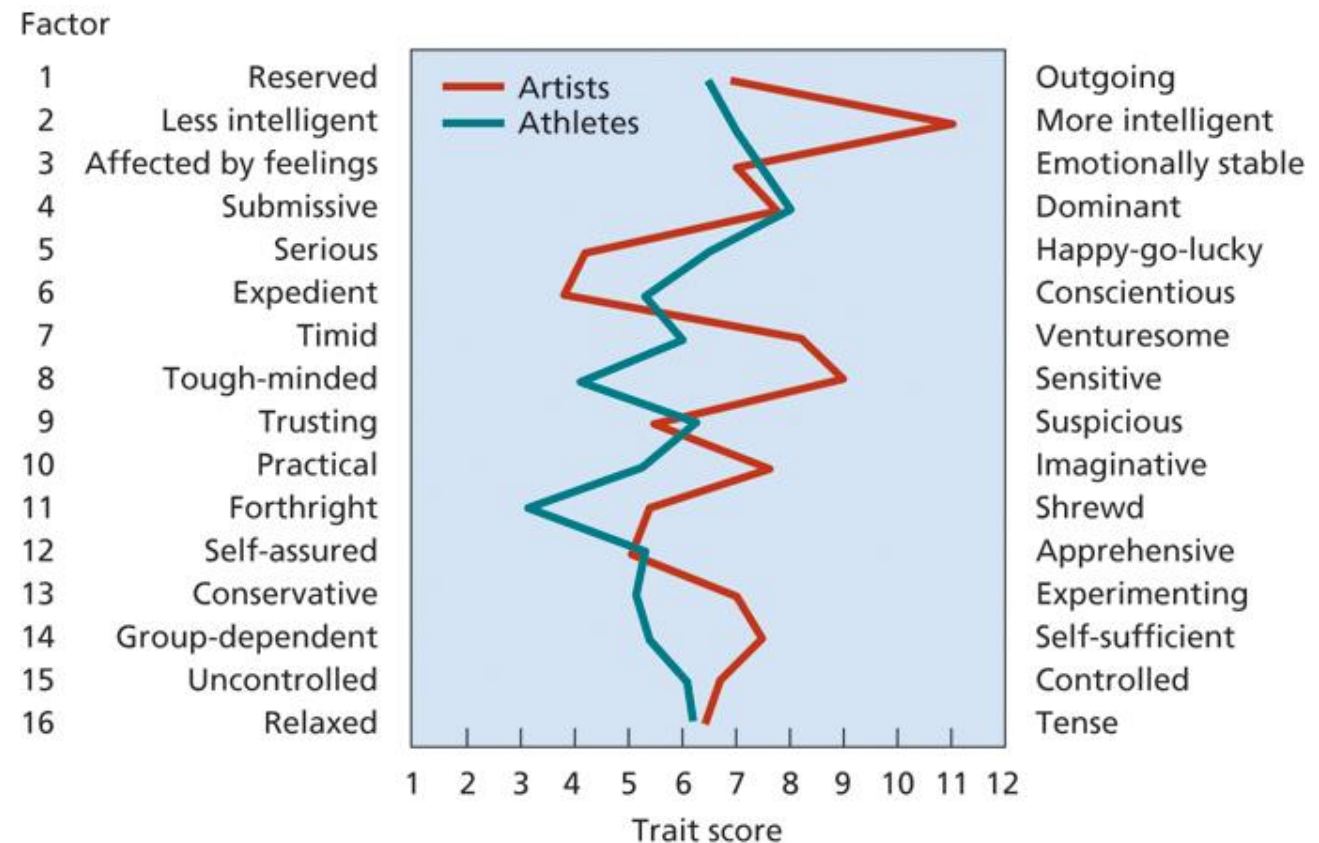
THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

16 PERSONALITY FACTORS (CATTELL, 1965)

Two basic categories of traits:

Surface traits: features that make up the visible areas of personality

Source traits: underlying characteristics of a personality



THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

THE FIVE FACTOR MODEL (COSTA AND MCCRAE, 1976)

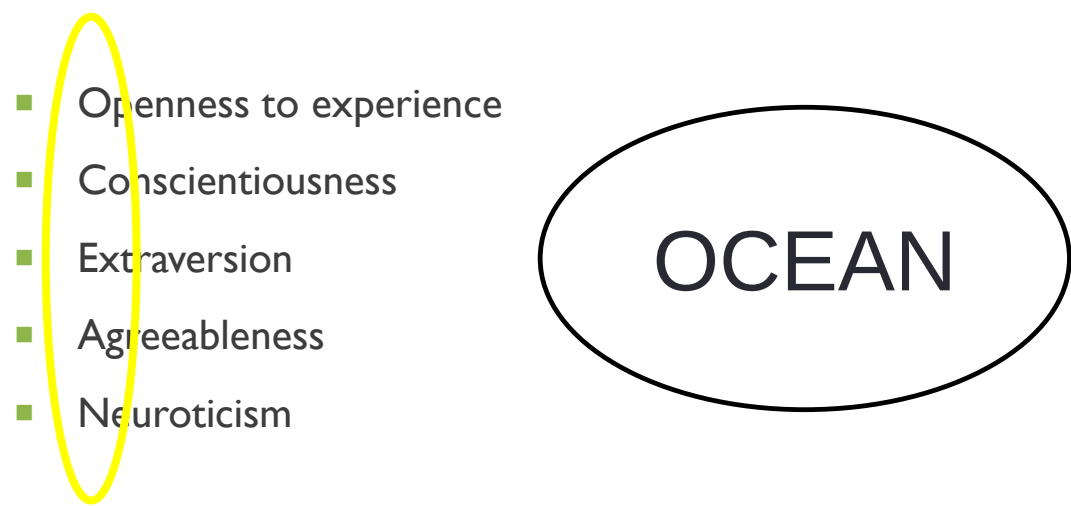
- ⦿ Argued in Cattell's 16PF concept was flawed
- ⦿ “cluster analysis” of adjectives to see if there were quantifiable aspects of behaviour that could be clustered together.
- ⦿ Also used the 16PF as part of their own factor analysis.
 - Two clear clusters found.
 - **Extroversion** – Sociable, Confidence, Optimism etc.
 - **Neuroticism** – Worry, Guilt-prone, anxiety etc.

THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

The **Five Factor Model** (McCrae & Costa, 2003)

- Proposes that five higher-order factors capture the basic structure of personality

- Openness to experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism



OCEAN

THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

Five-factor Model of Personality (McCrae and Costa, 2003) OCEAN

Might be universal to the human species (e.g. John and Srivastava, 1999; Trull and Geary, 1997)

O penness vs Closedness to experience	curious, imaginative, artistic, excitable, unconventional
C onscientiousness vs Lack of direction	efficient, organised, not careless, thorough, self-disciplined, not impulsive
E xtraversion vs Introversion	sociable, forceful, energetic, adventurous, enthusiastic, outgoing
A greeableness vs Antagonism	forgiving, not demanding, warm, not stubborn, not show-off, sympathetic
N euroticism vs Emotional stability	tense, irritable, not contented, shy, moody, not self-confident

- Six additional facets added to each of the Big Five - sharper predictions

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE.

HIGH

- Open to new experience.... Broad interests and imaginative. Practical but willing to consider new way of doing things.
- Costa and McRae (1992).

LOW

- Down to earth, practical traditional and set in your ways.
- Costa and McRae (1992).

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

HIGH

- Conscientious and well organised. High standards and strive to achieve your goals.
- Costa and McCrae (1992).

LOW

- Easy-going, not very well organised and sometimes careless. Preference in not making plans.
- Costa and McCrae (1992).

EXTRAVERSION

HIGH

- Extraverted, outgoing, active, high spirited. Preference to be around people most of the time.
- Costa and McCrae (1992)

LOW

- Introverted, reserved, serious. Preference to be around a few close friends.
- Costa and McCrae (1992).

AGREEABLENESS

HIGH

- Compassionate, good natured and eager to cooperate and avoid conflict.
- Costa and McCrae (1992)

LOW

- Hard-Headed, sceptical, proud, competitive. Tendency to express anger directly.
- Costa and McCrae (1992)



NEUROTICISM

HIGH

- Sensitive, emotional and prone to experience feelings that are upsetting.
- Costa and McCrae (1992).

LOW

- Secure, hardy and generally relaxed. Even in situations of high stress.
- Costa and McCrae (1992).

THE TRAIT PERSPECTIVE

Some personality traits tend to be more stable over the lifespan than others

- Introversion-extraversion, self-esteem, emotionality, and activity level remain relatively stable
- Neuroticism and openness tend to decline with age
- Agreeableness and conscientiousness tend to increase with age

Evaluation of the Trait Perspective

- Focuses attention on the value of identifying, classifying and measuring stable, enduring personality dispositions
- Need to focus on how traits interact with each other
- Focuses only on description, not explanation

LIFESPAN: BIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PERSONALITY

- **Temperament** - emotionality, sociability and impulsivity can be seen even in infants (Buss and Plomin, 1975)
 - Temperamental factors not personality 'traits' - biological building blocks (Buss and Plomin, 1984)
- Eysenck: Extraversion and Stability - variances due to differences in individuals' normal patterns of arousal within the brain
 - Extreme **introverts** chronically over-aroused brains
 - Extreme **extraverts** chronically under-aroused brains
- Introversion/extraversion: customary level of arousal
- Stability – Instability: suddenness of shifts in arousal
- Unstable people: nervous systems show large, sudden shifts in arousal
- Stable people: show smaller and more gradual shifts

BIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PERSONALITY

Evaluation:

- Strong evidence that brain functioning influences responses of individuals
- Bokenau et al (2006) – approx. 25% of behavioural variation can be attributed to genetic factors, which influence how we adjust our behaviour to different situations
- But – cannot separate biological from social (e.g. Phineas Gage)
- Biological functions act in combination with social situations

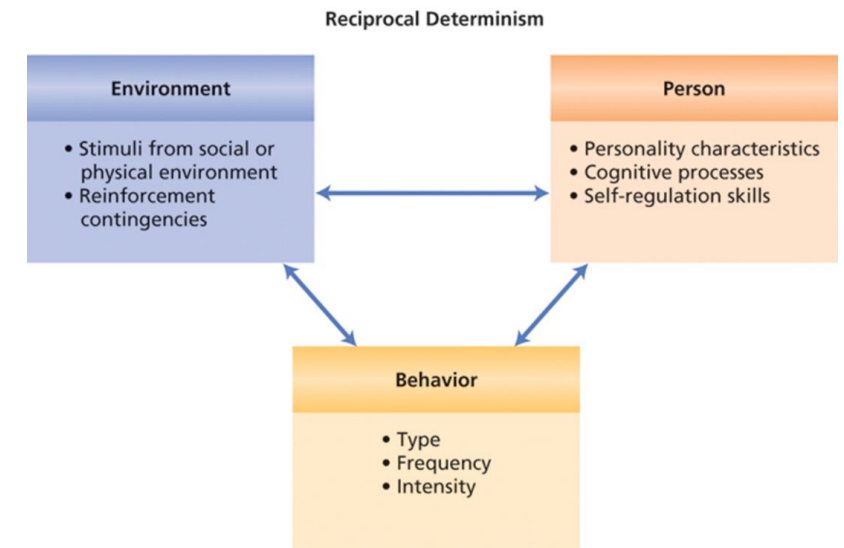


LIFESPAN CONSIDERATION: BEHAVIOURISM

- Humans as reactors to external events - no internal 'personality'
- Social-Cognitive theories:
 - Combine the behavioural and cognitive perspectives into an approach that stresses the interaction of a thinking human with a social environment that provides learning experiences

- Reciprocal determinism:

The person, the person's behaviour, and the environment all influence one another in a pattern of two-way causal links



CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

- Influence of cultural factors on family and community practices
- Western:
 - More complex than some hunter-gatherer cultures?
 - Independent compared to interdependent Eastern cultures?
- Markus and Kitayama (1998) - cultural differences between Japanese and European-American students' descriptions of themselves e.g. 96% of American students described themselves as 'special' compared to 55% of the Japanese students
- Individualistic and Collectivistic cultures e.g. Triandis and Suh (2002)

American students described themselves in terms of personal traits, abilities and dispositions - Japanese students used terms related to social identity

CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

- Cultural embeddedness and cultural individualism influences self-concept and emotional lives

Americans - more self-oriented positive emotions

Japanese - more interpersonally oriented positive emotions

(Kitayama et al, 2000)

- Personal traits predicted behaviour less in collectivist cultures (Church and Katigbak, 2000)

Evaluation:

- Are personality differences attributed to the individualistic and collectivist nature of the cultures concerned? Not everybody in these cultures embrace either individualist or collectivist goals
- European-Americans are less collectivistic than Chinese people, but are no less collectivistic than Japanese people (Oyserman et al, 2002)
- Most studies of individualism/collectivism have compared Japanese and Chinese people with European Americans – so findings likely to be culture-specific

PERSONALITY AND THE LIFE COURSE: INDIVIDUAL STABILITY

- Genetic (e.g. Kandler et al, 2010) and non-genetic factors e.g. stabilizing environment
- Non-genetic – short-term stability? (Kandler et al, 2010)

(Costa, McCrae and Löckenhoff, 2019)

Persistence of traits

- Edmonds, Goldberg, Hampson, & Barckley (2013):
- Teacher ratings of student personality in elementary school
 - Significant positive associations for most traits with those students' self-ratings of personality 40 years later in middle adulthood
 - But – correlations were modest
 - Perhaps rater perspective affects stability estimates

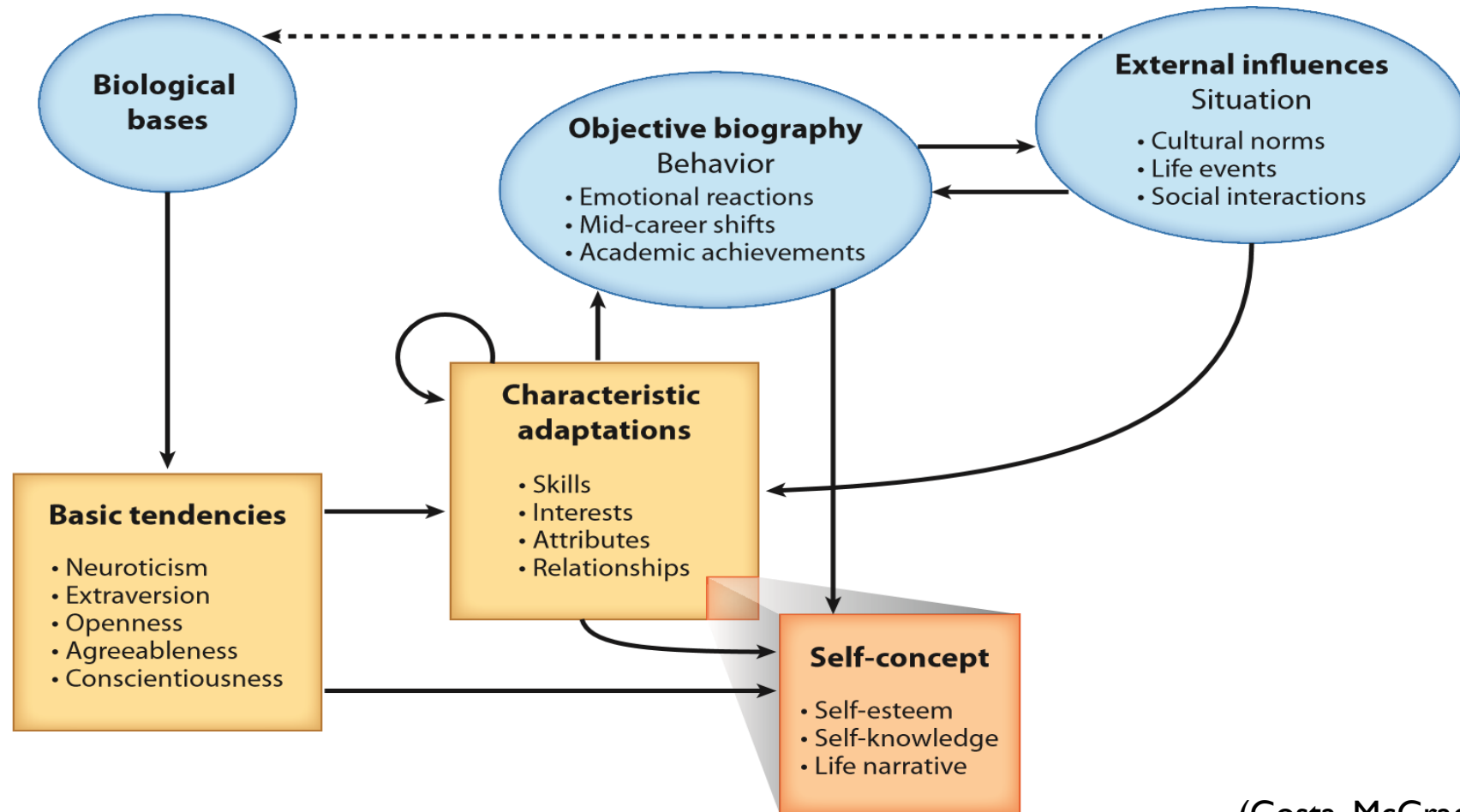
(observability of traits, motives, measurement variance etc.)

PERSONALITY AND THE LIFE COURSE: INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

- Result of life experience: traumatic events, role transitions, psychotherapy etc. (e.g. Galdiolo & Roskam, 2014)
- Transactional paradigm (Neyer & Asendorpf 2001) - traits influence the choice of relationships, and relationships, in turn, are thought to re-shape personality.
 - But - although evidence for the effects of personality on relationships, “most studies...failed to find the expected effects of relationship experiences on personality dimensions” (Mund & Neyer 2014, p. 352).
- Genes – may account for some individual differences in trait change (Kandler et al. 2010, McGue et al. 1993).
e.g.
 - Exercise/lack of exercise – argued to alter the trajectory of personality change (Stephan et al, 2014)
 - Baseline physical activity associated with decreased change in Extraversion and Conscientiousness in two large samples of older adults
 - Exercise might help sustain the energy needed to express Extraversion and Conscientiousness.

(Costa, McCrae and Löckenhoff, 2019)

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT BEYOND TRAITS



(Costa, McCrae and Löckenhoff, 2019)

PERSONALITY AND THE LIFE COURSE

Pathways Linking Childhood Personality to Later Life Outcomes

(Hill, Edmonds and Jackson, 2019, p.1)

- Dispositional characteristics are associated with important life outcomes across the lifespan, often predicting those outcomes decades in advance.
- Evidence demonstrates that personality characteristics measured during childhood and adolescence uniquely affect later life outcomes above and beyond adult personality.
 - May be important to “know” not only an individual’s adult disposition but also the individual’s personality trait profile as a child or adolescent.
- Unclear why personality produces unique effects at different life stages, given the modest consistency of personality across the lifespan

PERSONALITY AND THE LIFE COURSE

- Possible explanations for why unique predictive effects may occur
- Charting pathways that link childhood personality to later outcomes that differ from how adult personality influences the same products.
- Directions for longitudinal investigations into when, why, and how assessments of childhood personality can help advance our understanding of lifespan development.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SNARES HYPOTHESIS

- Childhood personality relates to later outcomes by predicting opportunities to enter pathways that affect a child's future.
- Paths we take early in life contour the options available to us later

Research:

- Students - responsible classroom behaviour - more likely to attain higher levels of education (Spengler et al., 2015)
 - Positively predicts later life successes in many domains.
- Less conscientious youth – at greater risk for substance use disorder (e.g., Anderson, Tapert, Moadab, Crowley, & Brown, 2007)
 - Could start them down the path for substance use in adulthood.
- One mechanism - early dispositional traits affect the likelihood of avoiding or participating in risky or positive behaviours
 - **Selection effects** - dispositional characteristics lead individuals to select environments that fit personality characteristics (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008)

DIFFERENTIAL MATURATION HYPOTHESIS

Trajectories and rates of personality change and development experienced prior to adulthood may affect later life outcomes. This may impact on later outcomes

- Normative pattern of personality maturation in which individuals tend to become more conscientious and emotionally stable from adolescence into adulthood
 - But - longitudinal studies of personality change during adolescence have consistently supported another tenet of lifespan theories of development—that individuals differ in their rates of change over time (e.g., Hill et al., 2013)
- Differential maturation hypothesis:
 - Trajectories and rates of personality change and development experienced prior to adulthood may affect later life outcomes.
 - Variability in individual patterns of change
 - e.g. conscientiousness might slip during late childhood and rise again in late teens, but catch up with others (or not)
 - Exposure to different patterns of risks
 - e.g. more conscientious when younger – may more quickly progress to higher levels of conscientiousness – effects study, work, relationships

AGE-DIFFERENTIAL PATHWAYS HYPOTHESIS

- Pathways explaining why personality affects later success may differ across life.
- Different stage of life – different influence of personality
- Exposure to the mechanisms linking personality to outcomes differs across the lifespan

e.g.

Links between personality traits and health risks across life (Hill & Roberts, 2011)

- Higher conscientiousness was associated with better self-rated health across all age groups
- Adherence to medication regimens explained this association better for older adults than for younger adults.
- Highlights the important role of adhering to medication regimens in the health of older adults
- Suggests alternate pathways likely link conscientiousness to health in younger adults

SUMMARY

- Trait models of Personality
- Personality stability and instability
- Life course models of personality
 - Opportunities and Snares model
 - Differential Maturation
 - Age-differential pathways hypothesis
- Enrichment of trait framework by considering other components of personality, such as life narratives

READING

Costa, P.T., McCrae, R. R., Löckenhoff,, C. E. (2019). Personality Across the Life Span. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, 423–48

Hill, P. L., Edmonds, G.W., Jackson, J. J. (2019). Pathways Linking Childhood Personality to Later Life Outcomes. *Child Development Perspectives*, 0 (0), 1–5