

# **Human Resources Training and Individual Development**

Personality Theories and Assessment  
March 3, 2004

## **Class Overview**

- Personality defined
- Measuring personality
- Personality theories
- Personality traits
- Your feedback

## **Personality Defined**

- “Every personality theory is concerned with differences as well as the similarities among people” (McCrae & Costa, 1990, p. 21.).
- The totality of a person’s psychological qualities which consistently influence a person’s behavior, emotional experiences and mental processes over time and across different situations

## **Measures of Personality**

- Interviews
  - Unstructured: “Tell me about yourself...”
  - Structured: Set list of questions
- Observation
- Objective tests
- Projective tests

## **Personality Theories**

- Psychoanalytic
- Humanistic
- Biological
- Behavioral, social learning and cognitive
- Trait theories

## **Trait Theory**

- Traits are dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions.
  - Tendency
  - Consistent
- Trait personality theories suggest that a person can be described on the basis of some number of personality traits

## What is Personality?

- An individual's personality is a relatively stable set of characteristics and tendencies that are reflected in traits. Traits that have been formed by
  - Genes
  - Early childhood
- Is situation or personality more important?
- How is personality best measured?
- Does personality change?

## Measuring Personality Traits

- Natural language and the lexicographical hypothesis
  - Over the course of centuries, every important attribute or trait reflecting differences or similarities among individuals will have been noted and named
  - Allport and Odbert (1936): 18,000 trait-descriptive terms in the English language
- Factor analysis and the Big Five factors

## “Big Five” Personality Factors

- Neuroticism
  - Whether a person is unstable and prone to insecurity
  - Facets: anxiety (fear), hostility (anger), depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, vulnerability
- Extraversion
  - Whether a person is sociable, outgoing and affectionate
  - Facets: warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, positive emotions, excitement-seeking, activity

## “Big Five” Personality Factors

- Openness to Experience
  - Whether a person is open to new experiences
  - Facets: fantasy, aesthetics, ideas, etc.
- Agreeableness
  - Whether a person is cooperative, trusting, and helpful
  - Facets: trust, altruism, tender-mindedness etc.
- Conscientiousness
  - Whether a person is disciplined and responsible
  - Facets: competence, order, dutifulness, achievement-striving, self-discipline, deliberation

## Measuring the FFM Traits

- Example: Extraversion
  - How many close friends do you have?
  - How much do you enjoy parties?
  - Are you often the leader of a group?
  - How active and energetic are you?
  - How much do you crave excitement
  - Are you usually cheerful?

## FFM and Performance

- Conscientiousness and neuroticism are the strongest personality predictors of job performance; extraversion predicts performance for some jobs
- Meta-analytic correlations:
  - $r = .25$  for conscientiousness and task performance
  - $r = -.15$  for neuroticism and task performance
  - Correlations are almost twice as strong for citizenship performance and counterproductive behaviors

## FFM and Job Satisfaction

- Judge, Heller, and Mount (2002) meta-analysis (163 samples):
  - Two traits were consistently correlated with job satisfaction:
    - Neuroticism –  $r = -.29$
    - Extraversion –  $r = .25$
  - Two other traits were correlated with satisfaction but the relationships were more variable across studies
    - Agreeableness –  $r = .17$
    - Conscientiousness –  $r = .26$
- Why do these traits predict job satisfaction?

## FFM and Motivation

- Judge and Ilies (2002): meta-analysis of the relationships between personality and motivation as conceptualized by three theories:
  - Goal-Setting
    - Neuroticism –  $r = -.29$
    - Conscientiousness –  $r = .28$
  - Expectancy
    - Neuroticism –  $r = -.29$
    - Conscientiousness –  $r = .23$
  - Self-Efficacy
    - Neuroticism –  $r = -.35$
    - Conscientiousness –  $r = .22$
- Why do these traits predict motivation?

## Personality and Leadership

- Meta-analysis by Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002) integrated 222 correlations reported in 60 studies (73 independent samples).
  - Neuroticism  $r = -.24$
  - Extraversion  $r = .41$
  - Openness to Experience  $r = .24$
  - Agreeableness  $r = .08$
  - Conscientiousness  $r = .28$
- Ilies, Gerhardt, and Le (in press) showed that 17% of the differences between how likely are individuals to become leaders are influenced genetic differences

## Other Traits

- Positive self-concept
  - A favorable self-regard; its core is self-esteem
  - Core self-evaluations are “fundamental, subconscious conclusions individuals reach about themselves, other people, and the world” (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998, p.18)
- Affective traits
  - Positive affectivity
  - Negative affectivity

## Personality Feedback

- FFM traits
- Positive and Negative Affectivity
- Core Self-Evaluations

## Evaluating Trait Theory

- Trait theory, especially the FFM, is able to describe personality
  - Cross-cultural studies find good agreement for the Big Five model in many cultures
- The FFM is useful in describing the aspect of personality that are important in the workplace
- Problems with trait theory include:
  - Explanation as to WHY traits develop

## **Next Time**

- Leadership development
- Please complete the leadership survey
- Readings:
  - Zaslavnic (1992)
  - Zemke and Zemke (2001)
  - Bass (1998)