

# 2 PERSONALITY

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### BY THE END OF THIS CHAPTER YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- Explain the two sides of the nature–nurture debate.
- Distinguish between nomothetic and idiographic theories of personality.
- Describe each of the Big Five personality characteristics and map the behaviour of individuals onto these characteristics.
- Distinguish between traits that are good for all jobs and those that are important only for some jobs.
- Discuss how and why organisations measure individual personality characteristics.
- Identify problems with using self-report instruments in the selection process.
- Identify bright and dark personality characteristics beyond the Big Five that are important in understanding individual-level behaviour at work.



### THIS CHAPTER DISCUSSES

What is personality? 25 | Nature–nurture debate 26 | Theories of personality 28 | The Five-Factor Model (or Big Five) 31 | How does personality influence behaviour at work? 34 | Measuring individual personality characteristics 38 | Other classifications of personality characteristics 39

## IN REALITY

Did you know that first impressions don't always last? While personality is considered to be stable over time, the impressions we gain about people, based on their personality, can change as we get to know them better. Furthermore, personality characteristics that are typically considered to be an advantage in many situations also have a 'dark side', which will be discussed in more detail at the end of the chapter. Extroversion, for example, has long been considered an advantage in many aspects of life. Extroverts are more successful at job interviews; they earn more money and tend to be happier in their jobs and careers. Extroversion is also considered important for leadership positions as well as for success in jobs like sales and teaching. Additionally, it is considered to be particularly important for group work and team performance. When groups first come together, team members form initial impressions of each other. Because of extroverts' tendency to express enthusiasm, confidence and dominance they are perceived to be highly competent at the outset and often get selected for leadership positions.

However, recent research has found that those initial good impressions can change for the worse as the team works towards their interdependent goals (Bendersky and Shah, 2013). Extroverts seem to disappoint their fellow group members as time goes on by not delivering on what was initially expected. It's not clear whether the extroverts 'promised' too much or whether their fellow group members simply expected too much. Interestingly, this research also found that individuals with a high need for emotional stability (that is, high in neuroticism) have a 'bright side' that has been given little attention until recently. As the task groups progressed, neurotics surprised their fellow group members by exceeding expectations and therefore their status within the group increased. It's nice to know that 'bad' first impressions don't always last.

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why your best friend wants to be alone so much of the time while you really like to be with other people, even when studying? Or why your friend can always seem to get her work done ahead of schedule while you are working like mad, even staying up all night and missing lectures, just to get your assignments finished? Perhaps you are the one who wonders why your gregarious friends struggle to meet deadlines. Chances are that you and your friend have different personality characteristics. Although you are taking the same subjects at university and have the same interests, maybe you wonder whether you are suited to different types of jobs after you graduate because of these personality differences.

Organisations are interested in the concept of personality because they believe, and indeed research has shown, that personality differences impact on behaviour at work. Personality affects motivation, communication, team interaction, and performance in both positive and negative ways. The focus of this chapter is to explore this relationship. Personality theories are examined and the issue of assessing personality for organisation-based decisions is outlined. We begin by defining personality and discussing the extent to which our genes versus our environment influence the type of personality we have. We then discuss alternative theoretical approaches to

understanding personality before focusing on five specific personality characteristics on which people differ (called the Big Five or the Five-Factor Model) and their implications for behaviour in organisations. This leads us on to the important issue of if, when and how employers should assess personality when hiring and managing employees. We finish off by discussing alternative lenses to the Big Five including what might be termed 'ugly' personality traits.

## WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

We all have a notion of what personality is. A friend tells you that she's met someone new and she thinks you'll like him. She immediately goes on to tell you what he's like:

'He's got a great personality, so much energy. He's fun and funny. He tells the best stories and really likes to have a good time. But he works hard too; you can tell that he wants to do something with his life.'

What she is describing is his social reputation, which is the way that we all – friends, family, neighbours, co-workers and supervisors – perceive other people. While social reputation isn't the same thing as personality, someone's social reputation is influenced by their personality. So what exactly is personality? While there is no universally accepted definition, we can think about someone's personality as their mental make-up. **Personality** is typically defined as the relatively stable set of psychological characteristics that can distinguish one individual from another and can provide generalised predictions about a person's behaviour. There are three important points relating to this definition that need to be emphasised.

- 1 Stability implies consistency over time and in different situations. We describe someone as being warm and kind if they are like this most of the time and in diverse life situations.
- 2 People differ in terms of how they think, feel and act. These **individual differences** are psychological ways in which people differ from each other and include factors such as intelligence, personality, and emotionality, and mean we can describe people according to their different personality characteristics.
- 3 While someone's behaviour is influenced by their personality, behaviour is also influenced by the social context. Some situations are described as **strong situations** in that everyone, regardless of their personality, behaves in the same way. For example, personality is likely to have less influence on behaviour in the armed forces, where the rules are clearly defined and the consequences for not following them are severe, than it might do in an organisation such as Google.

There is another interesting point about the personality–behaviour link. As the definition indicates, by knowing someone's personality characteristics, we can make reasonable predictions about their behaviour. Psychologists have studied ways to accurately measure personality

**personality** the relatively stable set of psychological characteristics that can distinguish one individual from another and can provide generalised predictions about a person's behaviour

**individual differences** are psychological ways in which people differ from each other and include factors such as intelligence,

personality, and emotionality, and mean we can describe people according to their different personality characteristics

**strong situations** those in which the rules and expectations of the social context control the behaviour of people regardless of their personality

and used this information to determine the impact of different personality characteristics on a wide range of behaviours within and beyond organisations, and this will be covered in more detail later in the chapter. However, for most of us in day-to-day life, the inference goes the other way. Instead of knowing someone's personality and using it to predict their behaviour, we tend to infer someone's personality by observing what they do, as well as what they say and by what others say about them (that is, their social reputation). This is because we cannot measure personality directly. These observations and assessments may or may not be accurate, but they do influence the impressions and judgements we make about other people.

## BUILDING YOUR SKILLS

### **Making Tough Decisions**

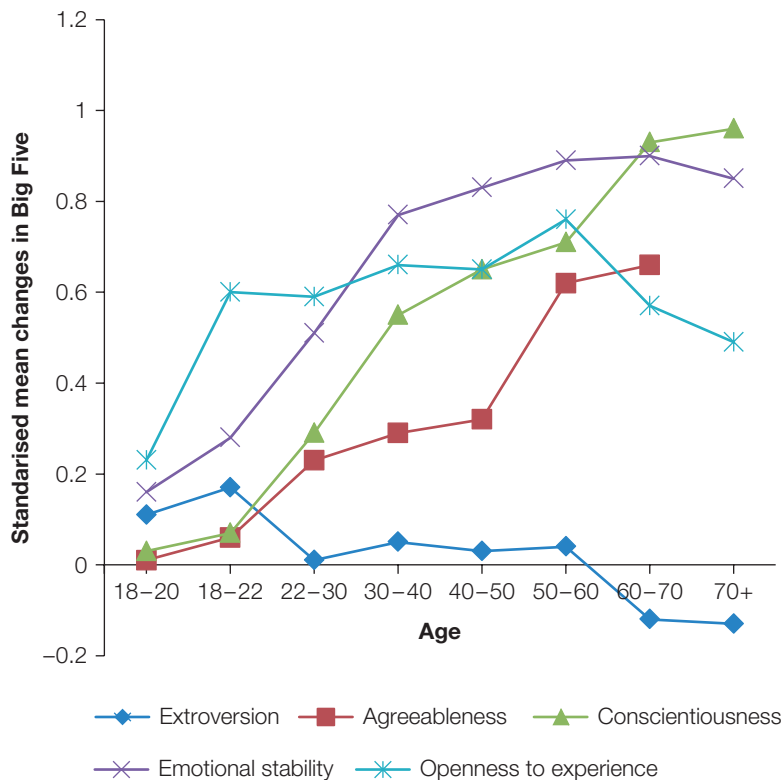
You are a line manager and your HR manager is recommending the use of personality tests to improve hiring decisions. Even if the tests have good predictive validity, you are worried about how the tests would be perceived by job applicants. Do some research yourself; ask some people you know if they have encountered such tests when applying for jobs and if they were concerned about them. What's your view now? Has it changed? How will you respond to the HR manager?

## NATURE—NURTURE DEBATE

Where does our personality come from? Is it from the genes that our parents pass on to us or is it influenced by our environment? This question basically summarises what is known as the nature–nurture debate. Imagine that you are quite imaginative and creative and your parents are too. It's possible that they've passed on an 'openness to experience gene' and/or an 'artistic gene' to you. This supports the nature side of the argument. However, it is also likely that you observed and imitated your parents' behaviour as you were growing up. Perhaps they're artists or musicians. Furthermore, your parents not only tolerated your creative pursuits, but they actively encouraged and rewarded them. The presence of these environmental conditions supports the nature side of the debate. So how do we separate them to understand the role of nature and nurture in the formation of personality?

The answer comes in part from studying twins who are raised apart. Behavioural scientists have conducted studies of twins who have been adopted by different sets of parents to try to disentangle these two influences. If identical twins (that is, those who share 100 per cent of their genetic makeup) have the same personality traits, even when they grow up in different environments, then there is strong support for the nature side of the debate. Researchers at the University of Minnesota have been carrying out such studies for several decades and have found that genes do in fact have a significant impact on personality. After reviewing several studies of twins and personality, Loehlin (1992) concluded that genes can explain between one-third and one-half of the variance in different personality traits.

Another research approach to understanding the influence of genes on personality is to examine personality traits over time (called life course research). Participants of these studies complete personality assessments several times throughout their life. Since people's environments are different at different points in their life, it could be inferred that personality has a strong genetic component if people's personality profiles are reasonably stable throughout their lives. Roberts *et al.* (2006) reviewed 92 life course studies that included over 50,000 people. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, some traits are reasonably stable while others change quite a bit over time. For example, openness to experience is quite stable once people become young adults. (It seems that teenagers are much less open to new experiences – no doubt reflecting the cliché you might have heard your parents recite when you were in secondary school: 'You think you know everything!') On the other hand, people become more conscientious as they age. Interestingly, life course studies show that relative positions between people tend not to change on the various traits. In other words, while you and your best friend are both likely to become more conscientious as you get older, if your friend is more conscientious than you are now, it is likely that she will continue to be into your old age.



**Figure 2.1** Personality dimensions across the life course

Source: Adapted from Roberts *et al.* (2006).

While heredity clearly plays a major part in determining one's personality, environmental factors are important too. People's personalities develop in part because they internalise their surroundings. Social, cultural and situation factors all have an effect on personality.

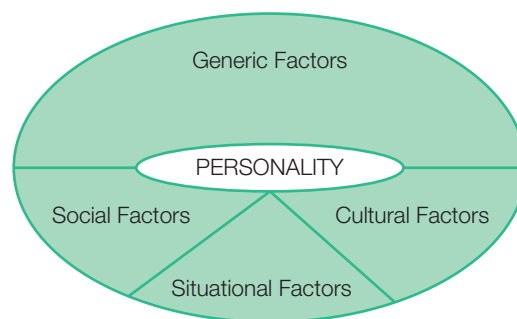
- *Social factors*: Interactions with parents, siblings, peers and others influence our personality and behaviour through a process of **socialisation**. Although socialisation takes place throughout our lives, early socialisation (for example, as the result of birth order) is particularly influential in the development of personality.
- *Cultural factors*: Socialisation also happens at the societal level and some researchers (for example, Heine and Buchtel, 2009) believe that cultures actually provide societies with their own unique personalities. A large study of more than 50 cultures found variation in the dominance of certain personality traits. For example, people from China, India, Nigeria and Iran tend to be more introverted than people from Iceland, Spain, Australia and Estonia. Of course this doesn't mean that there are no extroverts in China and no introverts in Iceland; these country differences are merely averages (McCrae *et al.*, 2005)

► **Chapter 12** ◀.

- *Situational factors*: Specific situations or experiences also play a role in the development of personality. Traumatic events, such as surviving 9/11 or experiencing bullying as a child, teenager or adult can change a person, often in dramatic ways.

## THEORIES OF PERSONALITY

There are a great number of theories of personality that attempt to explain how personalities develop and/or why people differ. These theories can be categorised as either **idiographic** or **nomothetic**. The idiographic approach tries to understand the essence of someone's personality and believes that all aspects of someone's personality are unique to that person



**Figure 2.2** Influencing factors on personality

**socialisation** the process of learning how to think, feel and behave by conforming to and imitating influential others within social settings

**idiographic** an approach which describes personality in terms that are unique to the individual

**nomothetic** an approach which describes personality in terms of specific dimensions that vary across people



alone. It also links someone's personality with their perceptions and attitudes in an attempt to understand their behaviour. Idiographic theories tend to have their roots in clinical psychology and are largely concerned with issues like helping people to cope with their everyday demands.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SKILLS

Organisations want to hire the person who has the best knowledge, skills and abilities for any job they are trying to fill. They also want someone who will fit well into the job, work group and organisational culture ▶ **Chapter 12** ◀. Sometimes the applicant that fits the best is lacking in one or more competencies and sometimes the person with the best skill set doesn't seem quite right in terms of their personality or fit for the job or organisation.

- 1 Which is more important, skills or fit? Why?
- 2 How much reliance should you place on psychometric tests and assessments when making selection decisions?
- 3 How should you go about integrating a new employee who has the right skills but might not be a clear fit?

To help you answer these questions, in your ebook click the play button to watch the video of Fiona Clarke from Eurostar talking about personality.



## IDIOGRAPHIC APPROACHES

### FREUD'S PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORY

No doubt you have heard of Sigmund Freud. His psychodynamic theory is probably the most famous of the idiographic approaches to personality. Freud believed that our personalities are made up of three interacting parts called the id, the ego and the superego. The **id**, which is something that we're born with, is an unconscious part of our personality and drives us to seek immediate gratification. The **ego** operates at a conscious level; its function is to think, control and organise. The ego decides when to give in to the impulses of the id and when to succumb to the demands of reality. The **superego** is the moral regulator of personality. It is culturally influenced and tells us what we should and shouldn't do. Furthermore, it punishes us with guilt when we do the wrong thing. It is the ego's job to manage the ongoing tension between the impulses of the id and the moral judgement of the superego. Imagine the anxiety you might feel if you were to get a last-minute ticket to the sporting event of the year on a day

that your boss needs you to chair an important meeting. Freud's theory focused on how an individual's personality develops, starting in early childhood. When people are well-adjusted, their ego is able to manage the id–superego conflict. However, when the ego can't cope, it develops defence mechanisms such as **repression** to protect itself.

Despite Freud's prominence, there are a number of reasons why his psychodynamic theory in particular, and idiographic approaches in general, have had limited impact on organisations. Their origins in clinical psychology mean that the focus has been largely on 'abnormal' rather than normal populations. Their idiosyncratic perspective means that measures of personality dimensions have not been developed and there is no real mechanism for comparing the personalities of different people. Furthermore, Freud's theories have come under particular scrutiny because it is not possible to test them using scientific methods.

## NOMOTHETIC APPROACHES

In contrast, theories adopting the nomothetic approach focus on identifying dimensions of personality that can be used to measure similarities and differences between people. They assume that personality characteristics are relatively stable within people over time. These theories are typically subdivided into **trait theories** and **type theories**. While there are many similarities between trait and type theories – including in some cases the dimensions on which theorists believe people vary – trait theories measure personality dimensions on a continuum from low to high whereas type theories classify people typically using dichotomies of opposites. Two influential, nomothetic theories were developed by Eysenck (1965) from the 1940s and by Cattell (1965).

### EYSENCK'S TYPE THEORY

Eysenck identified two key dimensions on which he believed that people vary: extroversion and emotional stability which resulted in four distinct personality types:

- Emotionally Stable Extroverts (Sanguine Types)
- Emotionally Stable Introverts (Phlegmatic Types)
- Emotionally Unstable Extroverts (Choleric Types)
- Emotionally Unstable Introverts (Melancholic Types)

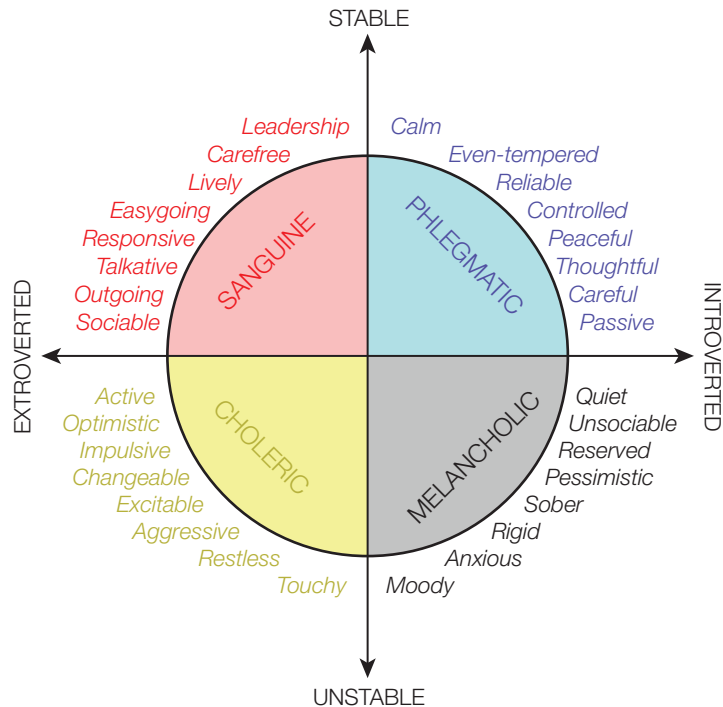
While Eysenck's theory is considered a type theory, he believed that specific traits stem from each of the four types. For example, Emotionally Stable Extroverts (known as Sanguine Types), tend to be sociable, outgoing, lively and carefree. Details of the traits associated with each of the four types are shown in Figure 2.3.

**repression** a defensive mechanism in which anxiety-producing thoughts are pushed into the unconscious

**trait theories** theories that describe people in terms of enduring personality characteristics

**type theories** theories that place individuals into predetermined categories thereby identifying them as a particular personality type





**Figure 2.3 Eysenck's personality types and associated traits**

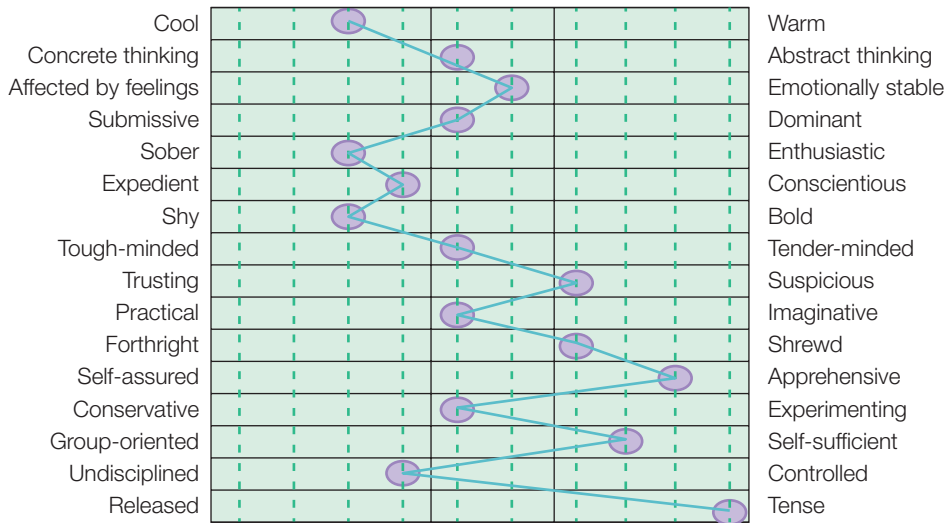
Source: Eysenck (1965).

## CATTELL'S TRAIT THEORY

Cattell (1965) believed that a distinction should be made between surface traits, which are observable through someone's behaviour, and source traits, which cause behavioural tendencies. He called source traits the fundamental building blocks of personality and through extensive testing with thousands of people he refined his theory and measurement instrument into a scheme of 16 source traits. Cattell's Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (known as the 16PF) is widely used in organisations for selection, career development, team building, leadership assessment and other purposes. A sample feedback report with the continuum of the 16 source traits is shown in Figure 2.4.

## THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL (OR BIG FIVE)

There has been a lot of debate among researchers about how many traits are needed to comprehensively describe an individual's personality. You can see from our discussion that Eysenck and Cattell disagreed as to the correct number. Over three-quarters of a century ago, Allport and Odbert (1936) identified several thousand words in the dictionary that



**Figure 2.4** A sample feedback report using Cattell's 16PF

Source: Bratton (2015).

describe normal everyday personality characteristics. They challenged the psychological research community to figure out exactly how many clusters of personality synonyms are needed to distinguish human behaviour from one individual to another. While researchers will continue to deliberate on this topic, most agree that a winner was declared in the 1980s with the emergence of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) known widely as the 'Big Five' (McCrae and Costa, 1987). Most individual differences in personality can be classified into five broad domains or dimensions which, importantly, are theoretically independent. That means that someone's level on one of the five dimensions is completely unrelated to their level on the other dimensions.

The five personality dimensions included in the model are: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness and Need for emotional stability. (This last factor is traditionally known as Neuroticism, but many have changed the label to 'Emotional stability' or 'Need for emotional stability' because 'neuroticism' has such negative connotations.) OCEAN is a useful acronym to help you remember the five dimensions although you can also use CANOE.

Each of the dimensions can be thought of as a continuum so, for example, someone could be high or low on extroversion. Think back to the chapter introduction in which two friends differed in how much time they liked to spend with other people. The friend who likes to spend a lot of time on her own is likely to be low on extroversion so would be an introvert. Because it is a continuum, someone may also be in the middle. The term 'ambivert' has started to gain popularity as a label for those who fall somewhere in the middle. Table 2.1 provides a brief description of the five personality dimensions and Table 2.2 provides you with a chance to score yourself on a shortened version of the Big Five.

## BUILDING YOUR **SKILLS**

### Managing Diversity

You are a project manager in a multinational company and you are putting together a group of experts to work on a high profile project. The team will be quite diverse in that the members will all work in different jobs and will all come from different countries. Should you also consider personality when designing the team? What would be the most desirable traits you would look for in future team members?



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**Table 2.1 The Big Five Personality Dimensions**

		High		Low
<b>O</b>	Open to experience	<b>Explorer</b> Like to learn about new ideas and experience new things; tend to be inquisitive, creative, unconventional and easily bored.	↔	<b>Preserver</b> Like operating in familiar territory; tend to be traditional, conventional and conforming.
<b>C</b>	Conscientious	<b>Focused</b> Focus their energies on accomplishing their goals; tend to be ambitious, hardworking, diligent and organised.	↔	<b>Flexible</b> Are spontaneous and work to their moods; tend to be good at multiskilling; can be inefficient and disorganised.
<b>E</b>	Extroversion	<b>Extrovert</b> Like to be where the action is; tend to be sociable, assertive, gregarious and dominant.	↔	<b>Introvert</b> Are happy to let others get stuck into where all the action is; tend to be quiet, reserved and private.
<b>A</b>	Agreeableness	<b>Adapter</b> Are accommodating when it comes to others' needs or wishes; tend to be kind, sympathetic and courteous.	↔	<b>Challenger</b> Focus on their own priorities over others'; tend to be competitive, quarrelsome and sometimes callous.
<b>N</b>	Need for emotional stability (or Neuroticism)	<b>Reactive</b> Can feel crippled by stressful situations; tend to be anxious and emotional and often feel nervous and insecure.	↔	<b>Resilient</b> Are able to stay quite calm in stressful situations; tend to be secure, relaxed, steady and stable.

Source: Adapted from Howard and Howard (2001).

**Table 2.2 Measure yourself on the Big Five**

The scales show descriptions associated with each of the Big Five factors. Read the words at both ends and place yourself where you think you actually are, not where you'd like to be. Then ask a friend or family member who knows you well to do the same thing. Are your impressions the same?		
Open to new experience, complex	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	Conventional, uncreative
Dependable, self-disciplined	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	Disorganised, careless
Extrovert, enthusiastic	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	Reserved, quiet
Sympathetic, warm	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	Critical, quarrelsome
Anxious, easily upset	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	Calm, emotionally stable

Source: Adapted from Gosling et al. (2003).

## HOW DOES PERSONALITY INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR AT WORK?

There are three questions you might consider before reading about how personality influences behaviour at work, particularly in relation to how organisations should act based on this information:

- 1 Are some personality traits better than others for effectiveness at work? If some traits are particularly important and you are a manager, you would most likely insist that your organisation uses personality tests to make sure you only hire people with these desirable traits.
- 2 Does effectiveness at work depend more on the situation? Perhaps some work environments suit some personalities better than others. Then it's a contingency argument and it's about fit. As a manager, you would be using personality tests to make sure job applicants have the right traits to fit with specific jobs.
- 3 Is it possible to have too much of a good thing? For example, if it's good to have a conscientious employee, is it better to have a very conscientious employee? Or are moderate amounts of desirable traits actually the most appropriate? As a manager, you would need a more detailed understanding of how personality tests are designed, how to interpret the scores and how to apply the results to the work context.

### OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

People who are open (that is, those who are high on the openness to experience dimension, sometimes called Explorers) are creative, curious, complex and cultured (Howard and Howard, 2001; Saucier, 1994). Open employees tend to perform well in creative jobs that require them to come up with novel ideas and solutions. Since they have a built-in desire to learn and experience new things, they also tend to thrive in jobs that are dynamic and have rapidly changing job demands. Because they tend to get bored doing things in 'the same old way' they are quick to adapt and improve existing procedures that aren't working well.

They are less well suited to jobs that are repetitive, require precise rules to be followed and have little autonomy such as accounting, police work, sales and some service occupations.

## CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

People who are conscientious are hard-working, organised, ambitious and persevering (McCrae and Costa, 1987; Saucier, 1994). Unlike openness, conscientiousness is thought to be important for all jobs and occupations. Can you imagine going into a job interview where they tell you that they are looking for someone who is lazy, disorganised and gives up easily? While people who are low on conscientiousness (sometimes called Flexible) are spontaneous, good at multitasking, and comfortable dealing with chaos (Howard and Howard, 2001), most research shows that conscientious employees are indeed productive employees (Barrick *et al.*, 2001; Judge *et al.*, 2008). Conscientious employees are motivated, committed and self-confident. They set higher goals for themselves than other employees and are more tenacious at attempting to reach their goals.

Conscientiousness has also been linked to a wide range of positive outcomes beyond job performance (Barrick *et al.*, 2001). For example, conscientious employees are more committed to their organisations and more satisfied with their jobs. Conscientious workers are more likely to employ **citizenship behaviours** and less likely to engage in **counterproductive work behaviours**. This is in part because of their high levels of job satisfaction. Feeling good about their job and the organisation promotes unprompted acts of citizenship and diminishes any feeling that they need to retaliate to negative treatment (Barrick *et al.*, 2001).

## EXTROVERSION

Extroverts are sociable, talkative, assertive and dominant. Extroversion is considered to be important for some but not all jobs (Barrick *et al.*, 2001). You can undoubtedly imagine jobs that require long periods of working on one's own (for example, computer programmers, archivists, chemists, writers) that would be unsuited to people who are high on the extroversion–introversion continuum. Jobs like project managers, teachers, sales representatives and health care professionals are often recommended for people who are high on extroversion. It is perhaps surprising that extroverts don't always perform better in jobs that require a lot of social interaction, such as service representative jobs. This may be in part because extroverts tend to make their presence felt by dominating situations, and there are times when a back-seat is more appropriate (Stewart and Carson, 1995). Research has found that extroversion is easier than any of the other Big Five factors to guess correctly (Levesque and Kenny, 1993). Think of times when you were with a new group of people; it doesn't take very long to figure out who the extroverts and introverts are.

**citizenship behaviours** discretionary behaviour that is often not formally recognised or rewarded by organisations but benefits the organisation and/or its members

**counterproductive work behaviours** any intentional behaviour by an employee that is seen to be contrary to the organisation's interests

Extroverts are concerned with being influential and successful; they strive to increase their status and develop a strong reputation. Extroverts often emerge as leaders in group situations ▶ **Chapter 8** 1. They are energetic and outgoing and they fit with the stereotype of what followers expect leaders to look like. Extroverts also tend to be high in both job and life satisfaction (Judge *et al.*, 2002). Extroverts are typically high in **positive affectivity** across a wide range of situations which undoubtedly accounts for these findings (Thoresen *et al.*, 2003).

## AGREEABLENESS

Agreeable people are kind, helpful, warm and cooperative. They focus more on getting along with others than they do on getting ahead in organisations. Once again, this set of traits is not right for all occupations. Agreeableness is very useful in jobs like nursing, teaching and service jobs in business, but may be less useful in jobs where being disagreeable is actually a requirement for being effective. For example, managers often have to make tough decisions that don't please their direct reports or other relevant stakeholders. Worrying too much about making everyone happy may lead to poor decisions or even complete indecision which would make no one happy.

Agreeableness has been found to be linked with several other positive and negative workplace outcomes. People who are high on agreeableness tend to have lower levels of career success when it's measured objectively by salary (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001). This is undoubtedly linked to their interest in getting along rather than getting ahead. Agreeable people are less likely to get involved in conflicts. However, if a conflict does arise, they are more likely to take a productive, integrative approach to resolve it, but are also more likely to feel distressed as a result of the conflict situation (Dijkstra *et al.*, 2004). They are less likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviours, especially behaviours directed towards others as opposed to the organisation (Judge *et al.*, 2008).

## NEED FOR EMOTIONAL STABILITY

People who are high on the need for emotional stability (sometimes referred to as neurotic people) are nervous, insecure, moody and emotional. Like conscientiousness, this dimension relates to all jobs and occupations but, unlike conscientiousness, jobs benefit from employees who are low rather than high on this domain. Employees who are calm under pressure, steady and secure are much more attractive to employers than those who are anxious and insecure.

You'll recall that extroversion is associated with positive affectivity. Well, need for emotional stability is associated with **negative affectivity** which undoubtedly explains their lower levels of job, career and life satisfaction (Barrick *et al.*, 2001; Judge *et al.*, 2002). Some research has also found that need for emotional stability correlates negatively with

**positive affectivity** a dispositional tendency to experience pleasant moods such as enthusiasm and excitement

**negative affectivity** a dispositional tendency to experience negative moods such as nervousness, annoyance and hostility



**objective career success** although the results have not been consistent (Judge *et al.*, 2002). Stress is also an issue for people who are high on need for emotional stability. They perceive that they are exposed to greater amounts of stress, regardless of their actual workload; they feel more threatened by stressful situations; and they use less effective coping strategies when trying to deal with stressful events (Bolger and Zuckerman, 1995).

### CONSIDER THIS...

You have recently been put into teams for a university assignment. You don't know your teammates and you are aware that personality will be a factor in how well you get along and how effectively the group will perform. Do you think you and your teammates should complete a personality instrument so that you can understand each other better from the start? Should you use scores on specific traits to decide who is best to lead the team? Are there any dimensions within the Big Five that might be too sensitive to assess?



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## CAN THERE BE TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

At the start of this section, you were asked to consider a few questions, one of which focused on whether it's possible to have too much of a good thing.

As discussed in detail above, highly conscientious people are more motivated, organised and persistent and therefore are more likely to reach their goals and performance targets. However, research has questioned whether too much conscientiousness may actually be detrimental (Le *et al.*, 2011). Highly conscientious people may be compulsive perfectionists who are overly rigid and become focused on the minutiae rather than the big picture. Sticking too closely to plans and goals may make them unable or unwilling to change direction and/or acquire new knowledge and skills, even when there are signs that these things are desirable. Similarly, very low and very high levels of neuroticism might also be more detrimental to performance. Feeling a certain amount of stress and anxiety might be useful for performance, but certainly very high levels can be crippling and lead to deterioration in performance. Le and his colleagues' research found what they expected. The relationship is not linear but rather curvilinear and more is better but only up to a point. After that point, high levels of conscientiousness and low levels of neuroticism were associated with lower levels of task performance and citizenship behaviour and higher levels of counterproductive work behaviours.

**objective career success** career success that can be assessed by a third party and is usually measured by hierarchical level reached, the salary attained and/or the number of promotions received

## MEASURING INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

If you believe that personality is important for predicting behaviour in the workplace, then you may feel that it's important to assess it when making hiring and promotion decisions. The previous discussion will give you some indication of the traits that might be useful for different types of jobs and work environments. Even so, organisations must carry out detailed job analyses including person specifications for each job they're filling so that they know exactly what attributes are needed for success in each and every job. They must also then decide what selection method to use to determine whether a candidate has the right attributes. Interviews, psychometric testing, reference letters and assessment centres are potential options used by organisations in the selection process.

Personality is often 'assessed' during interviews, or by asking former employers about the person's personality during reference checking. A study carried out by Barrick *et al.* (2000) set out to determine how good interviewers are at assessing personality during their interviews. They found that interviewers were pretty good at assessing openness, agreeableness and extroversion, but they weren't as good at determining levels of conscientiousness or neuroticism. As you know from our discussion above, conscientiousness and neuroticism are extremely important personality traits for job performance; therefore better methods of assessment are needed. So, how do organisations actually go about measuring the personality traits that they want to assess in order to make their hiring decisions? It's much easier said than done.

First of all, how can you measure what you cannot see or touch? It's not like height and weight and other physical entities that simply require agreed measurement tools. At best we can make inferences about someone's personality based on what is observable. We know that some people are more sociable and talkative than others. The same can be said for intelligence. We know that some people are better at solving difficult problems. However, just because measuring personality is difficult and cannot be done directly doesn't mean it's a complete guessing game. Psychologists have developed a number of 'yard sticks' to assess personality called self-report personality inventories. These are often referred to as personality tests (even in this chapter) but that's technically not correct, as the term 'test' implies that there are right and wrong answers and that's not the case when measuring personality.

### CONSIDER THIS...

When McCrae *et al.* (2005) administered the Big Five personality instrument to large numbers of university students in more than 50 countries, unsurprisingly they found country differences. On average, people in some countries are more agreeable/extrovert/etc. than people in other countries. Do you think there is any danger that this type of research would reinforce national stereotypes? Why or why not? Do you think there is any value in carrying out similar research within organisations to find out what the dominant personality profiles are within organisational cultures? Why or why not?

Some self-report personality inventories are to be completed using pencil and paper methods while others are administered online. Some are developed by academics and have been critiqued through the blind peer review process, while others are available commercially where the quality can be variable. It's important that these instruments are of a very high standard, especially if they are going to be used for making selection decisions. In particular, it's important that they have both **reliability** and **validity**. There are several types of validity, but the most important in this context is **predictive validity**. If you were to look in academic journals, you'd find some measures of the Big Five include 240 items. These longer tools typically have very good psychometric properties (in other words, they're reliable and valid) but they can take up to half an hour to complete. Employers should be wary of self-report instruments that are much shorter; although job applicants might prefer them, they are less likely to have the necessary validity and reliability.

One criticism of using personality measures in employee selection is that applicants have a vested interest in engaging in impression management. In other words, they present a fake version of themselves in order to be more attractive to the employer. No doubt this happens in all aspects of the selection process. Can you imagine going to an interview and not putting your best foot forward? Even employers do this because they want to impress you as much as you want to impress them. However, when using psychometric tests, this can be a serious concern, especially if not everyone does it and those who do are not identifiable.

This topic has been debated extensively by academics because of the implications for employee selection. On the one hand, we want to use well validated measures to select the best employee and we know that interviews have poor predictive validity. On the other hand, if well validated psychometric tests and self-report instruments can be faked, then they are no better. A study by Hogan *et al.* (2007) provides strong evidence that faking isn't as much of a problem as once thought. In this highly sophisticated study, people were given a second chance to take personality assessments six months after their job application was rejected because their scores did not meet the required threshold, but the basic finding was that they did not do any better the second time around. Hogan and his colleagues argued that even though these applicants were motivated to improve their scores, they were unable to do so. In other words, any attempt at faking or managing impressions did not lead to better scores. Since well validated instruments were used, they argued that faking is not the concern that many think it is.

## OTHER CLASSIFICATIONS OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

### MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

Although most psychologists believe that the Five-Factor Model is the best system for examining personality, it is certainly not the only lens available. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

**reliability** the extent to which a measure is consistent or repeatable

**validity** the extent to which a measurement tool measures what it purports to measure

**predictive validity** the extent to which a measurement tool accurately predicts future job behaviour or performance

## Personality Profiling and Sports

Recent reports indicate that more and more top-level teams, in a wide range of sports, are using personality assessments to help give them a competitive advantage over their opponents.

In 2013, the English Cricket Team used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (see below) 'to help 11 wildly different individuals to coalesce into a team' (Moody, 2013, p. 63), with apparent success: 'Reconciling divergent personalities into a well-oiled, cohesive team is no easy feat. England's behaviour on the field this month displays a maturity far removed from the discord and tensions of the recent past' (Rainey, 2013, p. 21). Kate Green, the England Cricket Board's lead on personal development stated that the more they understand their players, the more support they can give them in areas such as managing conflict and handling pressure both on and

off the field. One of the coaches said that the MBTI helped him to overcome a problem he was having with one of his players.

When he realised that they were completely opposite types in their personality profiles, he adjusted his coaching style and that helped them to overcome their problems.

AC Milan uses personality testing for a wide range of purposes including individual player assessment and development as well as understanding the team dynamic (Pepi, 2005). According to the head of European development at SHL (the business psychology consulting firm used by AC Milan), personality testing is even used for succession planning, including selecting the team captain. Furthermore, they have found that they can develop better recovery plans for injured players by considering their personalities and tailoring the plans to the players' needs.



IN THE NEWS

In the United States, top level coaches in both men's and women's basketball also use personality assessments at the individual and team level. Jeff Bower, who has coached both professional (NBA) and US college teams, uses personality profiling with all his potential recruits. Bower said, 'We're not looking for any one quality in particular. We're looking for how individuals function best and what their natural instincts are. We think it's a tool that will help us blend personalities together and bring the right kind of person here' (Eisenberg, 2013). Similarly, a high-profile women's basketball coach, Pat Summit, uses personality profiling to help her manage her players more effectively. After players have completed the personality inventory, she analyses the results with them. Those who thrive under pressure in the most intense situations are managed very differently from perfectionists who are hard on themselves whenever they make mistakes.

It seems that some coaches do have concerns however. When US college basketball teams are vying for the best talent, they don't want to scare anyone off before they've signed on the dotted line. The recruitment process has been described as 'a courtship' where 'romancing' is more the norm than psychological testing (Eisenberg, 2013).



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### Questions

- 1 Several advantages of personality profiling in sport are discussed above. Can you think of any additional uses or benefits? Can you think of any potential drawbacks to using

it? If you were managing a top-level sports team, would you use it and for what purposes?

- 2 Can you think of any top athletes whose personality helps them to be successful? What specific traits do you think they have that are so beneficial? Can you think of any top athletes whose personality gets in the way of their success? What traits are holding them back? Do you think anything can be done to help them overcome or deal with these negative traits?

- 3 Do you think a coach or manager of a top-level sports team should prioritise skill-fit or personality-fit? A player with the best skills for a specific position might disrupt the team because of personality-fit. Can the manager justify putting in another player who isn't as talented but works better in the team? Would your answers be different for business organisations than for sports teams? Why or why not?

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- Pepi, S. (2005). Top Scorers. *People Management*, 13 January, pp. 38–40.
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is arguably the most widely used personality instrument in the business world. This may be because the commercial providers are better at marketing it than other instruments, or it may be because its positive stance and simplicity make it attractive to people working in business. The different dimensions are shown as being opposites, but they're not described as being good or bad. Not having any negative definitions is a real advantage when introducing personality concepts into the workplace where trainers, managers and consultants are trying to improve morale and effectiveness and do not want to label people as having the 'wrong' personality.

The MBTI was originally designed to test Carl Jung's theory of personality type. Carl Jung, who once worked with Sigmund Freud (and then split from him), was the first to develop the terms extroversion and introversion. In his work he was drawn to understanding differences in the way people prefer to use their perception and judgement. He strongly believed in the notion of opposites. If you are not an introvert, then you must be an extrovert; there is no middle ground. A major difference between the MBTI (based on Jung's theory) and the theory underpinning the Big Five is the notion of opposite types. You'll recall from the discussion above that the Big Five dimensions are on a trait continuum. You may be very extroverted, a little bit extroverted, right in the middle of the continuum or somewhere towards the introvert end of it.

In the MBTI classification system, there are four dichotomies which lead to 16 different personality types, as shown in Table 2.3.

No doubt you can see a number of similarities between this classification scheme and the Big Five. Intuition is similar to Openness to experience; Feeling is similar to Agreeableness; and Judging is similar to Conscientiousness. The Extroversion link is obvious and Neuroticism doesn't have a parallel in the MBTI. The beauty of the MBTI is its simplicity. Someone's personality type can be captured by four letters. You might be an ENTP or an IFSJ. You can then read a short description of yourself that feels pretty accurate and fairly positive.



**Table 2.3 Myers-Briggs Type Indicator dimensions**

Extroversion (E) – being energised by people and things in the outer world	Introversion (I) – being energised by thoughts, feelings and impressions in the inner world
Sensing (S) – gathering information by focusing on facts and details that can be confirmed by experience	Intuition (N) – gathering information by focusing on possibilities and relationships among ideas
Thinking (T) – making decisions by using impersonal, objective and logical analysis	Feeling (F) – making decisions by using subjective analysis and focusing on others' needs
Judging (J) – approaching tasks by planning, being organised and reaching closure	Perceiving (P) – approaching tasks by being spontaneous, flexible and open

The MBTI does emphasise weak spots for each of the types to work on, but the tone and language is positive. This makes it appealing to managers in organisations who want a lens for understanding individual differences but don't want to unearth any 'bad types'. The MBTI is only available via commercial providers and must be administered, scored and interpreted by qualified practitioners. However, if you would like to complete an online version of Jungian Typology to see what your own type is, you can do so at: [www.123test.com/jung-personality-test/](http://www.123test.com/jung-personality-test/) (last accessed on 17 August 2015).

Psychologists have starting coming out pretty strongly against the MBTI, arguing that it is not a good measure and it is not based on a good theory. For a succinct yet interesting critique, refer to Adam Grant's hard-hitting assessment in the Huffington Post: [www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-grant/goodbye-to-mbti-the-fad-t\\_b\\_3947014.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-grant/goodbye-to-mbti-the-fad-t_b_3947014.html) (last accessed on 17 August 2015).

## CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS (CSE)

**Core self-evaluations (CSE)** as a collective emerged around 2000, which makes it quite a new addition to the personality literature. CSE is a basic, bottom-line set of evaluations that individuals make about themselves in determining their own self-worth (Judge *et al.*, 2003). While it includes self-esteem, it is broader than that. These four traits are closely linked to one and another and are well established in the psychology literature in their own right. See Table 2.4 for explanations of each of these concepts and some sample questions that you can use to assess yourself. As you can see, there is some overlap with the Big Five in that both include emotional stability (that is, neuroticism), but the emphasis of this personality lens is quite different to that of the Big Five.

Those who are higher in CSE tend to appraise situations more positively, have greater confidence in their ability to influence the world in a positive way, and generally feel pretty good about themselves. This self-belief and self-confidence mean they have higher levels of

**CSE** a broad trait indicator that includes four more specific traits: internal locus of control, emotional stability, self-esteem and generalised self-efficacy



**Table 2.4 The meaning and self-assessment of CSE**

CSE dimension	Meaning of CSE dimension	To what extent do you agree with the following sample statements? (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)
Internal locus of control	Beliefs about the causes of events in one's life – internal locus is when individuals see events as being the result of their own behaviour (rather than luck or external circumstances)	1 My life is determined by my own actions. 2 When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.
Emotional stability	The tendency to have a positive belief/style and to focus on the positive aspects of oneself	1 Too often, when things go wrong, I get discouraged and feel like giving up. (R) 2 I often feel inferior to others. (R)
Self-esteem	The overall value that one places on oneself as a person	1 I feel that I have a number of good qualities. 2 I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
Generalised self-efficacy	An evaluation of how well one can perform across a variety of situations	1 If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it. (R) 2 When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.

(R) These questions are 'reverse coded' items. They are negatively worded whereas the others are positively worded. You therefore need to reverse the scoring such that 5=strongly disagree and 1=strongly agree for these items.

Source: Based on information in Judge *et al.* (2003).

motivation. Think about it in relation to yourself. When you feel pretty good and you think you can do something, chances are that you stick at it until you succeed. This in turn leads to greater self-belief and you are on an upward spiral. When you are feeling down and/or have self-doubt, you are more likely to give up. This of course can lead to a downward spiral.

Research (by Kacmar *et al.* (2009), for example) has found that these four dimensions are collectively very good at predicting many important organisational outcomes. Those who have high levels of CSE not only perform better in their jobs, but they are also more satisfied in them and in life in general. They have more successful careers (for example, they earn more) and experience lower levels of stress and conflict. They are good at capitalising on opportunities and they cope well with setbacks. They are more effective at customer service and adjust better to foreign assignments. They persist more at job searching when unemployed and experience reduced levels of work–family conflict. In short, core self-evaluations are important for employers to consider when evaluating individual differences in the workplace. Researchers are enthusiastic about CSE as a way of looking at individual differences because it explains behaviour within (and outside of) organisations beyond what is explained by the Big Five.

## **DARK TRIAD OF PERSONALITY**

After reading the section on CSE, you might be feeling pretty positive: 'If I feel good about myself, I'll perform better and then I'll feel even better about myself. I can create my own virtuous cycle!' Sorry to change your mood, but we're now going to take a look at the dark

side of personality. There are three 'offensive' personalities that have also received a lot of attention in the literature: Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy (Paulhus and Williams, 2002, p. 556).

They are described in more detail below, but in brief, *Machiavellianism* is the manipulative personality, *narcissism* is the superiority personality and *psychopathy* is the highly impulsive, thrill-seeking personality that also includes low levels of empathy. These three personality traits have a number of features in common, including self-promotion, emotional coldness, aggressiveness and deception. Not surprisingly, all three correlate significantly and negatively with the Big Five dimension of agreeableness (Wu and LeBreton, 2011). These are not characteristics you would want in your friends, bosses or co-workers.

If you think about how these personality traits might play out in the workplace, you'll get a good sense of the problems they can cause. Machiavellian types are scheming, planning and manipulative. They are playing a game in which everyone is under their control. They form strategic friendships that last only as long as they are useful. They thrive on conflict and make sure that they are a step or two ahead of everyone else ▶ **Chapter 9**◀. Narcissists make everything relate to them. They take credit even when others do all the hard work and they promote themselves at every opportunity. They tend to be condescending to anyone who threatens them, treating them as inferior so that they can feel superior. They want to be admired by others and thought of as better than everyone else. For anyone working with a psychopath, the combination of lack of empathy and thrill-seeking is dangerous. Psychopaths will happily walk all over others, not caring about the consequences, and they do it just for the thrill of it all. Your misery seems to make them happy.

It's not surprising, in fact it's reassuring, that research has found negative workplace consequences for people with these dark personality traits (Judge *et al.*, 2006; Spain *et al.*, 2014). People who are high on these dark traits tend to receive lower performance appraisal ratings from their boss. Machiavellianism is also negatively associated with citizenship behaviour and positively linked to unethical decision-making in organisations. Leaders who are high in psychopathy engage in less corporate social responsibility and lower levels of support for their employees. They also respond less well to leadership training and development, in part because their overconfidence makes them less likely to take on board negative feedback. While narcissists claim to be very creative, the evidence suggests that they are no better at creative performance than others. All three of the dark triad traits have been linked with counterproductive work behaviours.

One area of particular concern for our purposes is that individuals with Machiavellian and/or narcissistic traits can make very good first impressions which might help convince employers to hire them. Narcissists tend to be talkative and good at self-promotion, both of which are advantageous at interviews. Machiavellian types seem to be more willing to engage in faking; they also seem to be better at it. However, researchers have argued that these initial good impressions wear off pretty quickly and others soon see them for what they are (Spain *et al.*, 2014).

## BrewBite

Michael O'Halloran has recently been appointed HR manager of BrewBite, a new and promising micro brewery based in the UK. While completing his undergraduate degree in business,

Michael did part-time bar work and was also actively involved in clubs and societies. He was Chairperson of the Gaming Society, which won numerous awards including Best Newcomers, and was also Public Relations Officer for the Ultimate Frisbee Club, which won Most Improved Club. After graduating, Michael worked as the Assistant Manager for a local bar and restaurant for 3 years then completed a Master's degree in HRM.

## ACTIVE CASE STUDY

Michael is looking forward to the many challenges he knows he will face at this young and growing company. He is the first person they have ever hired to work in the area

of HR and he wonders if he has the experience needed to be successful. He's recently learned that it is his capacity for innovation, which he demonstrated mostly through his leadership roles in the clubs and societies, that piqued BrewBite's interest in hiring him.

One of the first challenges Michael will face is devising a plan for a recruitment drive. BrewBite is expanding into new markets and needs to hire people for several positions from Sales Reps to Accountants. He has not been given a lot of guidance from the Senior Managers at BrewBite about how to do this, except from Jonathan Geary who is BrewBite's co-founder:

'We want people who are as passionate about our craft as we are, and that craft is making awesome beer and breaking down any walls of tradition in the process. The more walls we break – the better!'

BrewBite projects an image of a rebellious, non-conventional organisation with an almost rock star, tongue-in-cheek attitude. Jonathan

Geary heads the influential Culture Management Team whose job it is to ensure that BrewBite stays true to its values and that its culture remains strong as the company grows.

Although Michael has experience in management and with the adult beverage industry, it has become clear to him that this organisational structure and culture are not what he has worked with in the past. Despite this, he is determined to do a good job and make a good impression. He recognises the importance of working with the Culture Management Team as he develops his recruitment plan. Not only are they a powerful and influential group, but they have a good point about not wanting to dilute BrewBite's values and culture as the company grows. When employees all share the same assumptions about 'how things are done around here', things run more smoothly. It's easy to see that someone who doesn't fit into the organisation's culture would struggle to be effective. They would probably also be quite unhappy and would therefore leave. These are things that Michael wants to avoid. However, he also recognises the importance of hiring people with the right knowledge, skills and abilities to do the job they are hired to do. He worries that the Culture Management Team might want him to emphasise organisational fit more than actual job competencies.

There is a second issue: BrewBite has received a lot of publicity lately and the organisation is highly attractive



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(Continued)

### BrewBite (Continued)


to potential job applicants. Michael worries about how they will manage the barrage of applications they anticipate receiving shortly after the online announcement of job listings is made. He's considering screening applicants using psychometric testing. Only those who are successful will be invited for interviews.

#### Questions

- 1 When hiring new employees, do you think Michael should give priority to the knowledge, skills and abilities deemed necessary for the specific positions he needs to fill or to the fit applicants have with BrewBite's culture? How might the external consultant ensure Michael that the methods of testing used tap into the experimental question "Are you right for BrewBite?"
- 2 One of the first few positions that Michael has to recruit for is Accountants. He has done some research on the personality traits of effective accountants and found that they tend to be detail-oriented, introverted, logical and structured. They also prefer stability over change. Do you think it's possible for Michael to find someone with these traits who will also fit into BrewBite's culture? Is it crucial that BrewBite's accountants fit the mould set in place by its CEO? How might Michael and the external consultancy counter-argue that sentiment?
- 3 Michael also needs to hire Sales Reps. Research on the Big Five has found that successful Sales Reps tend to be extroverted and conscientious. They are outgoing and ambitious, and they strive for status and accomplishment. A potential candidate with an excellent sales track record makes it to interviews. Upon interviewing, the candidate appears shy and reserved, yet in the group role play, there is no question that he or she is a natural. Why might this be the case?
- 4 Work in a group and answer the following questions individually first, then share your answers with the group. What in your opinion is a personal attribute or individual quality that has the highest possibility of being overlooked by psychometric testing alone? How often does the situation or context come into play? How might we account for that?

*Written by Dario Di Ruzzo,  
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### SUMMARY

 IN THE EBOOK,  
CLICK TO HEAR  
AN AUDIO SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that as individuals, we differ quite significantly in a number of ways. These differences influence the way we think, feel and behave at work and outside of work. They also influence how effective and happy we are in different contexts. Research shows that, while environmental factors are important, our genes also play a very important role in determining our personalities. It also shows that personality is pretty stable throughout our lives. The Big Five model is a useful tool for understanding these similarities and differences. It's also useful for understanding how and why different people are effective in different work situations. An important issue that came up throughout this chapter was around the area of fit. While having the right fit for our job, work colleagues and organisation is important, we must ask ourselves whether fit is more important than having the right knowledge, skills and abilities. This is something you should think about if you are planning to manage people in your future career. You also need to think about what you would do to ensure you are adequately trained in psychometric assessments if you think your organisation should be using these 'tests' in the selection process.

While the Big Five Model is extraordinarily useful for understanding individual differences and how these differences influence behaviour at work, it is not the only lens for assessing personality. We finished off the chapter by examining what might be described as ‘the bad, the good and the ugly’. The ‘bad’ could be used to describe the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. While it is extremely popular, and one might argue is unlikely to do much harm since there are ‘no bad types’, it has been severely criticised for its substantial limitations. It is much better to use the Big Five which has so much good science to back it up. The ‘good’ refers to core self-evaluations. Even a quick read of this section illustrates how important positive self-belief is to so many aspects of our lives. And finally...the ‘ugly’. Personality isn’t all about the bright side and there are a number of personality traits, beyond the Big Five and CSE that managers, employees and HR practitioners need to understand because of their potentially toxic influence in the workplace.



## CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 In your own words, what is meant by the term personality? Is it important for HR practitioners and line managers to understand personality? Why or why not?
- 2 What is the nature–nurture debate and why is it important to our understanding of personality?
- 3 What are strong and weak situations? In which one is personality more likely to affect behaviour and why?
- 4 What are the five domains that make up the Big Five? List the traits that are associated with each of the five domains.
- 5 If you were hiring someone to work in a factory where the work was quite repetitive and there was little opportunity for people to talk to one another, what personality characteristics might you look for in job applicants and why?
- 6 Think about your friends. How similar are their personalities to yours? How do your similarities and differences influence your friendship? Has your friendship changed over time because of personality similarities and differences?
- 7 Your team at work is experiencing interpersonal conflict and you feel that it’s because of personality differences. You think it would be useful to have a team-building training session using personality as a way of discussing how and why the team members approach things differently. Would you use the Big Five or the MBTI and why?
- 8 What characteristics are associated with the dark triad? How might you deal with a work colleague who displayed some of these characteristics?



## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

In your ebook, click to take a multiple choice quiz to test your understanding of this chapter.



## FURTHER READING

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## USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/index.shtml?personality](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/index.shtml?personality)

The BBC provides a great deal of information about personality including a number of personality assessments. One of the assessments you can access from this website is based on the Big Five, while others focus on careers and even on the relationship between personality and food preferences.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=z11DeKK13vM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z11DeKK13vM)

This is a short video clip originally shown on ABC television in America. It discusses the Barnum Effect and shows how easily we can be fooled into believing horoscopes or mind readers. Barnum is the man credited with saying, 'There is a sucker born every minute.' Personality assessments that are not designed and validated by experts can also take advantage of Barnum-type statements, resulting in people mistakenly believing that the assessment they are given is a true reflection of their personality.

[www.careersportal.ie/](http://www.careersportal.ie/)

Most universities offer their students access to online career advice and resources. Some of these websites, like the Irish one whose link is provided here, are hosted at the national level. These websites offer students access to a wide range of resources including personality assessments.

[www.123test.com/personality-openness/](http://www.123test.com/personality-openness/)

123test® is a Dutch-based, privately owned company that creates and publishes psychometric tests online. It provides a wide range of tests covering IQ, personality, and career assessment.

[www.personal.psu.edu/~j5j/IPIP/](http://www.personal.psu.edu/~j5j/IPIP/)

Professor John A. Johnson at Pennsylvania State University set up a website in which anyone can find out how they score on the Big Five. You can take the long or short version of the IPIP-NEO which is the International Personality Item Pool representation of the NEO PI-R™.