

# Discovering Personality: The Big Five Model

Notes on the Lecture Series by Jordan B. Peterson  
William W. Lorey

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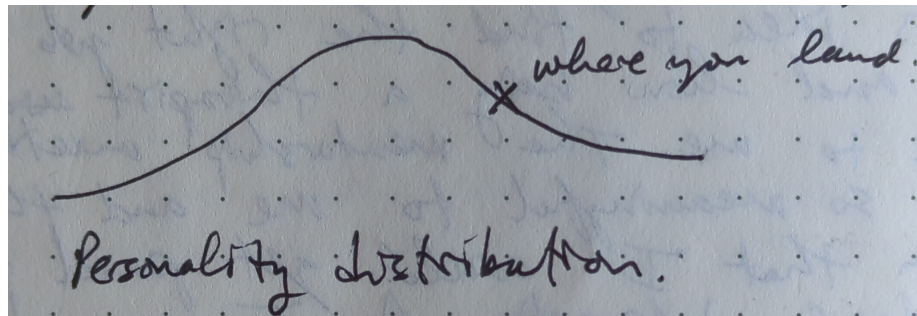
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## 0: Introduction

Similarity of personality is better for mate choice (with the exception of neuroticism).

It is 'more straightforward'/useful/a good idea to choose an occupation that suits your personality.

It is useful to expand your personality to encompass more of the distribution, although your 'default state' may/will remain where you started on the distribution.



All other personality tests pale in comparison to the Big Five.

"If you want to sort out elements, use the periodic table because it's correct."

The world manifests itself differently to different people.

## 1: Introduction to Personality Psychology

Our perception is tied to our intent and our intent is tied to our values.

Ex: Ball-pass counting experiment. >50% of participants do not see the gorilla.

Evolved structures that regulate our perception:

- motivational systems
  - id
  - Baseline physical needs are governed by the hypothalamus (positioned above spinal cord), and exploration
- emotional systems

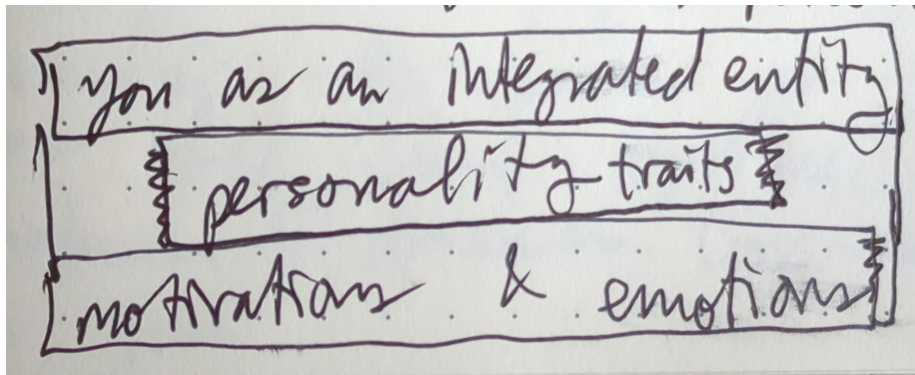
The border between these is foggy.

In general: motivations set goals and emotions regulate movement towards goals (although some emotions also set goals).

From the psychoanalysts: drives are like their own personalities (albeit narrow).

Ex: Hunger. It interrupts you, forms a plan to satisfy a bodily drive, rationalizes the necessity for its existence. It is a narrow personality.

The *personality* lies between motivations, emotions and You as an integrated person.



*Personality traits are aggregations of solutions to the basic/fundamental problems of motivation and emotion.*

Your personality is a functional map of the world, of heuristics for action; it is a low resolution map of quick and dirty solutions.

Your personality is a low-resolution solution to a complex problem.

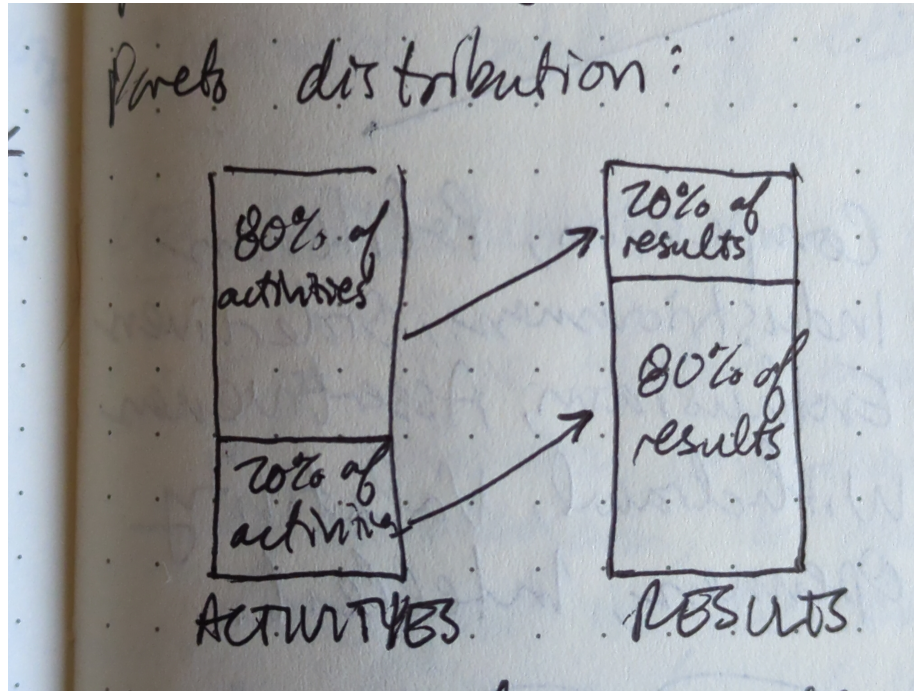
Personality is the hand you're dealt at birth. It is an effort to produce human variants that are well adapted to the current situation.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- A personality trait is simply a low-resolution solution to a complex problem.
- Humans have evolved structures that help us process the world for it to not be overwhelming. These structures can be separated into motivational systems and emotional systems.

## 2: The Five Factor Model: An Empirical Approach to Personality

Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex: associated with abstract problem solving.



How were the personality traits discovered? *Brute force empiricism.*

### Axioms Underlying the Big Five Model

- It is reasonable to assume that human lexicons—the entire vocabulary structure of language and communication—have captured the essential elements of personality.
- People know enough about their own personality to report on it accurately (in a *valid* and *reliable* manner).

Statistics allow us to see if people answer the questions regarding their personality in a patterned way.

There are questions that are answered in similar ways across people.

Factor analysis: enables you to find questions that “clump” together.

This produces five dimensions. Cross-culturally this is true.

The stable five factor solution comes to:

Agreeableness	→	Compassion, Politeness
Conscientiousness	→	Industriousness, Orderliness
Extraversion	→	Enthusiasm, Assertiveness
Neuroticism	→	Withdrawal, Volatility
Openness to Experience	→	Openness, Intellect

(5 Factor Solution → 10 Factor Solution)

Psychologists do not want to give up their measure(s) because they have spent their careers studying it.

Ex: You can almost perfectly predict *self-esteem* by taking extraversion and subtracting neuroticism.

People with high self-esteem have more positive emotion and less negative emotion and that is pretty much all there is to it.

Self-esteem does not exist in a fundamental sense. You have it conceptualized wrong.

The Big Five and IQ are **concept killers**.

There has been a 30 year war between traditional psychiatric measures and using the fundamental Big Five aspects.

The Big Five and IQ can be used as a “periodic table of elements.”

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- The five factor model, which consists of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, was developed in the early 1990s and uses a lexical (word-based) approach to determine personality traits. This model was developed empirically with only two distinct philosophical assumptions:
  - It is reasonable to assume that human lexicons have captured the essential elements of personality.
  - People know enough their own personality to report on it with some accuracy.
- When reviewing personality predictions and models, it is important to understand psychometrics and measurement.
- Dr. Peterson lists four criteria for determining if a personality test has functional value (i.e. pragmatic utility):
  - The measures are reliable (stable across different administrations).
  - The measures are valid (they predict something of importance).
  - The measures are useful for multiple different criteria.
  - The test is different in important ways from what already exists.

### 3: Extraversion: Enthusiasm and Assertiveness

Each of the Big Five breaks into two aspects. The Big Five Aspects Scale was created by JBP et al.

#### Assertiveness trait descriptors

- Take charge
- Have a strong personality
- Lack the talent for influencing people (reversed)
- Know how to captivate people
- Wait for others to lead the way (reversed)
- See myself as a good leader
- Can talk others into doing things
- Hold back my opinions (reversed)
- I'm the first to act
- Do not have an assertive personality (reversed)

#### Enthusiasm trait descriptors

- Make friends easily
- I am hard to get to know (reversed)
- Keep others at a distance (reversed)
- Reveal little about myself (reversed)
- Warm up quickly to others
- Rarely get caught up in the excitement (reversed)
- I'm not a very enthusiastic person (reversed)
- Shy my feelings when I'm happy
- Have a lot of fun, laugh a lot

You hit the law of diminishing returns when you try to move someone on the personality distribution, because you are moving against their temperament.

It is much easier to adjust the job to you than it is to adjust you to the job. Know what your proclivities are so the hand you have been dealt can be optimally played.

This is part of the relationship between biological determinism, which set you up with a particular temperament, and how you might operate in the world. You are a certain way which means your choices are constrained, which is good because you don't want unlimited choices. Take what you are good at and find your niche. This is hard to do but it's still your best bet. You're far better off finding where you belong rather than finding somewhere arbitrary then molding yourself into whatever you need to be.

#### Extraversion trait descriptors

- Sociable vs. retiring



- Fun-loving vs. sober
- Affectionate vs. reserved
- Friendly vs. aloof
- Spontaneous vs. inhibited
- Talkative vs. quiet
- Make eye contact
- Drawn to sales and personnel work
- More impulsive
- Have more sex (another form of impulsivity)
- Less affected by punishment
- Have high levels of positive emotion

**You guess at how unpredictable the future is with your temperament.**

If you are extraverted, it means you discount the future more. That is also the case if you increase your mood.

Extraversion is the dimension of positive emotion.

Motivations set goals, emotions keep you on track (generally).

- Positive emotion: keep doing what you're doing.
- Negative emotion: Wait, there is an obstacle in your path or there is a problem with your plan.

How happy should you be when things are going according to plan? How unhappy should you be when things don't? We don't know; you bet with your temperament.

You compare yourself to other people in the competitive hierarchy all the time in an attempt to calibrate your positive and negative emotions.

Uncertainty is philosophically costly. It makes you **old** faster; it burns up future resources. This is why people fight for their position in a hierarchy: they are fighting for their lives.

High resolution, physical action is at the base of higher order maps.

Ex: High order goal: be a good person.

High resolution building block: competently chop carrots.

Match the punishment to the crime.

Ex: Kid drops the spoon. "You stupid dumb kid" vs. "You must not have gripped the spoon when I handed it to you."

When someone fails in a high resolution subroutine, repair the tiny little piece, don't attack their entire higher order map. Zero in on the smallest possible unit of correction, the narrowest possible domain for the correction to occur.

Anger makes you accelerate your responses up the hierarchy.

Aim for the minimal compromise for satisfaction—the reasonable minimal solution.

The broader the area of their map you criticize, the more emotional dysregulation you produce.

Stories are maps. Where you were, where you were going, what happened along the way.

You feel good when you move towards something you need and want. You're making progress **and** that indicates that the map you're using is accurate, which is an even better deal.

You want circuits that 'work' (i.e. produce behaviors that produce positive emotion) and these reinforce themselves: "do more of that."

The closer they are to the event, the stronger those circuits get.

That "feeling good" may be a direct consequence of the flourishing of that circuitry. The opposite, bad feeling, is the experience of the death of that circuitry. You experience your growth and your death at a neurological level. (This is a hypothesis and might be the case.)

The more extraverted you are, the more positive emotion you feel per unit of success.

It's like you have two brains:

- Left hemisphere: positive emotion and movement forward
- Right hemisphere: negative emotion and uncertainty

More activity can be detected in newborns—hemisphere activation—based on if they're happy or sad. The emotional systems are active right at birth.

Left hemisphere: language.

(Although brains can be mirrored, which means they're just flipped from this layout.)

You talk about things that you're after. There is a relationship between linguistic and manual dexterity. The things we take apart are also things we name and extraverted people tend to be more verbally fluent.

People talk more when they're happy, less when they're sad.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Extraversion breaks down into two aspects: enthusiasm and assertiveness.
- Extroverts tend to value the present more than the future. Introverts, on the other hand, tend to value the future more than the present.
- Motivations help you establish goals, while emotions keep you on track.
- Positive emotions move you forward towards desired goals, while negative emotions can cause you to stop or move backward.

## 4: Neuroticism: Volatility and Withdrawal

Neuroticism: dimension of negative emotion.

We are more sensitive to negative emotion than positive.

Withdrawal: associated with animal behavior of freezing.

Volatility: associated with defensive aggression and sensitivity to punishment.

It is helpful, if your partner is more volatile, to step back and detach from their behavior. It is more them than you.

Ex: JBP curses a lot while driving and doesn't understand how other people can be calm while driving.

In general, you want a partner that matches your placement along the dimensions of personality/temperament. Except for neuroticism: people high in neuroticism should partner with someone low in neuroticism. Two highly neurotic people will be divorced, technically speaking (**best predictor of divorce is neuroticism**).

### Withdrawal trait descriptors

- Seldom feel blue (reversed)
- Am filled with doubts about things
- Feel comfortable with myself (reversed)—self consciousness
- Feel threatened easily
- Rarely feel depressed (reversed)
- Am easily discouraged
- Am not embarrassed easily (reversed)
- Become overwhelmed by events
- Am afraid of many things

### Volatility trait descriptors

- Get angry easily
- Rarely get irritated (reversed)
- Get upset easily
- Keep my emotions under control (reversed)
- Change my mood a lot
- Rarely lose my composure (reversed)
- Am a person whose moods go up and down easily
- Am not easily annoyed (reversed)
- Get easily agitated
- Can be stirred up easily

### Neuroticism trait descriptors

- Worrying vs. calm
- Nervous vs. at ease

- High strung vs. relaxed
- Insecure vs. secure
- Self pitying vs. self satisfied
- Vulnerable vs. hardy
- Irritable
- Moody
- Touchy

Pain is a marker for damage. Anxiety is a marker for pain (i.e. for the possibility of damage).

You feel anxiety so that you don't have to feel pain.

We've evolved to be anxious so we avoid taking on damage: this is one strategy. The problem is, you could be hurt all the time which means you can (and some are) anxious all the time.

JBP's recommendation of anti-depressants comes when someone is as high on the social hierarchy as they can be (i.e. job, wife, family, friends, hobbies), and still something is missing. You have a life but your emotional reactions do not match accordingly.

One factor in negative emotion: how cluttered is the pathway to your goal?

Analgesic: drug that relieves pain.

Physical proximity is analgesic.

You can tell that your children aren't anxious and that they're well adjusted to the circumstance if they are playing. Playing has its own circuitry and is easily interrupted by other factors.

Kagan established long term temperamental stability in children (21 months—7.5 years) → high test reliability.

Voluntary active exploration normalized the children's behavior; it moved them closer to the 'normal range.' This is exactly what you see clinically in anxious people.

Causes of negative emotion: pain, the possibility of pain, uncertainty.

Handling high levels of negative emotion:

- Have a plan. One with a reasonable possibility that you will successfully implement. Make the simplest possible plan you can that is also motivating.
- Don't underestimate the utility of routine. Get up at the same time, go to bed at the same time. Eat at the same time. Scaffold the predictability with islands of stability (great for anxious children).
- Expose yourself to unfamiliar situations voluntarily. **This demonstrates to your anxiety systems that you are more competent than the thing is dangerous. The danger isn't reduced, but you can cope with it.**

Ex: If you protect young, volatile, withdrawn adults from anything that would upset them, you make those traits worse (e.g. universities).

Neuroticism is mediated by the right hemisphere.

Neuroticism is our response to danger, the unknown.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Neuroticism is broken down into two traits: withdrawal and volatility.
- Anxiety is a marker for pain and pain is a marker for damage. Therefore, you experience anxiety before you experience pain as it's part of a defense mechanism.
- Voluntarily active exploration normalizes anxious behavior in children and adults. (In other words, actively exposing yourself to what you're afraid and/or anxious about.)

## 5: Agreeableness: Compassion and Politeness

### Compassion trait descriptors

- Not interested in other people's problems (reversed)
- Feel others' emotions
- Inquire about others' well-being
- Can't be bothered about others' needs (reversed)
- Empathize with others' feelings
- Indifferent to the feelings of others (reversed)
- Take no time for others (reversed)
- Take an interest in other people's lives
- Don't have a soft side (reversed)
- Likes to do things for others

Compassion may be seen as a negotiating strategy, where the other gets a better deal than you do.

Compassion → care for those who need care, which broadens (potentially detrimentally) into care for everything.

Politeness ⇔ respect for authority.

### Politeness trait descriptors

- Respect authority
- Believe I am better than others (reversed)
- Hate to seem pushy
- Take advantage of others (reversed)
- Avoid imposing my will on others
- Rarely put people under pressure
- Insult people (reversed)
- Seek conflict (reversed)
- Love a good fight (reversed)
- Out for my own personal gain (reversed)

### Agreeableness trait descriptors

- Good-natured vs. irritable
- Softhearted vs. ruthless
- Courteous vs. rude
- Forgiving vs. vengeful
- Sympathetic vs. callous
- Agreeable vs. disagreeable

Agreeableness can be thought of as the dimension of maternal care.

One of the biggest personality differences between sexes is agreeableness: women are higher on both politeness and compassion (as well as neuroticism).

Maternal nature may be characterized by high sensitivity to negative emotion (high neuroticism) and high agreeableness.

Optimal female personality may be optimized for *mother and infant* well being as a unit rather than *mother* well being.

On the other end of agreeableness (opposite the maternal end) is disagreeableness, or *predatory aggression*.

If you have teeth and you're willing to use them, you often don't have to.

Agreeableness and conscientiousness increase as you age. Parents are older nowadays and are more careful and cautious. But we don't know how negligent you should be to be a good parent. Kids should be left alone as much as you can and you should let them do what they need to do.

We don't fully understand everything that's going on with only children—that isn't the 'natural' way of bringing up kids historically.

Disagreeableness can be thought of as stubbornness or fortitude.

Ex: JBP's son refusing to eat. How can something so small be so stubborn?

Agreeableness is the best personality predictor of childhood conduct disorder, as well as adult antisocial personality and criminality.

Aggressive behavior is extremely stable.

If your kid has antisocial childhood conduct disorder at 4, it is almost impossible to do anything about it.

Low agreeableness is the best personality predictor of incarceration. The worst, most pernicious are also low in conscientiousness.

Competitive sports are abstracted hunting competitions. Hunting is to identify the target and to hit it. That's the basis of competitive sports.

Male disagreeableness—associated with predation when extended past its socialized utility—has been brought under socialized and cooperative control. It is partially the basis for how humans can organize themselves into goal-directed groups and compete + cooperate toward an agreed upon end.

Disagreeableness works when it is part of the competitive spirit that drives cooperative activity forward, if it is socialized. This is a positive of disagreeableness.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Agreeableness is a Big Five personality trait comprised of two aspects: compassion and politeness. Agreeableness helps us solve the problem of how much to value our own interests compared to others'.

- There is an obvious language bias that makes it sound like being agreeable is better than being disagreeable, but there are pronounced advantages and disadvantages to both:
  - Agreeable behavior is an adaption for maternal care, while disagreeable behavior is an adaption for predatory aggression.
  - Disagreeable people are unlikely to be used by others, often receive higher salaries for the same work, and do not become resentful. Conversely, agreeable people can become resentful or passive aggressive over time.



## 6: Men and Women: Personality Differences

The biggest temperamental differences between men and women are in agreeableness and neuroticism. This seems to be true cross culturally.

Men and women are temperamentally more alike than they are different.

There is more diversity within men and women than there is between men and women.

Gender, race, and ethnicity are bad markers for diversity. These would only be good markers if there were more differences between genders, races, and ethnicities than similarities, which there are not.

### Temperamental differences between men and women, in rank order

1. Compassion (women higher)
2. Withdrawal (women higher)
3. Politeness (women higher)
4. Volatility (women higher)
5. Openness (women higher)
6. Orderliness (women higher)
7. Enthusiasm (women higher)
8. Assertiveness (women lower)

As cultures become more egalitarian, and as cultures become more wealthy, women and men get more different. Not by a little bit: the differences are large by social science standards. This is something we will have to chew on for a very long time.

Ex: The differences in the proportion of men and women in stem fields is larger in egalitarian countries.

Interest: another trait-like behavior that psychologists have been studying for a long time. Two poles of interest: more interested in *people* or *things*.

Disagreeable people tend to be more interested in things, agreeable people tend to be more interested in people.

The difference between male and female outcome that is not a consequence of prejudice cannot be laid at the feet of something as simple as ability. Men and women are essentially the same in **IQ** and essentially the same in **conscientiousness**. **These two biggest predictors of long-term success** are pretty stable across men and women. But interest is a big differentiator and the difference in interest grows as the egalitarian nature of states increases, and as wealth increases. This is enough to drive substantive differences in occupational choice.

⇒ If you free up men and women to make their own choices (which is an aspect of equality of opportunity), you increase the degree to which certain elements of inequality manifest themselves on the outcome end.

Two populations can be very similar at the average, yet very different in the extremes. We often don't care about what's happening in the middle because the real choices are determined at the extremes.

Ex: Engineers. The stereotype (which, stereotypes are often quite accurate) is that they're harsh, abrasive, a little bit on the autism spectrum—and autism is endemic in Silicon Valley where engineers tend to mate. There is evidence that autism is an extreme *thing* orientation. Engineers are gadget oriented, not very people focused, and not so great socially. But they are remarkable at constructing things and putting them together.

Hardly anyone is an engineer. Let's say 1 in 20 to 1 in 50 people are engineers, then 2-5% of the population are engineers (if it is that high). These are not your average people: they're outliers along some dimension. Part of that is IQ because you have to be smart to be an engineer. That wipes out ~85% of the population. What else do you need to be an engineer? You kind of have to be obsessed with things. Because that's what you're doing, you're dealing with things all the time.

If you took the 1 or 2 in 100 people that were *most* interested in things, how many of them would be men? ~90%. That's enough to account for the occupational difference.

The same thing happens at the opposite end of the distribution. There are not many male nurses.

The ratio of men to women in prison, cross-culturally, is 15:1. Why? If you take the 2 most aggressive people out of 100, the probability that they are men is ~93%.

**Men and women are more alike than they are different. There are differences, which are stable, which get magnified with increased egalitarianism, and those differences are enough to drive occupational choice differences.**

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- There are gender differences in personality, most notably in agreeableness and neuroticism, with women scoring higher in both.
- Interest is a trait-like behavior that measures the differences between interest in things vs. interest in people.
- Small differences in distributions can have a large effect at the extreme ends of the distribution, which is where decisions are often made.

## 7: Conscientiousness: Industriousness and Orderliness

### Industriousness trait descriptors

- Carry out my plans
- Waste my time (reversed)
- Find it difficult to get down to work (reversed)
- Mess things up (reversed)
- Finish what I start
- Don't put my mind on the task at hand (reversed)
- Get things done quickly
- Always know what I am doing
- Postpone decisions (reversed)
- Am easily distracted

### Orderliness trait descriptors

- Leave my belongings around (reversed)
- Like order
- Keep things tidy
- Follow a schedule
- Am not bothered by messy people (reversed)
- Want everything to be just right
- Am not bothered by disorder (reversed)
- Dislike routine (reversed)
- See that rules are observed
- Want every detail taken care of

### Conscientiousness trait descriptors

- Conscientiousness vs. negligent
- Careful vs. careless
- Reliable vs. undependable
- Well-organized vs. disorganized
- Self-disciplined vs. weak willed
- Persevering vs. quitting

Conscientiousness is the 2nd best predictor of life outcome. The 1st is IQ.

Conscientious people value duty, diligence, and focus (industriousness), and organizational ability, concentration on detail, and insistence on borders and boundaries (orderly).

Conscientious people seem to be good at carrying things out.

The prefrontal cortex is responsible for planning. It grew out of the motor cortex. The prefrontal cortex is an extension of the part of the brain that acts: “think before you act” is made possible. Thinking is planning actions—practical fictions

laid out in a conceptual space. The dorsal-lateral prefrontal cortex is integrally involved in planning and envisioning.

JBP's theory: Conscientiousness is associated with dorsal-lateral prefrontal cognitive ability.

The correlation between dorsal-lateral prefrontal cognitive ability and IQ is extremely high. They might even be the same thing (they probably are). *The correlation with conscientiousness was ZERO.* They were theoretically “supposed” to be correlated but weren’t at all.

Delayed gratification tests, dutiful “n” circling tests<sup>1</sup>: *the correlation with conscientiousness was ZERO. Researchers could not find a single thing in the laboratory that conscientious people did better.* It is not correlated with IQ either. A predictor of conscientiousness could not be found: only personality tests. There is no theoretical model either.

So they split conscientiousness into its sub-traits, which was useful.

**Orderliness predicts political belief. Conservatives → lower in openness, higher in orderliness.**

**Orderliness: sensitivity to disgust.**

There is a disgust system and facial response associated with it.

Orderly people are easily disgusted, so they work to keep things orderly so they are not disgusted.

What is the utility of disgust? You manifest disgust to contaminate and pathogens.

Opposite of disgusting: purity → there is a moral element to this. Orderly people aim for what is pure, away from what is disgusting.

The results of a study examining predictors of authoritarianism: (1.0 is perfect)

- warfare (negatively, slight)
- malnutrition (barely, .05)
- famine (.26)
- pathogen prevalence (.42 → *way up there in terms of relationships found by psychologists*)
  - measured by blood parasite count

Conservative forms of political belief are part of the process by which we put borders and barriers between things.

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<sup>1</sup>“Dutiful ‘n’ circling” tests are sustained attention tasks where participants must methodically circle every instance of the letter “N” in long sequences of text or letter arrays. These tests were designed to measure what researchers thought might capture the “dutiful” aspect of Conscientiousness—the ability to persist at boring, repetitive tasks that require careful attention to detail. The logic was that highly conscientious people, being more disciplined and thorough, would perform better on such tedious vigilance tasks. (Claude Sonnet 4)

Why stay in the box (intellectually, creatively)? Well, what is the box keeping out?

- Liberal answer: ideas and the free flow of information and goods.
- Conservative answer: pathogens.

There are reasons to keep things inside the box.

Ex: The Bubonic plague was (maybe) carried by rats on ships.

95% of the native population of North America was killed by mumps and smallpox.

Industriousness may be associated with guilt and shame. People who are industrious work so they are not useless. If they are inactive, that is not morally acceptable and they are working to avoid that. Along with being dutiful and pulling your weight. *This is speculation.*

Syphilis may be the only disease that came from the Western hemisphere, brought back from the Europeans. When this became an epidemic in Europe, it produced Victorian sexual morality.

Disgust is a broad category that reaches up into what we consider moral and pure.

“Hitler’s Table Talk”: Book of transcribed (by his secretary) dinner conversations with Hitler. A pattern was noticed when JBP read this book. Hitler’s metaphor for the Aryan race was a body. A pure body with pure blood that was under assault by parasites. Hitler bathed four times/day.

Hitler was a great admirer of will power. He would do the “Hitler salute” for 8 hours/day when driving around in his staff cars and was very proud of his ability to do that. There were ways in which he was hyper-disciplined.

Conscientiousness is one of the best predictors of military success (orderliness).

Ex: Germans in WWII made highly reliable tanks that would last forever. But the US made worse tanks that could be cranked out much more quickly. This was the way to go because tanks are meant to be blown up—the side with more, worse tanks did better.

**Orderly obsessiveness with detail can cloud your vision of the broader picture.**

Two patterns of prediction in business:

- high IQ, high conscientiousness: predicts managerial and administrative success
- high IQ, high openness: predicts creative and entrepreneurial success.

Liberals and conservatives are both required for the optimal functioning of any enterprise. Conservatives implement and liberals revivify. This underpins the

importance of upholding free speech. This keeps a political system stable: the free exchange of ideas from a truly diverse group.

Disgust is what drove Hitler. How do you destroy the pathogen you're disgusted by? Destroy it. Burn it.

OCD is a disorder of disgust.

Ex: They feel contaminated if they touch the wrong thing.

The behavioral immune system: the manifestation in the psyche and in behavior of the immune system has these external behavioral manifestations that can become pathologized, as in the case of OCD.

Hyper-conscientious people get hyper-judgemental. And they do it morally.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Conscientiousness is the Big Five trait that is comprised of hard work and organization.
- Orderliness is associated with sensitivity to disgust.
- Conservative forms of political belief are part of the process by which we put borders and barriers between things.
- Orderly obsessiveness with detail can cloud your vision of the broader future.
- High conscientiousness combined with high IQ predicts managerial and administrative success, while high openness combined with high IQ predicts creative and entrepreneurial success.

## 8: Openness to Experience: Intellect and Openness

Creativity is the ability to generate a diverse range of original but practical ideas. This can be measured with the Torrance Creativity Test (Ex: write down as many uses for a brick as you can think of in a given time span).

Not everyone is creative. The bulk of creative work is done by a tiny proportion of the people (Pareto distribution).

Pareto distribution rule:  $\sqrt{n}$  people do half the work,

where  $n$  is the total number of people

This rule scales oddly:

10 employees	→	3 do $\frac{1}{2}$ the work
100 employees	→	10 do $\frac{1}{2}$ the work
1,000 employees	→	30 do $\frac{1}{2}$ the work
10,000 employees	→	100 do $\frac{1}{2}$ the work

Big corporations die in large part because the consequence of the Pareto distribution. Incompetence grows exponentially while competence grows sublinearly (slower than linear growth and faster than logarithmic growth).

Too big to fail? No: so big it will inevitably fail. This is a general rule. Not everything scales.

### Openness trait descriptors

- Enjoy the beauty of nature
- Believe in the importance of art
- Love to reflect on things
- Get deeply immersed in music
- Do not like poetry (reversed)
- Seldom notice the emotional aspects of paintings and pictures (reversed)
- Need a creative outlet
- Seldom get lost in thought (reversed)
- Seldom daydream (reversed)
- See the beauty in things that others might not notice.

### Intellect trait descriptors

- Quick to understand things
- Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas (reversed)
- Can handle a lot of information
- Like to solve complex problems
- Avoid philosophical discussions (reversed)
- Avoid difficult reading material (reversed)
- Have a rich vocabulary
- Think quickly

- Learn things slowly (reversed)
- Formulate ideas clearly

Both of these traits are positively correlated with IQ.

### Openness to Experience trait descriptors

- Original vs. conventional
- Imaginative vs. down-to-earth
- Creative vs. uncreative
- Broad interests vs. narrow interests
- Complex vs. simple
- Curious vs. incurious
- Daring vs. cautious
- Independent vs. dependent
- Untraditional vs. traditional
- Liberal vs. conservative

The US military was very interested in IQ; they studied it for 100 years. Recently it has been made illegal to induct anyone into the military with  $IQ < 83$ . That's 10% of the population. Reading between the lines: "10% of the population cannot be trained to do anything useful whatsoever." This means that our society is structured in such a way that 10% of the population is unemployable.

IQ is a truly reliable test. There isn't in JBP's belief a more reliable test in all of social science.

**IQ: Take 10,000 questions about ANYTHING. Choose 100 questions randomly. Administer them to 100 people. Rank order the results. That is IQ. It has  $\sim .95$  or  $.96$  reliability.**

There is a 60:1 return on investment in nutrition and vaccines for children. Proper nutrition boosts fluid intelligence to as high as you can manage.

Crystallized intelligence increases with age; fluid intelligence decreases with age.

**IQ is a deadly predictor of long-term life success.**

If you administer a battery of abstract questions and group them by factors (just like the Big Five), you get ONE FACTOR. This is one type of intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>IQ can be understood as an empirical discovery rather than a theoretical assumption: when researchers administer hundreds of different cognitive tests—memory, vocabulary, spatial reasoning, math problems, pattern recognition—to large groups of people, a striking pattern emerges in the data. Nearly every mental task correlates positively with every other task, meaning people who perform well on one type of cognitive challenge tend to perform well on others. When statisticians apply factor analysis to these correlations, they consistently find that roughly 40-50% of the variance across all these diverse mental abilities can be explained by a single underlying factor—what we call “g” or general intelligence. This isn't a theory about what intelligence “should be,” but rather a mathematical description of how human cognitive performance actually clusters in the real world. Just as factor analysis revealed that thousands of personality descriptors reduce to five basic dimensions (the Big Five), the same statistical method reveals that cognitive abilities, despite their surface differences, share



There is a profound biological underpinning to the differences in intelligence.

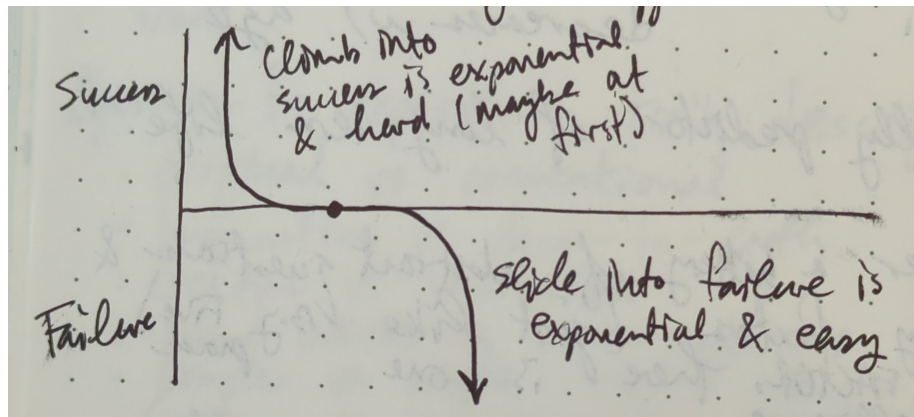
The richer and more egalitarian the society, the more the IQ differences are determined by biological factors. *Remove the cultural variation and all that's left is the biological variation.*

### **IQ is profoundly predictive, powerful, and unfair.**

Universal basic income could be very hard on conscientious people who maybe lack the intelligence to be employed.

The problem with UBI is not “how are we going to provide people with enough material resources so they can scrape by, or even flourish, materially speaking,” it is “how are we going to provide people that are on the lower end of the cognitive distribution with a genuine purpose and place in a complex technological society?”

Pareto principle: if you're successful at one thing, more opportunities come your way and so do more people who open doors for you, leading to more opportunities. Once good things start to happen, it increases the probability that more good things will happen. The same thing happens with the negative.



### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Creativity is the ability to generate a diverse range of original but practical ideas.
- Openness to experience is the Big Five personality trait associated with openness and intellect.
- Intellect is a direct reflection of IQ. IQ is the best and most reliable measure of intelligence. It measures a person's capacity to learn, the number of abstract variables they can manage at one time, and their processing speed.

### **TRAIT SUMMARY**

- Extraversion: associated with positive emotion.

substantial common ground that we measure as IQ. (Claude Sonnet 4)

- Neuroticism: associated with negative emotion.
- Agreeableness: associated with maternal care and predatory aggression.
- Conscientiousness: associated with industriousness and orderliness (disgust).
- Openness to Experience: associated with intelligence and creativity.

## 9: Q&A

Conflict that never goes away is worse than just conflict. For agreeable people: swallowing bitterness and not confronting the conflict is no way to make things better. Things deteriorate.

Consult your resentment. It can be shameful to even admit that you have it but it is really useful. Resentment either means that (1) you are being taken advantage of and you should stand up for yourself, or (2) you should grow up and quit complaining.

Vow to live without resentment. This will morally obligate you to say “no” when necessary.

Impolite  $\Leftrightarrow$  blunt

Bluntness can be a good thing but is at times inappropriate.

A bad plan is way better than no plan at all because you learn along the way. Break down the tasks until they’re small enough so you could even do them (for the unconscientious). Plan the day you really want.

The problem with creative endeavor is that it often times requires an intermediary mess, which is hard on orderly people. This can be addressed by putting a time constraint on your creative endeavors. These constraints make you do things truly original and imaginative.

See if you can figure out how to do things 10x faster. This requires sacrificing some things (maybe) but its certainly possible. Why not do something good 10x faster?

Disagreeableness is allied with a “thing/gadget” preference. Engineers are obsessed with gadgets: that’s a niche and a really useful one.

Notice behaviors and reward them. If you are wise in your use of attentive reward, people around you will start doing all sorts of things that you want done. When people do something good, especially when they’re taking tentative steps to improve, don’t punish them.

Ex: Hot girlfriend dresses up for the night out. Jealous you discourages that. Now she won’t look nice anymore (make an effort) and she hates you.

Personality disorder: (the clinical findings)

- high neuroticism,
- low agreeableness,
- worsened by low conscientiousness

JBP says: wisdom is the broadening of personality. You want to have a hat for every occasion. Specialize in what you are: it’s easier to push a rock downhill. But while you’re doing that, try to broaden your personality.

The opposite of what you are is also valuable under some circumstances.

*Roughly speaking, you want to choose a career that suits your personality and a partner that, roughly speaking, is quite similar to you.*

Intellect can be improved by reading and writing.

If you listen to someone, someone's personality transforms. They articulate their problems and, if you keep letting them talk, they solve them. They are stumbling towards enlightenment just as you are.

Ex: JBP listened to a client for 24 hours before she got to the point.

*Listen to your partner (or anyone) without premature judgement and they will transform.*

*There is nothing you can do that is better for someone than to listen.*

*Listen to yourself because you don't know who you are.*

**All personality measures are either good or bad variants of the Big Five.**

**Personalities are not optional. They're built into us and are present, we have seen, as early as 6 months (at least with some traits), maybe earlier.**

## Appendix: Brief Notes on Couples Report from [understandmyself.com](http://understandmyself.com) | Jordan & Tammy Peterson | EP 226

Scoring 88th percentile vs. 98th percentile for a particular trait, say extraversion, may not seem like a large difference, but it is more substantial than you might think.

88th percentile: if there were 100 people in a room, you would be more extraverted than 88 of them, and less than 11 of them. Another way of putting it: 88th percentile means you occupy the rank ordered position of 89 in the lineup of 100 people.

*88th percentile for extraversion  $\Leftrightarrow$  more extraverted than 9/10 people (less than 1/10)*

98th percentile: if there were 100 people in a room, you would be more extraverted than 98 of them, and less than 1 on them.

*98th percentile for extraversion  $\Leftrightarrow$  more extraverted than 49/50 people (less than 1/50)*

*There is a difference between being 1/10 and 1/50.*

Or take another example: 98th vs. 99th percentile in extraversion. The 98th percentile extraverted person is more extraverted than 49/50 people. The 99th percentile extraverted person is more extraverted than 99/100: they are something like twice as extraverted.

Temptation towards narcissism: high level of extraversion, low level of agreeableness; this is moderated by conscientiousness.

People can get along with a variety of other personality traits, but if you have two neurotic people, that can be quite difficult.

Women initiate about 75% of divorces (one reason for this: higher in neuroticism—sensitivity to negative emotion).