

MODULE TWO:

TEENAGE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Theories of Personality & Personality Development

The Five Factor Model of Personality (FFM)

The FFM is a set of five personality trait dimensions often referred to as the Big Five: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience. The FFM is the most widely used model of personality structure, and research has shown that each Big Five dimension develops across the life span in response to biological and environmental influences.

Personality and the Brain

Recent research in personality neuroscience has begun to investigate patterns of brain structure and reactivity associated with the Big Five.

Lifespan Personality Development

Personality change appears to have both biological and environmental causes with cross-cultural personality research providing some key insights on personality change trends that occur with age.

Youth Personality Development

Most of the research to date has focused on adult personality development; much less is known about

youth personality development. Historically, researchers have looked at temperament in children and personality in adults. Temperament usually refers to behavioural traits seen in the early years (which are considered to have a strong biological basis). In contrast, personality has been thought to gradually emerge over the course of childhood and adolescence as temperamental dispositions become more complex personality traits. Typically temperament and personality have been measured using different tools.

The Little Six

A number of recent reviews have worked to connect temperament and personality research which has led to the development of the “Little Six” model. It incorporates key elements of temperament and personality aligning each element with one of the existing FFM dimensions, or, with an additional ‘Activity’ dimension. Several studies have provided sound data for the validity of these six dimensions indicating the Little Six model has potential for describing youths’ traits, and, for integrating temperament and personality research.

Source: Dr Christopher Soto, Colby Personality Lab (2015)

The Five Factors and The Little Six - Definitions:	High scorers are...	Low scorers are...
Extraversion	Outgoing and enthusiastic	Quiet
Agreeableness	Trusting and empathetic	Uncooperative and distrustful
Conscientiousness	Organised and self-directed	Spontaneous and disorganised
Openness to Experience	Creative and imaginative	Practical and conventional
Emotional Stability	Emotionally stable	Prone to stress and worry
Activity	Energetic and physically active	Inactive or sedate



Key Concepts and Recent Findings in Youth Personality Research

Concept One: The Maturity Principle

Research in to the Five Factor Model of Personality has consistently shown (across genders and cultures) that most adults become more agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable as they age. While it may be assumed that this trend would continue from birth through to old age, this isn't necessarily the case. Childhood and adolescence can create significant disruptions in some dimensions (see Disruption Hypothesis below).

Concept Two: The Disruption Hypothesis

The disruption hypothesis proposes that rather than steadily increasing throughout the lifespan, some dimensions are 'disrupted' and decline temporarily during adolescence. Recent youth personality studies support this theory showing conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience declining from childhood into early adolescence, followed by inclines from late adolescence into early adulthood. The disruption hypothesis also fits with what we know about brain development in teens.

Age Group Definitions:

Late childhood (10-12 years)
Early adolescence (13-14 years)
Late adolescence (15-17 years)
Early adulthood (18-20 years)

Concept Three: Gender Differences in Personality Development

Modest gender differences in personality are evident in adult populations with women tending to have slightly higher rates of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, and slightly lower rates of emotional stability, than men (these differences vary across cultures). Research into youth personality traits has also found differences between genders. During adolescence, the gender differences tend to be more pronounced creating more significant disruptions.

Key gender differences in youth personality development:

Conscientiousness: There is a decline in conscientiousness in both genders with its lowest rate at around 12 years of age. The decline is much more pronounced in boys. Conscientiousness increases for both genders from age 13-20. Girls are more conscientious at every age with the gender difference largest at 13-14 years old.

Agreeableness: Girls tend to be slightly more agreeable than boys, but the differences are small.

Openness to experience: Boys' openness to new experiences dips quite sharply between the ages of 10 and 16 before picking up slightly in late adolescence/early adulthood. Girls are more variable. Overall they tend to be somewhat more open to new experiences than boys, but are a bit more up and down. Two key items of interest within this dimension are curiosity/exploration and fantasy/daydreaming which show distinctive and virtually opposite trends. Curiosity declines significantly and progressively from childhood to age 14 and then plateaus (no increases). Daydreaming increases significantly from childhood to age 17 years. From 17-20 years this item plateaus for boys while dropping away a little for girls.

Extraversion: Changes in extraversion with age are consistent across gender. Typically expressive behaviour declines significantly from childhood to age 14 and then levels out.

Emotional Stability: Both boys and girls show a similar decline in emotional stability during childhood, but from age 10-20 years, gender differences are evident. For boys, emotional stability increases between the ages of 10 and 20, while for girls, a brief increase between 10 and 12 years of age is followed by a decrease from 12 through to 20 years of age. These results indicate gender differences with girls appearing to experience greater negative emotionality. Of note, while emotional responses like crying decline significantly over time, self doubt (for both boys and girls) increases throughout adolescence.

Research findings discussed in this page directly referenced from the article:

Soto, C. J. (2016). **The Little Six personality dimensions from early childhood to early adulthood: Mean-level age and gender differences in parents' reports.** *Journal of Personality*, 84, 409-422.

This article reports on survey responses from the parents or guardians of 16,000 children, adolescents and young adults between the ages of three and 20 years).



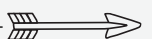
NEWCASTLE PERSONALITY ASSESSOR (NPA)*

*The Newcastle Personality Assessor (developed by Daniel Nettle) is a brief tool for assessing the Big Five. While a longer questionnaire will undoubtedly produce even more accurate results. Nettle has developed the NPA by carefully selecting and validating a small number of statements which when tested correlate highly with longer tools. So despite the short assessment the results are pretty helpful. This makes it a great initial tool to use with young people where attention spans may wane quickly!

How Accurately Can You Describe Yourself?

Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly the same age as you.

1.	Starting a conversation with a stranger.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
2.	Making sure others are comfortable and happy.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
3.	Creating an artwork, piece of writing, or piece of music.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
4.	Preparing for things well in advance.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
5.	Feeling blue or depressed.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
6.	Planning parties or social events.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
7.	Insulting people.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
8.	Thinking about philosophical or spiritual questions.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
9.	Letting things get into a mess.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
10.	Feeling stressed or worried.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
11.	Using difficult words.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me
12.	Sympathising with others' feelings.	Very unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very like me



CALCULATING AND INTERPRETING YOUR SCORES

Your Results

	Your Score	Low	Low-Medium	Medium-High	High
Extraversion		2-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Emotional Stability		2-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Conscientiousness		2-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Agreeableness		3-10	11-12	13	14-15
Openness/Creativity		3-8	9-10	11-12	13-15

REFERENCES

Source Material:

This document relied heavily on material sourced from the Colby Personality Lab (directed by Dr Christopher Soto). Colby is a private liberal arts college based in Maine, USA. The Colby Lab has a strong focus on lifespan personality development and has undertaken a number of specific studies on adolescent personality development which is a relatively under researched area at present.

Other References:

ACADEMIC ARTICLES:

Soto, C. J. (2016).

The Little Six personality dimensions from early childhood to early adulthood: Mean-level age and gender differences in parents' reports.

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Soto, C. J., Kronauer, A., & Liang, J. K. (2016).

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In S. K. Whitbourne (Ed.), Encyclopedia of adulthood and aging (Vol. 2, pp. 506-510). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

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Personality traits in childhood and adolescence: Structure, development, and outcomes.

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Nettle, D. (2007). **Personality What Makes you the Way you Are?** Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

