

Free-Response Question 2

Although personality is generally consistent throughout the life span, some people exhibit major personality changes.

A. *How do each of the following help to explain BOTH continuity and change in personality?*

Biological factors

Learning factors

Situational factors

Cognitive factors

B. *How would any TWO of the above interact to produce change in the trait of shyness?*

Question 2 Scoring Guide**PART A: EXPLANATIONS (8 points)****General Comments**

1. Each point awarded must be identifiable within the context of a particular area (biological, learning, etc.) and within the context of either continuity or change.
2. The use of terms without explanation ("concept bombing") is not enough. To adequately explain, students should describe a mechanism or use a concrete example.
3. Sometimes the same idea (e.g., social learning theory) can be used to justify both continuity and change. This is acceptable as long as the student has clearly established the context for both.
4. Continuity can be established by speaking to two different points in time, or words like "enduring" or "maintaining." In order to receive credit, it must be possible to infer some permanence to a personality change.

Biological Factors**Point 1: Biological Continuity**

- a. Genetics and heredity.
- b. Temperament or the notion that some traits and patterns appear to be established at birth (i.e., inherent traits).
- c. Stable neurochemistry or hormone levels.
- d. Body type.

Point 2: Biological Change

- a. Neural changes, e.g., neurotransmitter levels, tumors, brain injury, etc.
- b. Changes related to maturation (e.g., puberty or menopause) or aging (e.g., Alzheimer's).
- c. Serious bodily injuries, such as loss of limb, if related to neurological changes.
- d. Genetic problems with later manifestation (e.g., late onset schizophrenia).

Learning Factors**Point 3: Learning Continuity**

- a. Patterns established through early experiences or conditioning.
- b. Responses that have a history of reinforcement or conditioned emotional responses.
- c. Learned habits.
- d. The long-standing effects of social learning, socialization, interactions with parents or others, or modeling.

Point 4: Learning Change

- a. Changes resulting from new reinforcement patterns or contingencies.
- b. Behavioral therapies.
- c. Traumatic experiences.
- d. Changes produced by social learning, e.g., socialization, modeling, learning from others, etc.

BUT:

- Credit is not granted if the student's answer does not relate to learning theory. The student must at least imply a psychologically-based learning mechanism or process.

Situational Factors**Point 5: Situational Continuity**

- a. Culture, family, or similarity of situations/circumstances across time.

Point 6: Situational Change

- a. Life changes (e.g., moves, family, etc.), major disappointments, or stress.
- b. Effect of changes in groups or environments.

BUT:

- No credit is granted for temporary or short-term effects of situation. Personality change requires some degree of permanence or the passage of time.

- No credit for change if the student simply says that a person has learned to show different traits in different situations. The situation must be presented as the independent variable, i.e., the factor that is causing the change.
- No situational points if the student simply repeats the same arguments used for learning factors. No “double dipping” between these two sections.

Cognitive Factors

Point 7: Cognitive Continuity

- a. Consistency in thinking styles, beliefs, or schema.
- b. Stability of outlook (positive or negative) over time.
- c. Thinking styles, positive versus negative outlook.
- d. Consistent attributional style.

Point 8: Cognitive Change

- a. Changes in the way one thinks.
- b. Result of cognitive therapeutic techniques.
- c. Cognitive restructuring or the development of new ways of thinking.

PART B: INTERACTION (1 point)

Point 9:

- a. To earn this point, the student’s answer must:
 1. Relate to shyness.
 2. Plausibly *combine* at least two types of factors. To do this, the student must explain the presence of shyness based on any one factor and then explain what happens as a result of a factor from a different area. The second factor modifies (either enhancing or reducing) the effect of the first. For example, a genetic predisposition to shyness can be modified (either enhanced or reduced) by reinforcement.

Sample Student Responses

EXCELLENT ESSAY (9 points)

Biological factors explain continuity in personality because of genetics and the trait theory. These state that one's personality is predetermined from the start and that the personality you have as a child will be the same you have as an adult. It supports a discontinuous change in personality because our levels of hormones are forever changing with these changes and imbalances can come the major personality changes.

Learning factors explain a continuous personality in that early in life people are conditioned and reinforced to behave in a certain way. They may experiment with different ~~behaviors~~ ^{behaviors} but sooner or later they will be reinforced enough with a certain type of behavior that they will have for the rest of their life. It supports major change because we may suddenly exert a new behavior with people that gets a very positive ^{result} ~~result~~. This would change our behavior and thus change our personality.

Situational factors explain a continuous personality because the situations that people place themselves in are never going to be radically different. Therefore their personality would stay the same. It supports discontinuity because there are major life changes such as a death of a spouse, marriage, or divorce that can change one's personality forever.

~~Cognitive~~ ^{Cognitive} factors suggest continuity because once one adopts a mental schema for himself and the world with all his ^{prejudices} ~~prejudices~~ and attributions he will keep that personality for his entire life. Discontinuously one might have a flash of insight so magnanimous or so profound an experience with something they formerly thought

was true (prejudice, schema) that could change their personality forever.

Learning and Cognitive factors could interact to produce change in the trait of shyness. Somebody introverted, or shy, could be conditioned positively for taking any kind of an extroverted approach to life. Then their behavior would slowly but surely become more outgoing which would stimulate cognitive thought. They would discard any irrational beliefs about their shy selves and would ^{allow} to stimulate their new found freedom to intrinsic qualities. This would then create a more higher sense of self-esteem and reward for both the proper (extroverted) behavior and the right train of ~~the~~ restructured thought.

Comments:

A. Biological: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point given for mention of genetics and trait theory (the student is referring to the theory and supporting research evidence that a significant amount of personality traits are inherited).
2. Change: Point given for the statement that hormonal changes and imbalances can result in major personality changes.

B. Learning: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point given for student's statement that consistent patterns of conditioning and reinforcement early in life for certain behaviors will lead to enduring patterns of behavior.
2. Change: Point given for idea that "positive results" for a new behavior would change our behavior and thus change our personality. This point would have been stronger if the student had used the term "positive reinforcement" instead of positive results.

C. Situational: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point given for pointing out that the situations people place themselves in often have a sameness that produces a sameness in personality.
2. Change: Point given for the student pointing out that major life changes can change one's personality forever.

D. Cognitive: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point given for student's correct use of the concept of "mental schema" and that such schemas help determine personality.
2. Change: Point given for the "flash of insight" that changes one's schema and, consequently, one's personality forever.

E. Interaction: 1 point

Point given for showing how learning (being conditioned positively for taking any kind of extroverted approach) and cognition (which would stimulate them to discard any irrational beliefs about shy selves and attribute new-found freedom to intrinsic qualities) could interact to produce a change in the trait of shyness.

EXCELLENT ESSAY (8 points)

Many factors effect personality. These factors both promote personality continuity, and cause change.

A person's biological condition promotes continuity, in that one gets a certain set of genes that one can not change. These genes create a persons basic personality. However if there is a malfunction in the devices that carry out the genetic plan, a change ~~could~~ may occur.

~~Occurances~~ Occurances that could cause a personality change would be a hormone imbalance or a neurological ~~ex~~ problem. Learning factors promote continuity, because, ~~once~~ once a behavior is learned, and ~~repeatedly~~ used, it may become part of one's ~~own~~ personality, ~~like~~ such as a habit. Changes in personality can also result from learning factors as well. One can be taught to think or act in a different way. Newly learned information can interfere with old information (retroactive). People tend to ~~be~~ adapt to the people they are around. If someone is around the same group all the time, their personality will reflect this. However, if ~~some~~ this same person begins being introduced to new groups and situations, their persnality will change to accomadate the new situation. Cognitive factors, or the way ~~one~~ one mentally represents the world, also effect personality. If one consistently

views the world in the same way, their personality will ~~be~~ show continuity. However, if they ~~begin~~ do not have a consistent mental representation, their personality may change as a result.

Learning factors and ~~s~~ situational factors can interact to ~~change~~ change someone who is shy to an outgoing person. If a shy person is placed in a group of outgoing people, the atmosphere they create, along with ^{the} gradual learning of the outgoing behavior, ~~they~~ will cause them to adapt and become ~~more~~ less reserved. If the shy person observes that asking a question will not have a negative side effect, they will learn that it is okay, and be more willing to do it in the future. If a shy person is in an atmosphere where they need to be outgoing, such as having to ask for directions, they are more likely to do it.

Comments:

A. Biological: 2 points

1. Continuity: point given for genes that one cannot change.
2. Change: point given for a hormone imbalance or neurological problem causing a personality change.

B. Learning: 1 point

1. Continuity: Point given for acquisition of a habit becoming part of one's personality.
2. Change: Point not given; the gathering of new information, or learning to act or think in a different way, does not address a learning theory based impact on personality change.

C. Situational: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point given for personality formation as a result of being with the same group over time.
2. Change: Point given for changes in personality as the person accommodates the being in a new situation.

D. Cognitive: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point given for consistently viewing the world in the same way, giving continuity to the personality.
2. Change: Point given for personality change as a result of an inconsistent mental representation.

E. Interaction: 1 point

Point is given for placing the shy person in a group of outgoing people, combining that "atmosphere" with observational learning leading to a change in the level of shyness exhibited by that person in the future.

GOOD ESSAY (6 points)

Although personality is generally consistent throughout one's life, many factors can influence, and even change drastically, their personality.

One such factor is biology. Biology plays a key role in one's personality. There is much evidence that personality traits are genetically inherited and that chemical ~~tests~~ and hormonal changes can influence personality. During adolescence, for example, teens go through drastic hormonal changes. These changes can increase the libido, increase aggression, and ~~also~~ modify personality in ~~general~~ one's mood and emotions. Another biological factor is the onset of genetically inherited diseases. For example, schizophrenia may be genetically inherited; this illness does not usually set in until early adulthood. This onset could drastically alter one's personality.

Another factor is learning factors. Many psychologists believe that modeling and imitation are key in creating one's identity and personality. Modeling, although it occurs most efficiently in childhood, can occur late in one's life. People, according to social psychologists, imitate people they respect or admire. This may influence people to alter their personality. For example, if one's best friend is humorous, that person may make an unconscious attempt to be funny as well.

Another factor is the situation one is placed in. If a person is usually happy and content and suddenly placed in a ~~hostile~~ ^{hostile} environment such as a war or even a prison, they may exhibit a drastic change to a more aggressive and violent personality.

Cognitive factors ~~also~~ can also drastically influence one's personality. If one believes they should be caring and honest, they most likely will unconsciously strive to achieve that personality. This idea, known as self-fulfilling prophecy,

is a key factor in Freudian thought but is also essential in cognitive beliefs. ⁽⁷⁾ Thinking that one is a certain personality type will aid in making that personality evident.

One example of how a personality can drastically ^{is} shy. A ~~person~~ ^{person} who is suddenly afflicted with schizophrenia, particularly simple schizophrenia may exhibit symptoms of ~~myself~~ ^{introversion} which is a complex form of shy. Another factor is learning. One who feels that their role in society is to be shy, and their parents and siblings are all shy may suddenly change their personality to one of a very shy person.

Many factors could induce ^{such} ~~that~~ drastic changes in personality. They may be ~~a~~ combination of many or simply one single factor. This though not often does occur.

Comments:

A. Biological: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point is given for "personality traits are genetically inherited."
2. Change: Point is given for hormonal change can influence personality coupled with adolescent maturation.

B. Learning: 2 points

1. Continuity: Point is given for "modeling and imitation are key in creating one's identity and personality."
2. Change: Point is given for "people . . . imitate people they respect or admire" — indicating modeling as the learning mechanism.

C. Situational: 1 point

1. Continuity: Point is not awarded — no reference to personality consistency.
2. Change: Point is awarded for introduction into a changed environment (hostile-war) that results in change in personality.

D. Cognitive: 1 point

1. Continuity: Point is given for the establishment of a belief system as a thinking structure, coupled with the comment that thinking pattern makes that personality evident.
2. Change: Point is not awarded — there is no comment on personality change.

E. Interaction: 0 points

The point is not awarded as these are two independent examples of factors influencing change in shyness. There is no combination (interaction) of the factors.