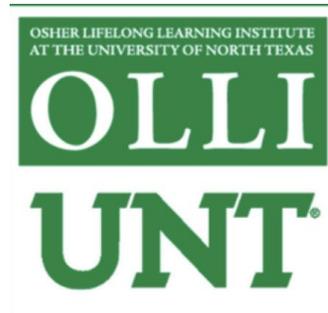


Does Our Personality Change? If So, Why?

Craig S. Neumann, Ph.D.

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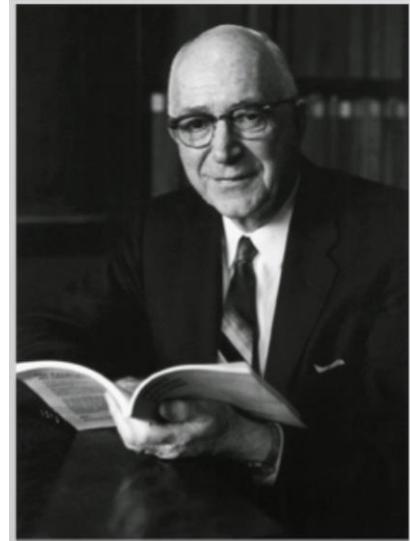
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Personality refers to the **enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life**, including major **traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept**, *abilities*, and *emotional patterns*. Various theories explain the structure and development of personality in different ways, but all agree that personality helps determine behavior.

Allport defined personality as,

"the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought."

'a characteristic way of thinking, feeling, and behaving'



Gordon Willard Allport was an American psychologist. He was one of the first psychologists to focus on the study of the personality, and is often referred to as one of the founding figures of personality psychology

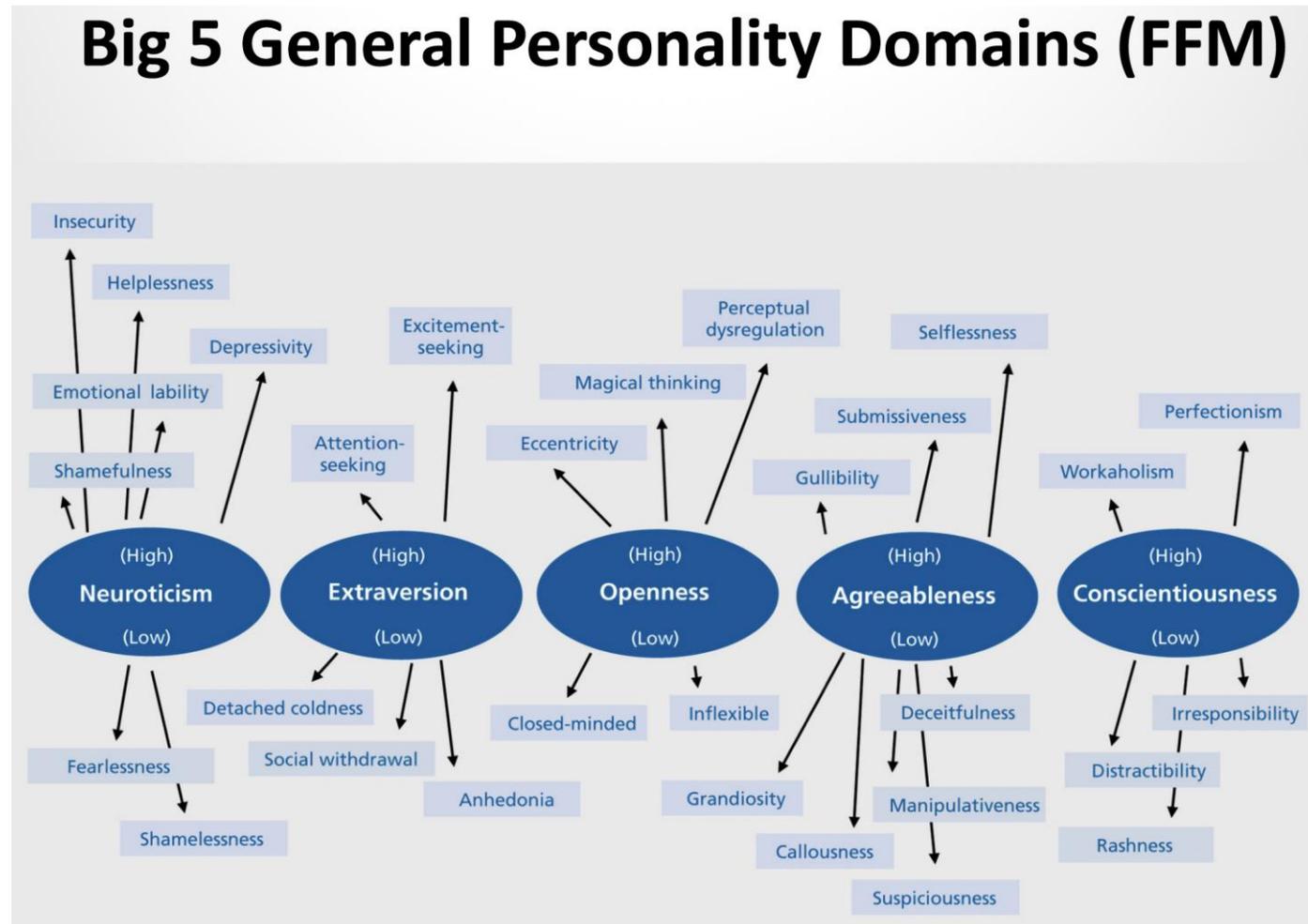
Born: November 11, 1897, [Montezuma, IN](#)

Died: October 9, 1967, [Cambridge, MA](#)

Education: [Harvard University](#), [Glenville High School](#)

Individual differences in personality characteristics—i.e., traits.

Understanding how the traits of a person come together as a whole.



Dispositional traits (DTs)
VS
Characteristics adaptations (CA)

*** DTs = *characteristics of persons that are consistent across situations and contexts*
(strong biological basis)

*** CAs = *relatively stable characteristics of person-in-context*
(influenced by experiences)

Dispositional traits (DTs) VS Characteristics adaptations (CA)

Table A1. *Definitions and Examples of Dispositional Traits and Characteristic Adaptations*

Theory / Model	Dispositional traits	Characteristic adaptations
Five-Factor Theory (McCrae & Costa, 2008)	<p>“endogenous [biologically based] basic tendencies ... that influence patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions” (p. 165)</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> Five-Factor-Model domains (i.e., Big Five trait dimensions, e.g. neuroticism and extraversion) and facets (e.g., anxiety and sociability)</p>	<p>“culturally [contextually] conditioned ... expressions of [basic tendencies] ... that develop over time” via trait-environment interactions (pp. 163-165)</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> strivings (e.g., social interest), attitudes (e.g. priority for cooperation), and self-schemas (e.g., self-esteem)</p>

How stable are personality traits from infancy to old age?

Will you recognize your college friend's personality when you meet her again at age 50?

Personality Stability and Change: A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies

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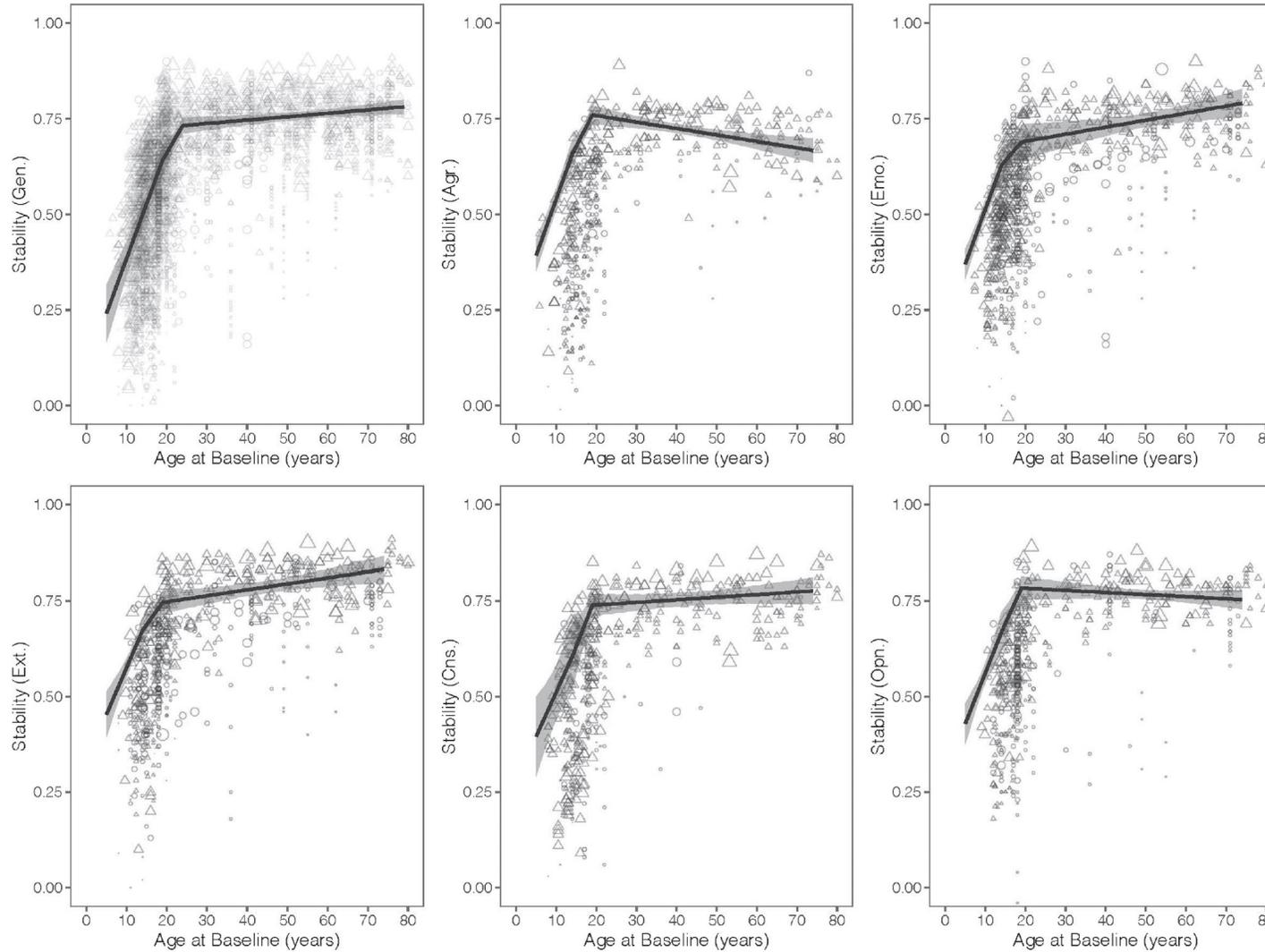
⁴ Department of Psychology, Loyola University Chicago

Public Significance Statement

This study summarized data from hundreds of longitudinal studies to confirm that (a) personality trait differences are fairly stable among adults, (b) these differences tend to stabilize during adolescence and young adulthood, and (c) personality tends to change in the direction of greater maturity as people age. These patterns hold across gender, nation, and ethnicity, although research from Western countries was overrepresented.

Figure 2

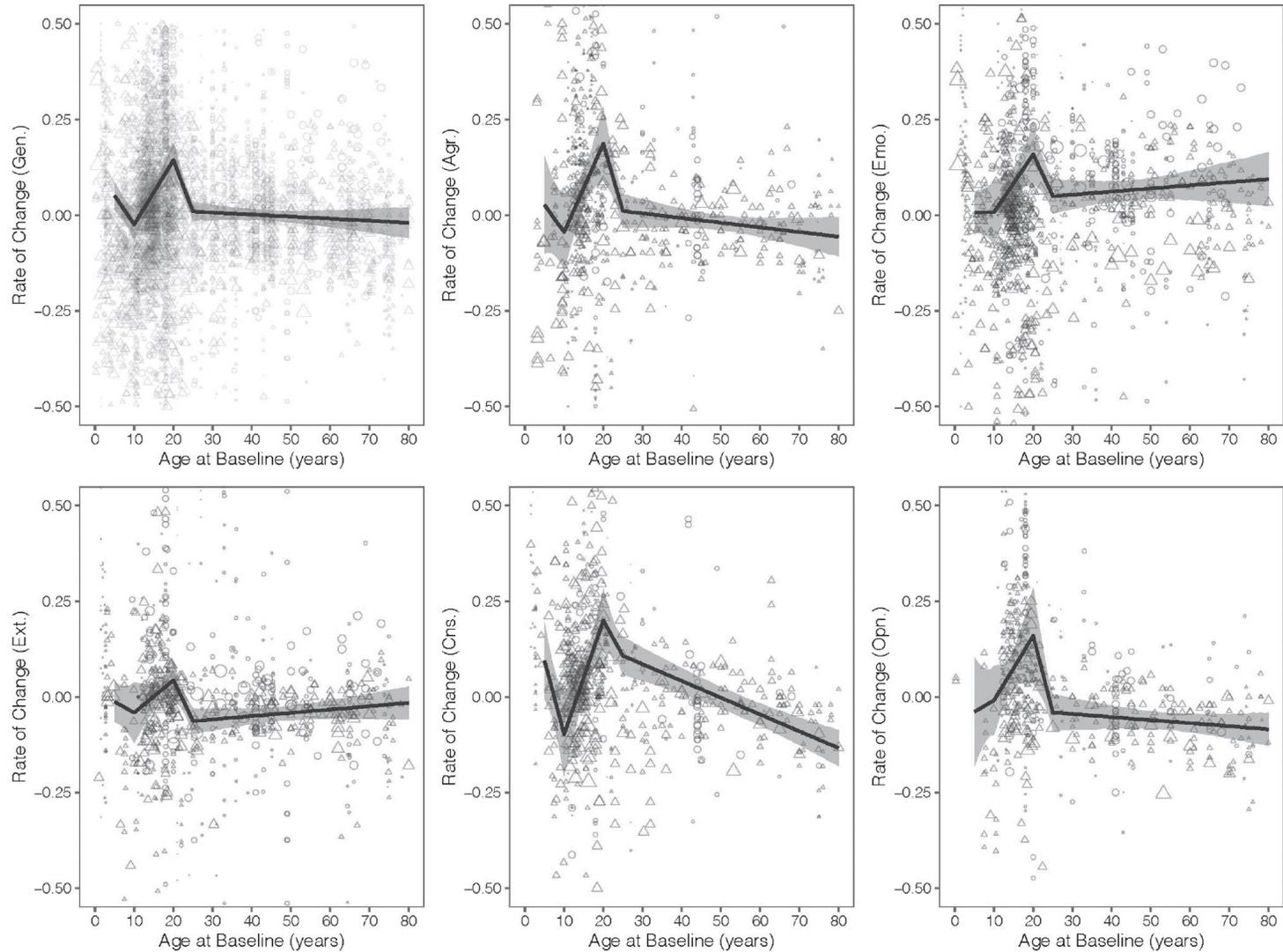
Life Span Trends for Rank-Order Stability Estimates (r) for All Traits and the Big Five Separately



Note. The first panel plots results for the full data set, and the subsequent panels plot results for Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness, in that order. Effect sizes are plotted in addition to the best-fitting spline model and scaled relative to the weight the effect size carried in the analysis, with larger plotting characters carrying more weight. Effect sizes represented as a circle are from previous meta-analyses, and effect sizes represented as a triangle are from the newly coded data. Shading around the trend line reflects the 95% confidence interval. Gen = general personality effect size; Ext. = Extraversion; Agr. = Agreeableness; Cns. = Conscientiousness; Emo. = Emotional Stability; Opn. = Openness.

Figure 4

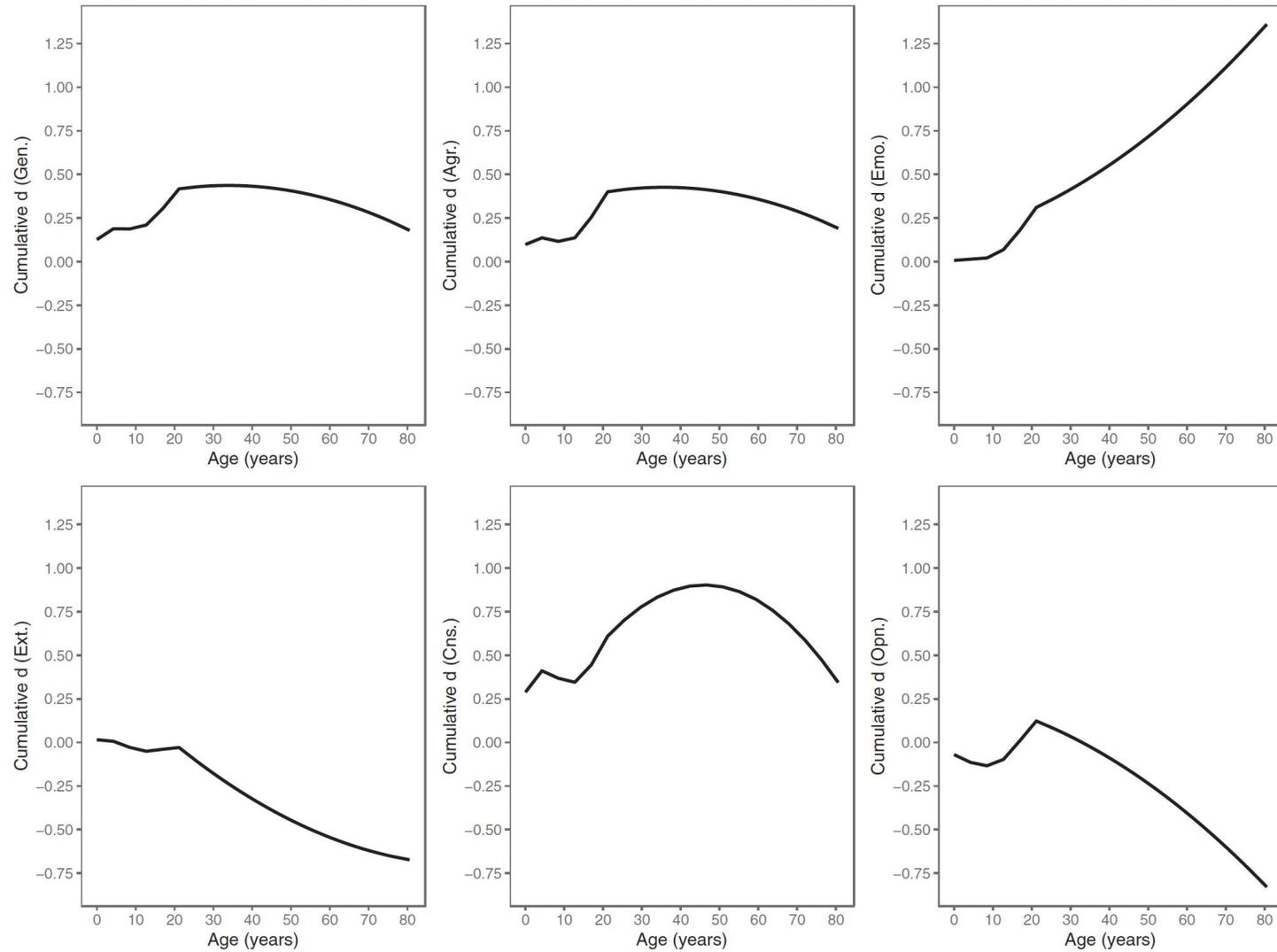
Life Span Trends for Rates of Mean-Level Change (Cohen's d) for All Traits and the Big Five Separately



Note. The first panel plots the results for the full data set, and the subsequent panels plot the results for Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness, in that order. Effect sizes are plotted in addition to the best-fitting spline model and scaled relative to the weight the effect size carried in the analysis, with larger plotting characters carrying more weight. Effect sizes represented as a circle are from previous meta-analyses, and effect sizes represented as a triangle are from the newly coded data. Shading around the trend line reflects the 95% confidence interval. Gen = general personality effect size; Ext. = Extraversion; Agr. = Agreeableness; Cns. = Conscientiousness; Emo. = Emotional Stability; Opn. = Openness.

Figure 5

Cumulative Mean-Level Change Across the Life Span for all Traits and the Big Five Separately



Note. Expected cumulative mean-level change (Cohen's d) across the life span for all effect sizes and the Big Five separately assuming a hypothetical cohort subject to the age-specific rates of change (Figure 4) and tracked from birth to age 80.56 years every 4.24 years. The first panel plots results for the full data set, and the subsequent panels plot results for Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness, in that order. Gen. = general personality effect size; Ext. = Extraversion; Agr. = Agreeableness; Cns. = Conscientiousness; Emo. = Emotional Stability; Opn. = Openness.

Findings reinforce aspects of the *maturity principle of personality development*

** Conscientiousness increases from Ages 20 to 50

** Emotional Stability shows continuous increases throughout the life span

** BUT... Agreeableness does not show continued increases past age 20

Less change of personality traits in middle and late adulthood

Middle adulthood as a period of maintenance, mastery, and control ... strategies prepare middle-aged adults to cope with stressors and maintain established lifestyles.

The mean levels of most traits decreased in old age

- ** Lower extroversion and openness to new experience in later adulthood
- ** emphasize the role of losses and resources for late life development
- ** Older adulthood comes with challenges such as health problems, loss of loved ones, and a general disengagement from social roles.

Personality-trait development reflects age-graded influences of both genetic and environmental factors

Is it primarily intrinsic biological processes?

Changes in the individual's environment that drive personality-trait development?

Biological Perspective

Personality traits are defined as “endogenous dispositions that follow intrinsic paths of development essentially independent of environmental influences”

e.g., becoming better at handling (regulating) one’s emotions with age

Social-Investment Theory

Age-graded life transitions (e.g., getting a job, married, becoming a parent) stimulate personality maturation because they force young adults to invest in new social roles

e.g., new responsibilities lead to adjust/adapt in a more conscientiousness way

Genetic factors on personality is substantial at all ages, but it peaks during early adulthood.

Environmental influences become more important and increasingly stable during early adulthood.

Genetic and environmental influences contribute to both stability and change in personality traits

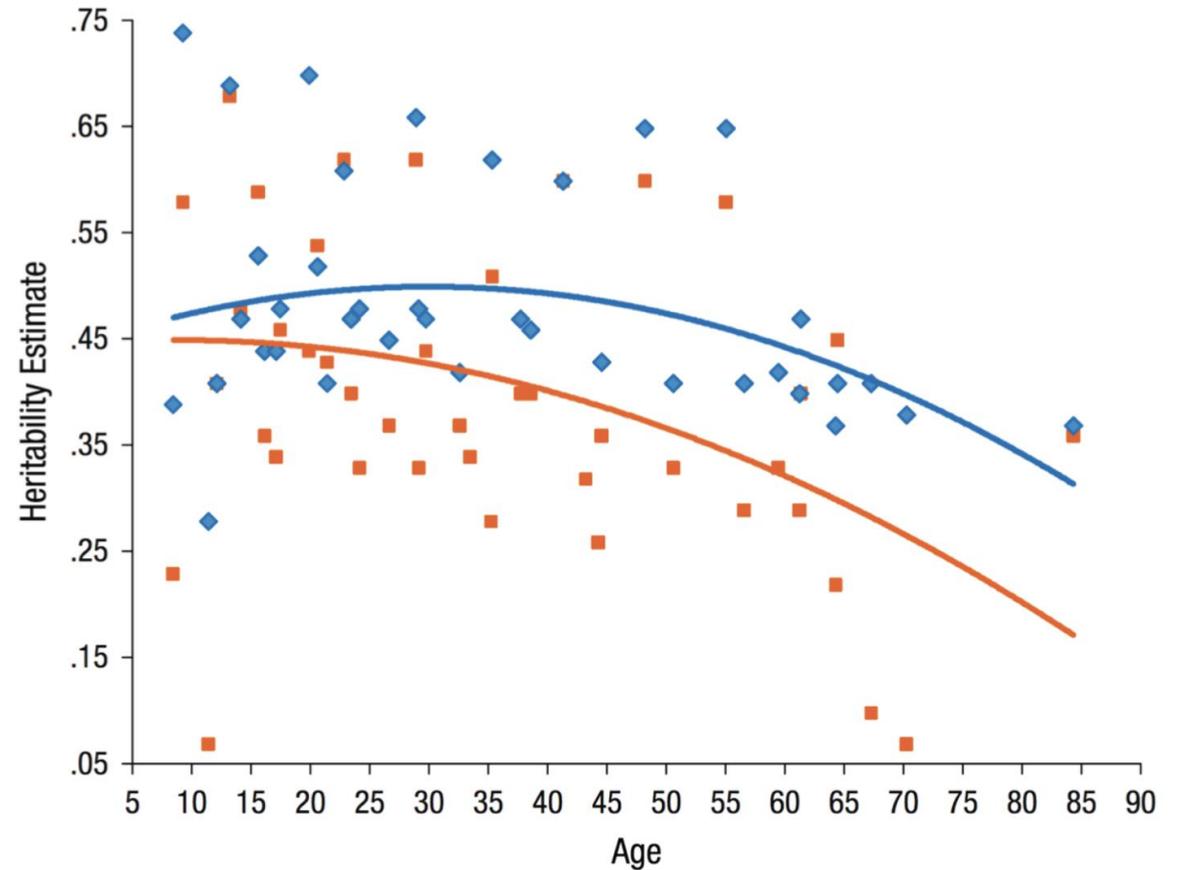


Fig. 3. Heritability estimates (the proportion of interindividual differences accounted for by genetic differences) for extraversion (depicted by the blue line and data points) and neuroticism (depicted by the orange line and data points) as a function of age. The heritability estimates shown are based on the results of genetically informative longitudinal and age-cohort studies (weighted by sample size): Bratko and Butkovic (2007), De Fruyt et al. (2006), Gillespie, Evans, Wright, and

Broad and narrow environmental and genetic sources of personality differences: An extended twin family study

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Abstract

Objective: Several personality theories distinguish between rather genetically rooted, universal dispositional traits (DTs) and rather environmentally shaped, more contextualized characteristic adaptations (CAs). However, no study so far has compared different measures of theoretically postulated DTs and CAs regarding their environmental and genetic components while considering differences in measurement abstraction and reliability. This study aims to bridge this gap by testing the assumed differences in the sensitivity to environmental influences based on representative sets of DTs (Big Five and HEXACO domains and facets) and CAs (goals, interests, value priorities, religiousness, and self-schemas).

Method: Using intra-class correlations and running extended twin family and spouses-of-twins model analyses, we analyzed a large data set ($N = 1967$) encompassing 636 twin pairs, 787 parent-offspring dyads, and 325 spouses/partners.

Results: Findings consistently support lower environmentality of DTs compared to CAs. On average, more than half of reliable variance in DTs was genetic, whereas the reverse was found for CAs. Larger environmental components in CAs were primarily attributable to larger individual-specific effects (beyond error of measurement) and factors shared by spouses.

Conclusions: Findings are discussed against the background of the definitional distinction between DTs and CAs and the value of extended twin family data.

KEYWORDS

characteristic adaptations, dispositional traits, environmentality, heritability, personality, twin family study

Dispositional traits (DTs)
VS
Characteristics adaptations (CA)

** DTs = *characteristics of persons that are consistent across situations and contexts*

** CAs = *relatively stable characteristics of person-in-context*

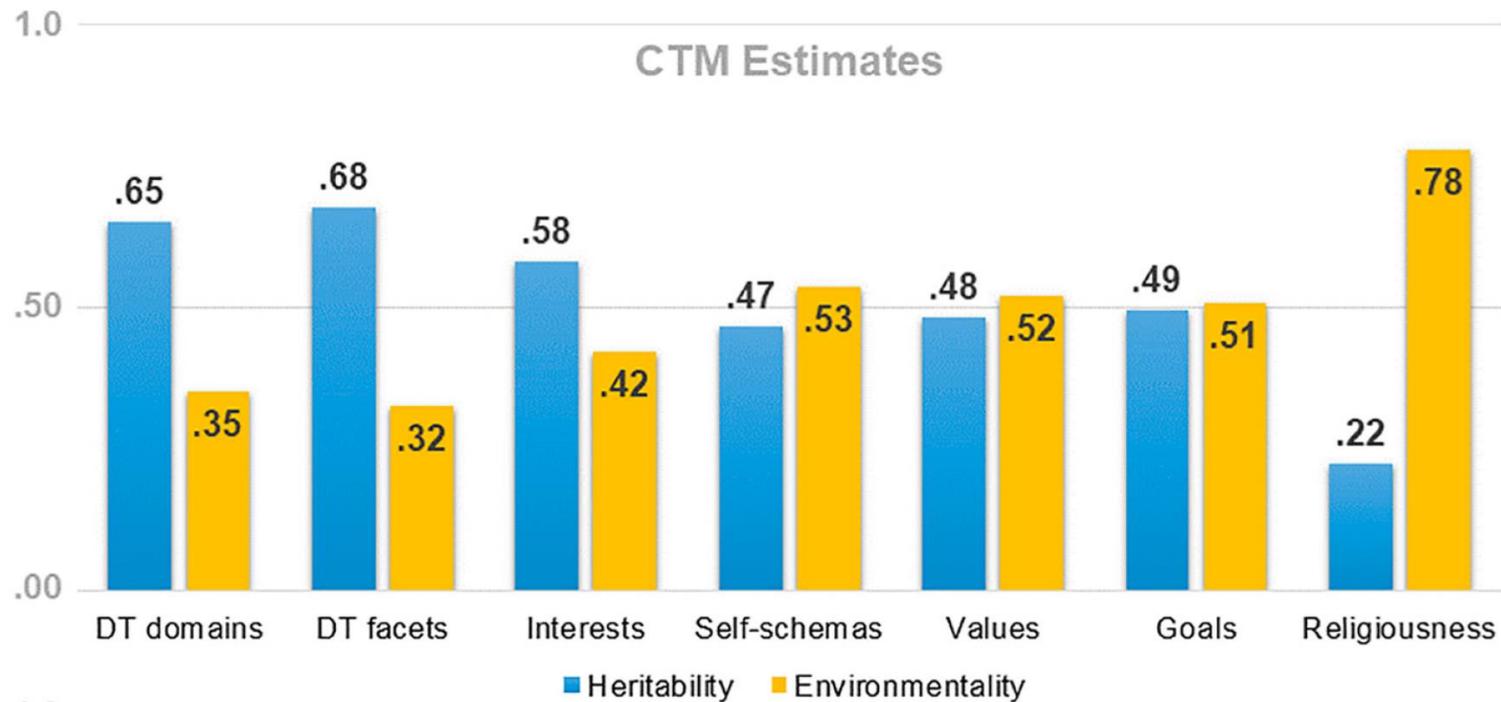


FIGURE 2 Differences in genetic and environmental variance components between measures of dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations. Estimates are standardized, corrected for unreliability of measurement, and based on the classical twin model

What Accounts for Personality Maturation in Early Adulthood?

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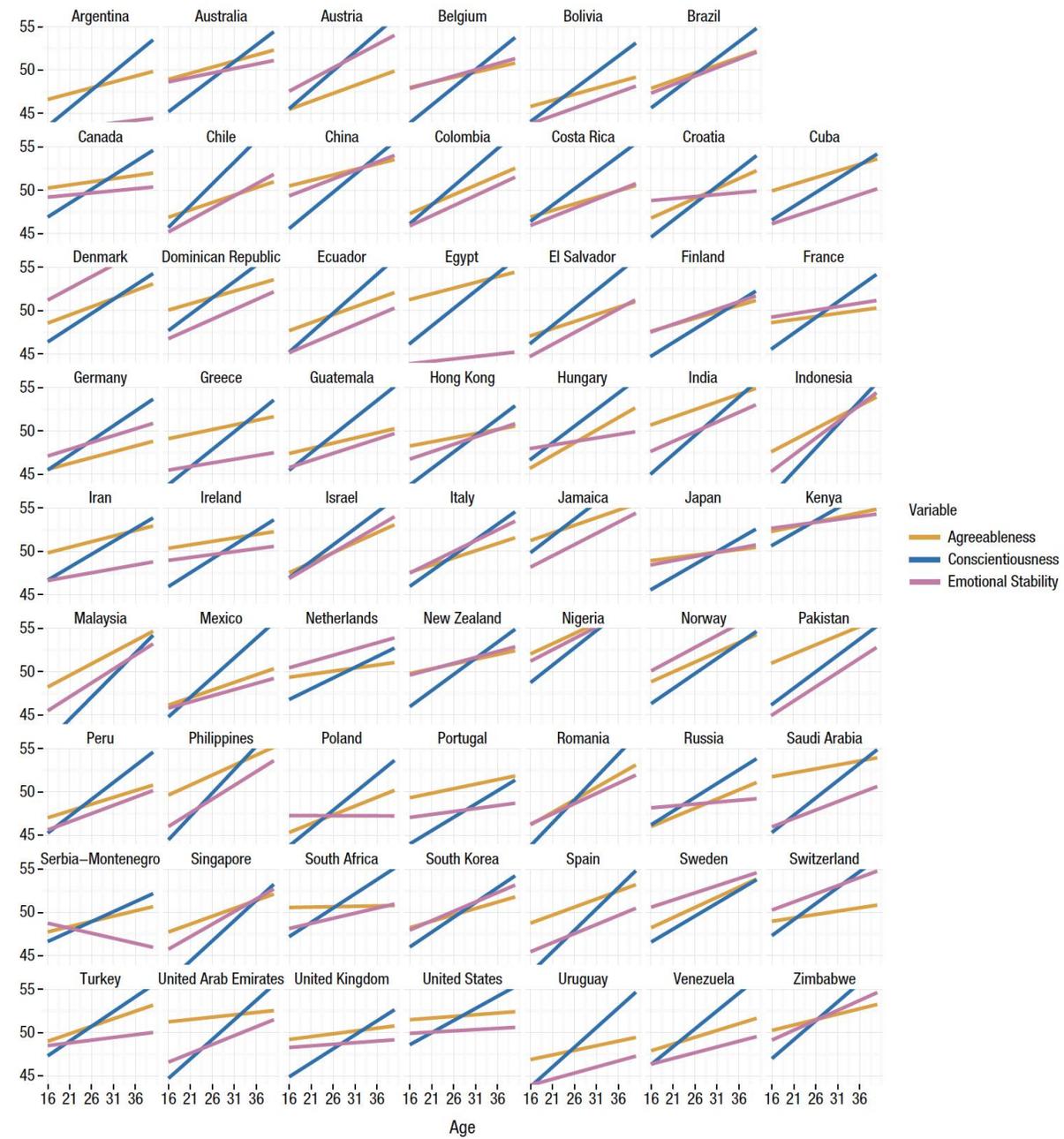
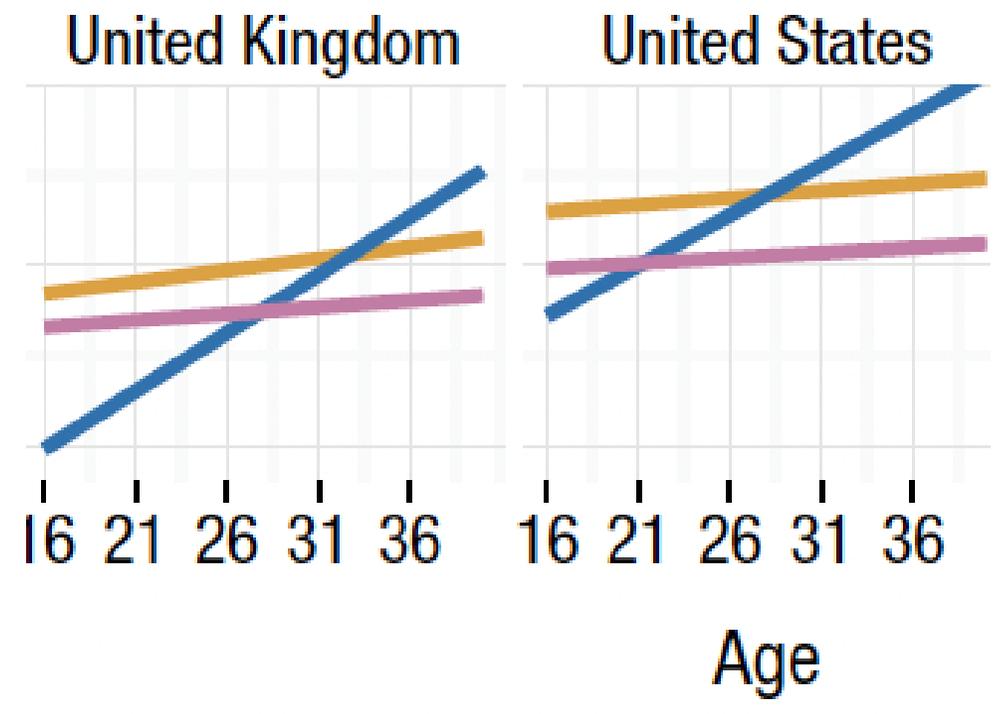
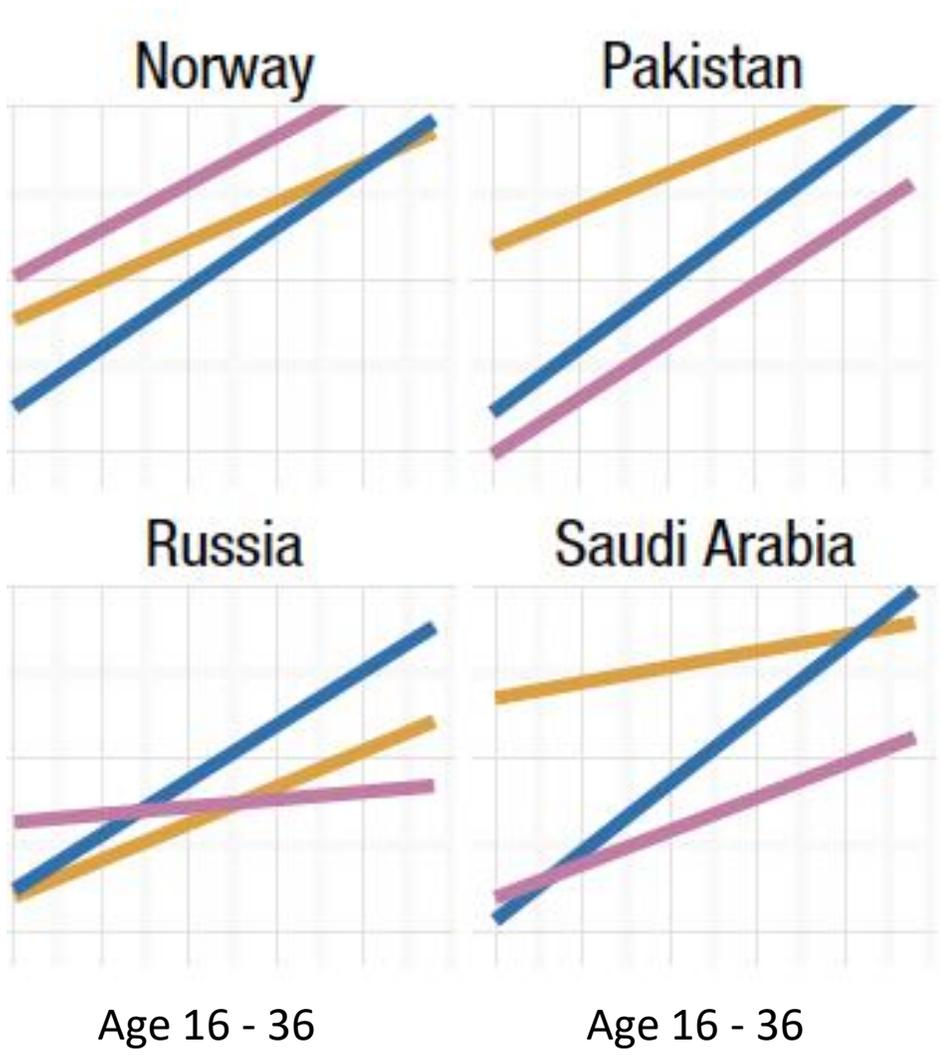


Fig. 2. Age effects on emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, based on data from 884,328 young adults (ages 16–40 years) from 62 nations (Bleidorn et al., 2013).

Variable

- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Emotional Stability



Research Article



Personality Maturation Around the World: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Social- Investment Theory

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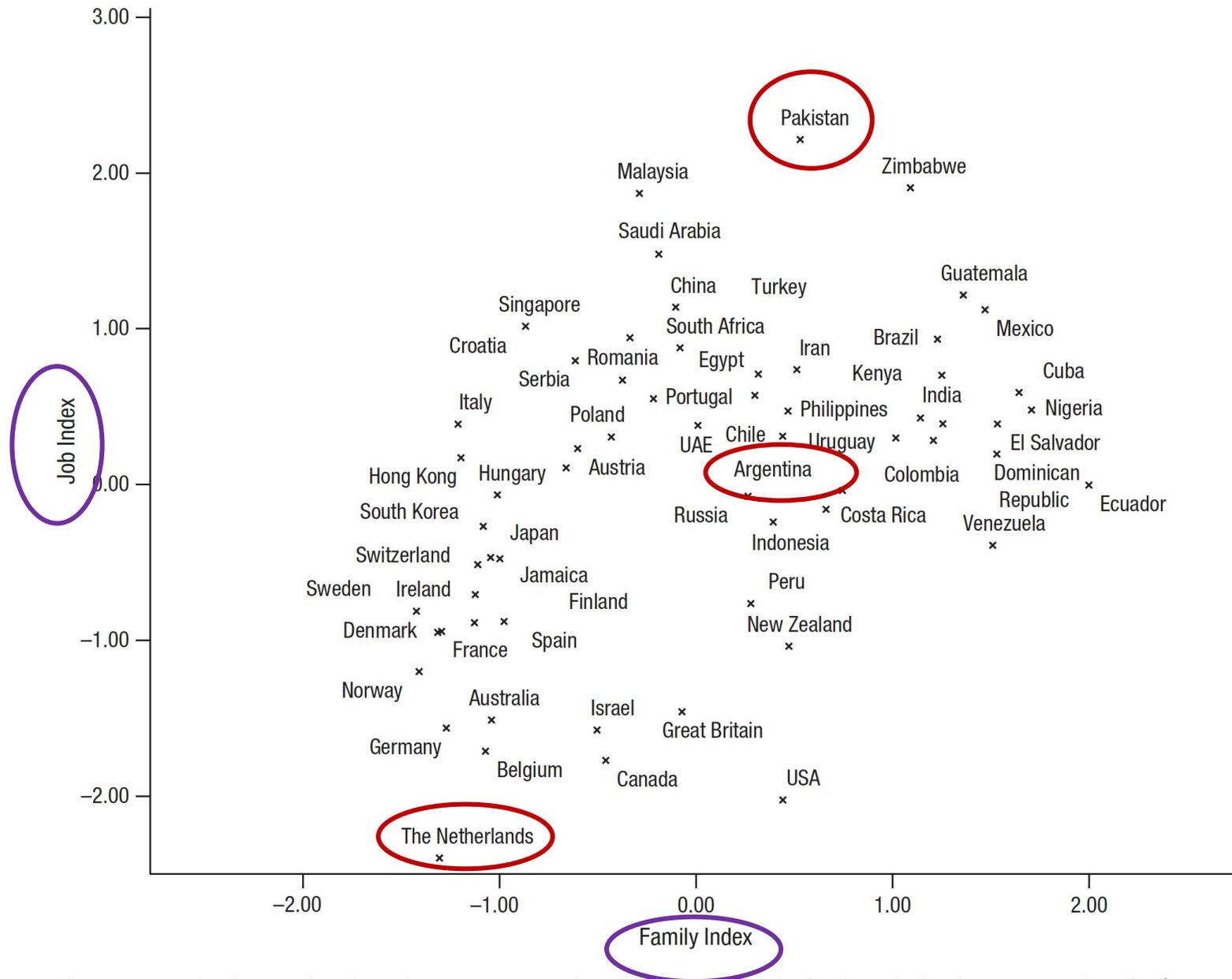


Fig. 1. Scatter plot showing the relation between regression-based factor scores on the family- and job-role-transition indices for 62 nations (see Table 1 for exact z scores). UAE = United Arab Emirates; USA = United States of America.

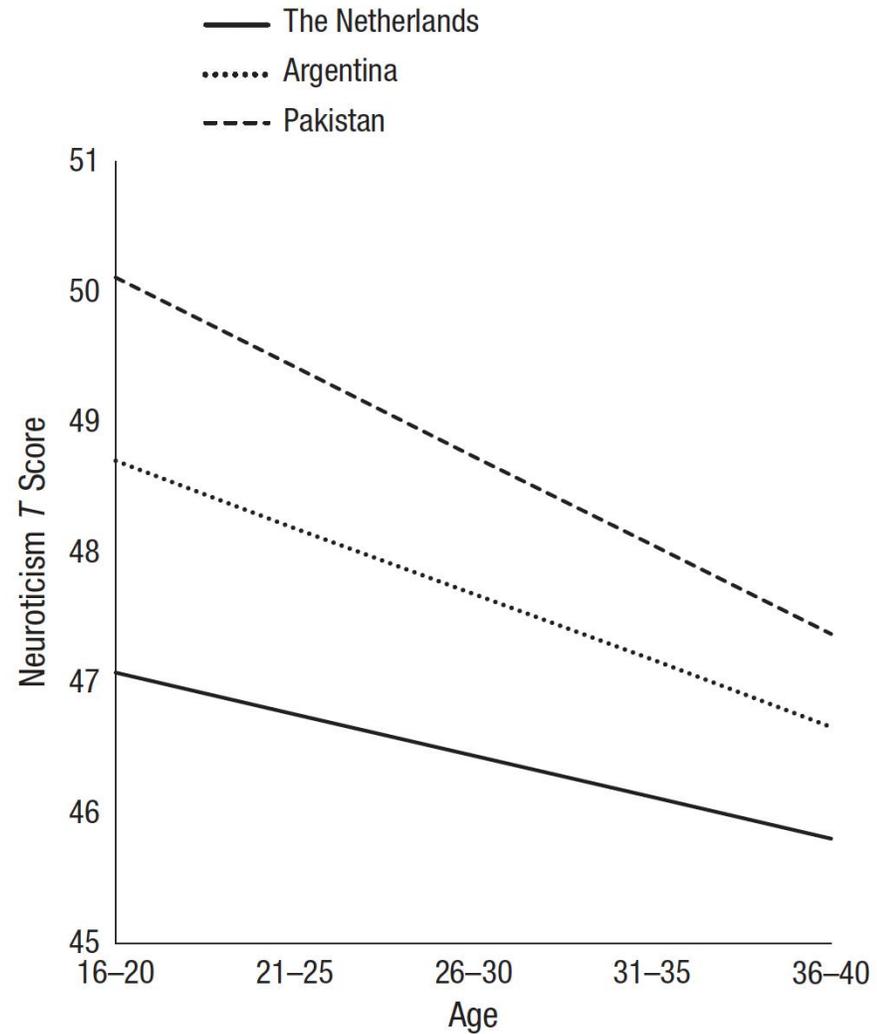


Fig. 2. Neuroticism as a function of age, as implied by the model. Results are shown for the cultures with the highest factor scores (Pakistan), average factor scores (Argentina), and the lowest factor scores (The Netherlands) on the job index (cf. Table 1).

OPEN

Genetics, personality and wellbeing. A twin study of traits, facets and life satisfaction

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Human wellbeing is influenced by personality traits, in particular neuroticism and extraversion. Little is known about which facets that drive these associations, and the role of genes and environments. Our aim was to identify personality facets that are important for life satisfaction, and to estimate the contribution of genetic and environmental factors in the association between personality and life satisfaction. Norwegian twins ($N = 1,516$, age 50–65, response rate 71%) responded to a personality instrument (NEO-PI-R) and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). Regression analyses and biometric modeling were used to examine influences from personality traits and facets, and to estimate genetic and environmental contributions. Neuroticism and extraversion explained 24%, and personality facets accounted for 32% of the variance in life satisfaction. Four facets were particularly important; anxiety and depression in the neuroticism domain, and activity and positive emotions within extraversion. Heritability of life satisfaction was 0.31 (0.22–0.40), of which 65% was explained by personality-related genetic influences. The remaining genetic variance was unique to life satisfaction. The association between personality and life satisfaction is driven mainly by four, predominantly emotional, personality facets. Genetic factors play an important role in these associations, but influence life satisfaction also beyond the effects of personality.

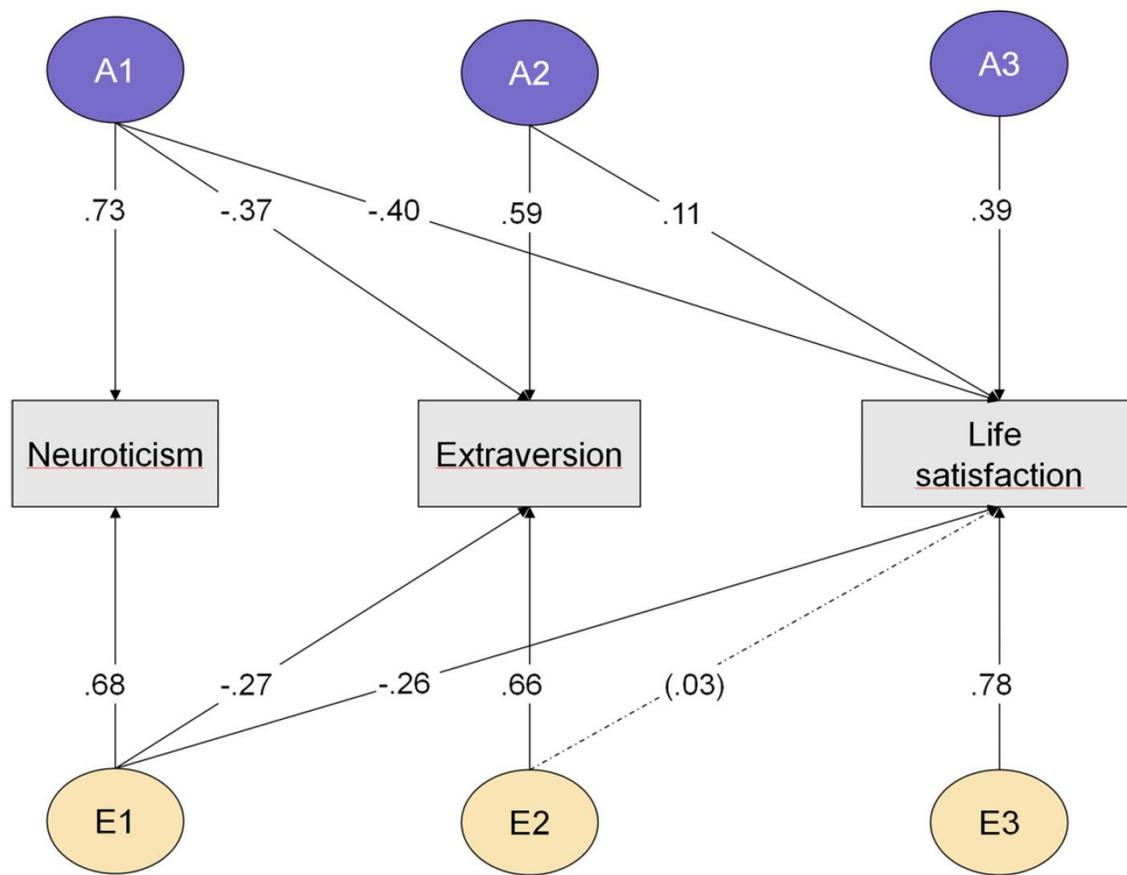


Figure 1. Biometric Cholesky model of neuroticism, extraversion and life satisfaction. A = Additive genetic factor; E = Non-shared environmental factor; All parameters: $p < 0.05$, except one parameter (n.s.) in parenthesis and dotted arrow.

Genetic factors of neuroticism reduce vs.
genetic factors of extraversion increase
Life Satisfaction

Environmental factors that increase
neuroticism vs. factors that increase
extraversion decrease vs increase
Life Satisfaction

Separate genetic and environmental factors
independently contribute to
Life Satisfaction

Summary

Genetic factors on personality is present at all ages, but it peaks during early adulthood

Environmental influences become more important and increasingly stable during early adulthood

How we choose to adapt, given our personality & our environments, plays an important role in our life satisfaction