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Essay Questions-Introduction

1. ***What is personality? What are some of the limitations of current definitions of the term?***

   Social attractiveness is frequently used to define personality in social contexts. A "good personality" is someone who impresses others with his or her ability to get along with others. Popularity is frequently used to define a person's "personality" in the workplace, school, and even church. In two major ways, defining personality in terms of social attractiveness is inadequate. For starters, it restricts the number and type of behaviors considered aspects of personality; that is, only behaviors chosen by the perceiver in judging the perceiver's attractiveness or unattractiveness are considered aspects of personality. Second, it implies that some people lack personality when they clearly have unique learning histories and distinct, biologically based temperamental traits.

2. ***What is the difference between a priori and post hoc explanations? Give some examples.***

   As an example of post-hoc, the textbook uses Freud's predictions about Leonardo da Vinci's sexuality. Based on information about Leonardo's early life, he offers an intriguing and ingenious post-hoc explanation of Leonardo's alleged homosexual dynamics. Although these "scientific formulas" appeared logical and correct, another investigator examined other aspects of Leonardo's early childhood experiences and came

to a completely different conclusion, namely, that post-hoc does not prove anything scientifically. The distinction between post hoc and a priori prediction is that when one event follows another, the first event inevitably leads to the second. For example, an a priori prediction is when we Christians have an a priori belief that God exists but lack physical evidence to prove it to others.

3. ***Why are attempts at replication of studies important to the scientific understanding of phenomena?***

Although replication is sometimes regarded as a minor aspect of science, it is essential and required because the results of any research work are not considered facts in any absolute sense, but rather as possibility statements. Researchers can better assess the value of any hypothesis based on the replication results. Replication success frequently boosts confidence in the findings. Researchers question the empirical validity of the relationship when it fails to replicate, assuming that the measurement procedures used to evaluate the hypothesis constructs are neither reliable nor valid. Failure to replicate on a consistent basis may force the initiators to revise their theories and possibly make new predictions. One case in point is an article published in a medical journal in 1998 by a British researcher who claimed to have discovered a link between a common childhood vaccine and autism. The children he studied, according to this article, developed autism shortly after receiving the vaccine. Following the publication of the article, many parents refused to allow their children to be vaccinated. As a result, several epidemics occurred, and some children died as a result of these diseases. Other researchers attempted to replicate the original study shortly after it was published. It could not, however, be replicated. No other study could discover a link between vaccines and autism. As a result, scientists came to believe that the initial findings were incorrect. Investigators eventually determined that the initial study was a hoax. They discovered that the study's author was paid a large sum of money to find evidence that vaccines cause autism, so he fabricated his findings. The truth might not have been discovered if other scientists had not attempted to replicate the study.