

# The Doctrine of Traits

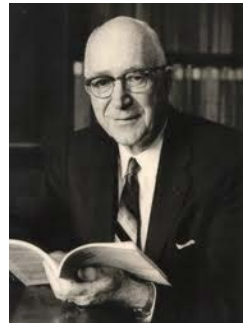
## Lecture 29

# The Doctrine of Traits

Allport (1937)

[A trait is] a generalized and focalized neuropsychic system... with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and expressive behavior.”

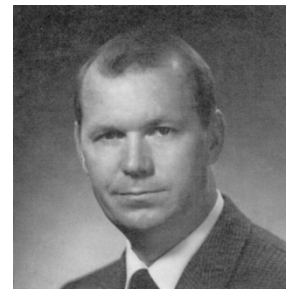
- Biosocial View
  - Traits Have Nominal Existence
- Biophysical View
  - Traits Have Actual Existence





# Psychometric Properties of Personality Tests

Anastasi (1969); Nunnally (1969)



- Standardization
- Norms
- Reliability
  - Inter-Rater
  - Test-Retest
  - Internal Consistency
    - Item-to-Total
- Validity
  - Content
  - Face
  - Empirical
    - External
  - Construct
- Utility
  - Efficiency
  - Cost-Benefit Ratio

# Standardization and Norms

- Standardization
  - Procedure for Administering the Test
  - Procedure for Scoring the Test
- Norms
  - Representative Sample of the Population
  - Permit Comparison of Individual Scores

# Reliability

- Inter-Rater
  - Inter-Judge
- Test-Retest
- Internal Consistency
  - Item-to-Total

# Validity

Meehl (1945); Cronbach & Meehl (1955); Loevinger (1957)

- Content
  - Universe of Content
- Face
  - Intuitive
- Empirical
  - External
- Construct
  - Theory



# Utility

Mischel (1968)



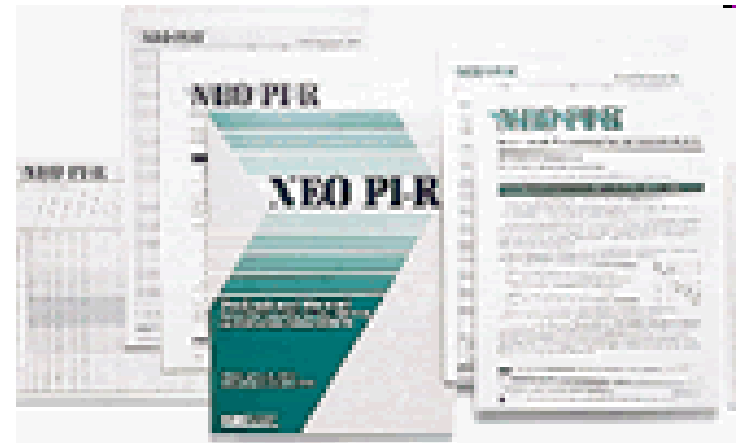
- Efficiency of Measurement
- Cost-Benefit Ratio

# The “Big Five” Personality Traits

Fiske (1949); Norman (1963); Goldberg (1981)

- Extraversion
- Neuroticism
  - Emotional Stability
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Openness to Experience
  - Intellectance, Culturedness

NEO Personality Inventory  
NEO Five-Factor Inventory



Costa & McCrae (1985, 1992, 1999)





# Facets of Extraversion

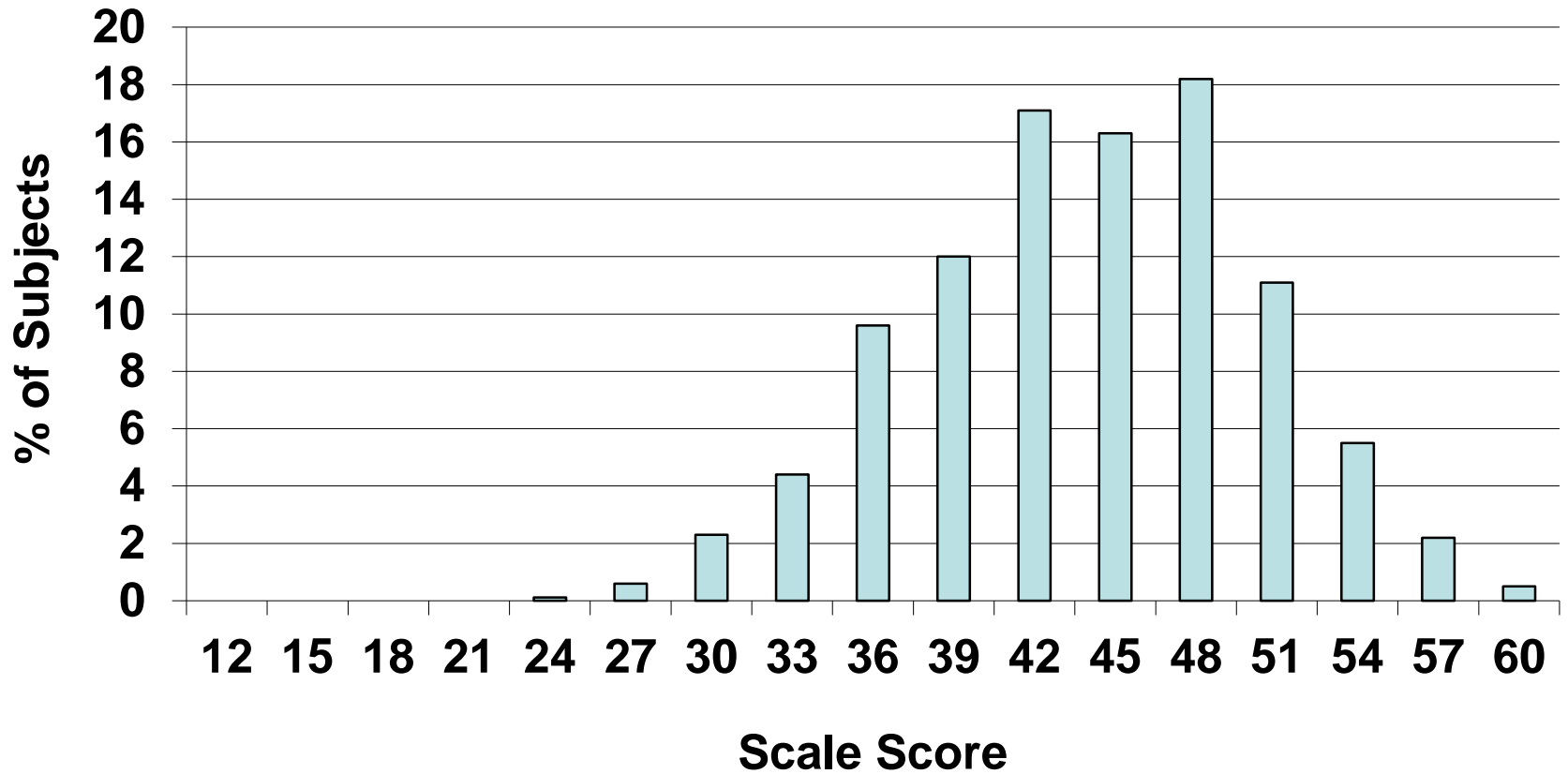
## Self-Reported Behavioral Tendencies

NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae (1985, 1992)

- **Interpersonal Warmth**
  - I really like most people I meet.
- **Gregariousness**
  - I like to have a lot of people around me.
- **Assertiveness**
  - I have often been a leader of the groups I've belonged to.
- **Activity**
  - I often feel as if I'm bursting with energy
- **Excitement-Seeking**
  - I have sometimes done things just for “kicks” or “thrills”.
- **Positive Emotions**
  - I am a cheerful, high-spirited person.

# Distribution of Extraversion

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991



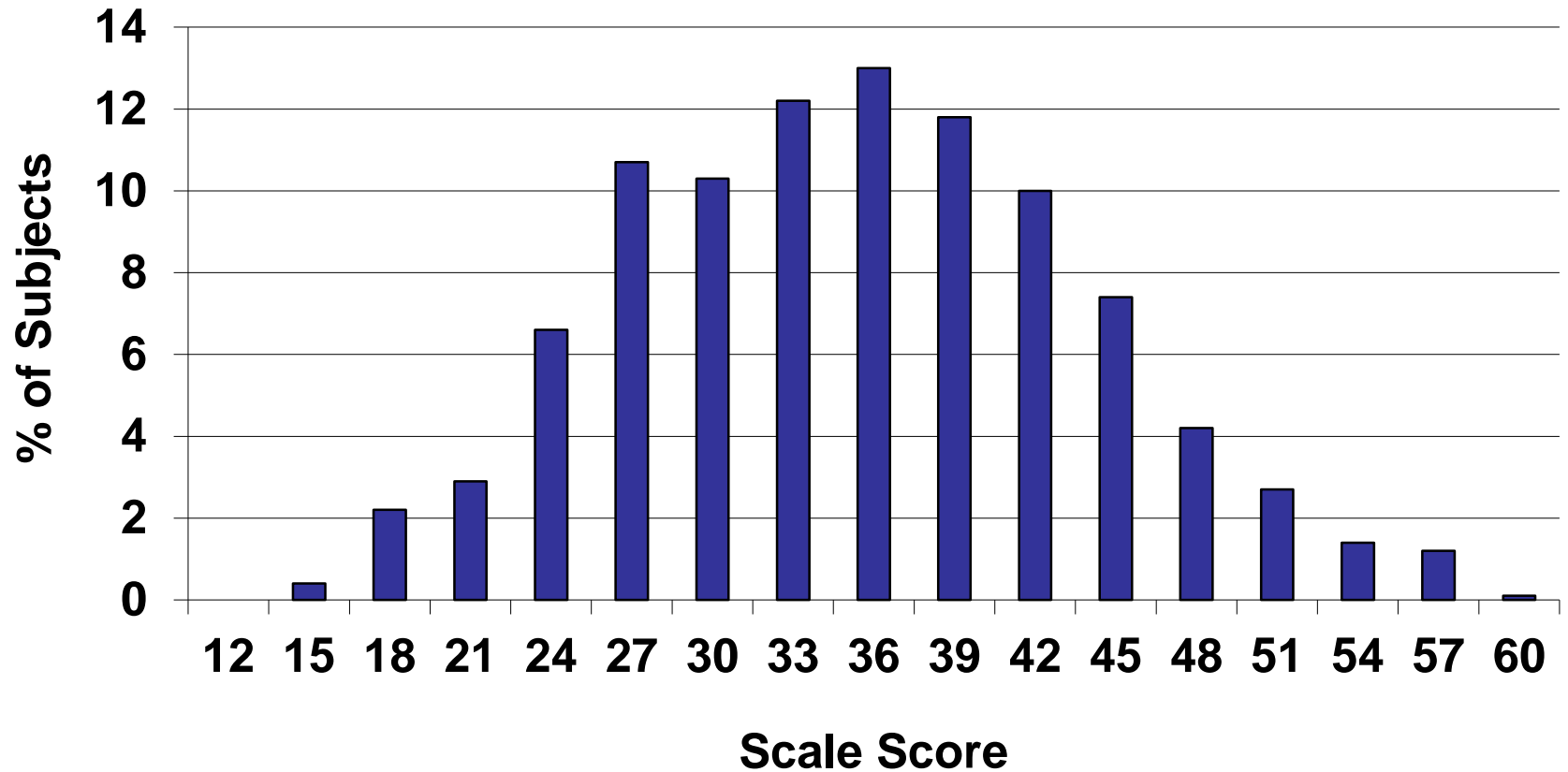
# Facets of Neuroticism

Costa & McCrae (1985, 1992)

- **Anxiety**
  - I often feel tense and jittery
- **Angry Hostility**
  - I often get angry at the way people treat me
- **Depression**
  - Sometimes I feel completely worthless
- **Self-Consciousness**
  - In dealing with other people, I always dread making a social blunder
- **Impulsiveness**
  - I have trouble resisting my cravings
- **Vulnerability**
  - When I'm under... stress, sometimes I feel like I'm going to pieces

# Distribution of Neuroticism

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991



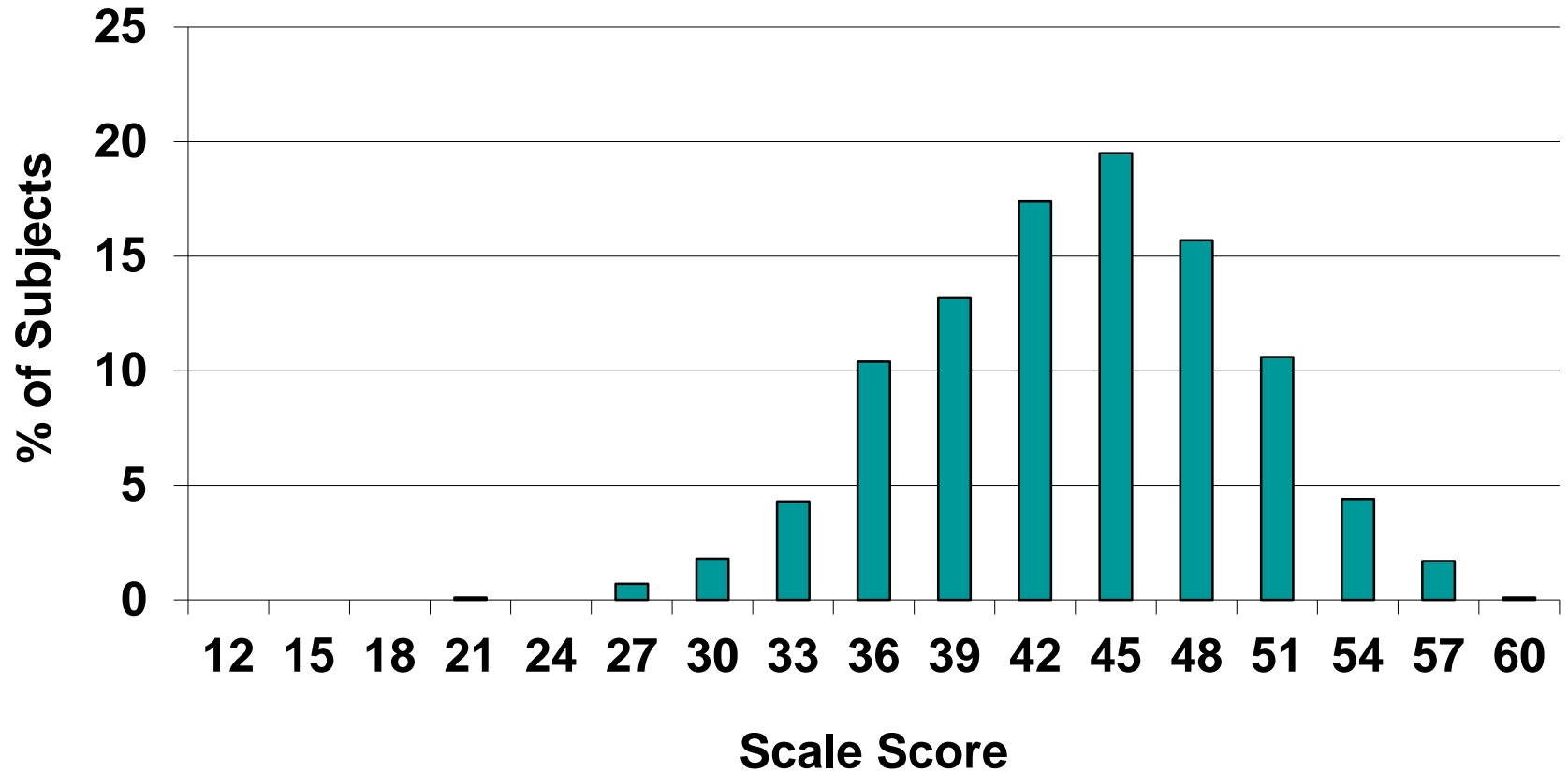
# Facets of Agreeableness

Costa & McCrae (1985, 1992)

- **Trust**
  - I think most people I deal with are honest and trustworthy
- **Straight-Forwardness**
  - I would hate to be thought of as a hypocrite
- **Altruism**
  - I go out of my way to help others if I can
- **Compliance**
  - I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them
- **Modesty**
  - I try to be courteous to everyone I meet
- **Tender-Mindedness**
  - I believe that most people are basically well-intentioned

# Distribution of Agreeableness

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991



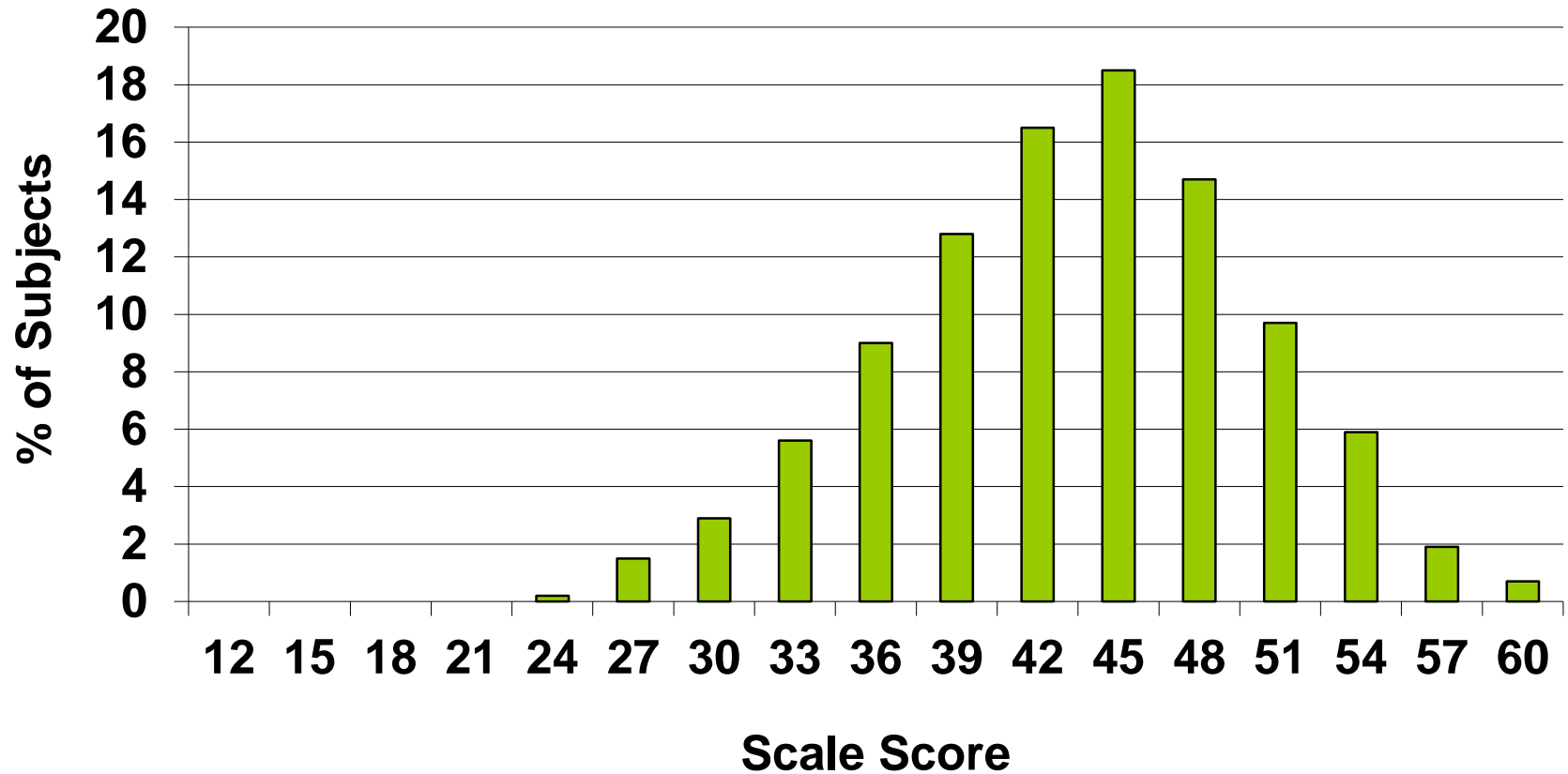
# Facets of Conscientiousness

Costa & McCrae (1985, 1992)

- **Competence**
  - I am a productive person who always gets the job done
- **Order**
  - I keep my belongings neat and clean
- **Dutifulness**
  - I try to perform all the tasks assigned to me conscientiously
- **Achievement Striving**
  - I work hard to accomplish my goals
- **Self-Discipline**
  - I'm pretty good about pacing myself so as to get things done on time
- **Deliberation**
  - I try to do jobs carefully, so they won't have to be done again

# Distribution of Conscientiousness

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991





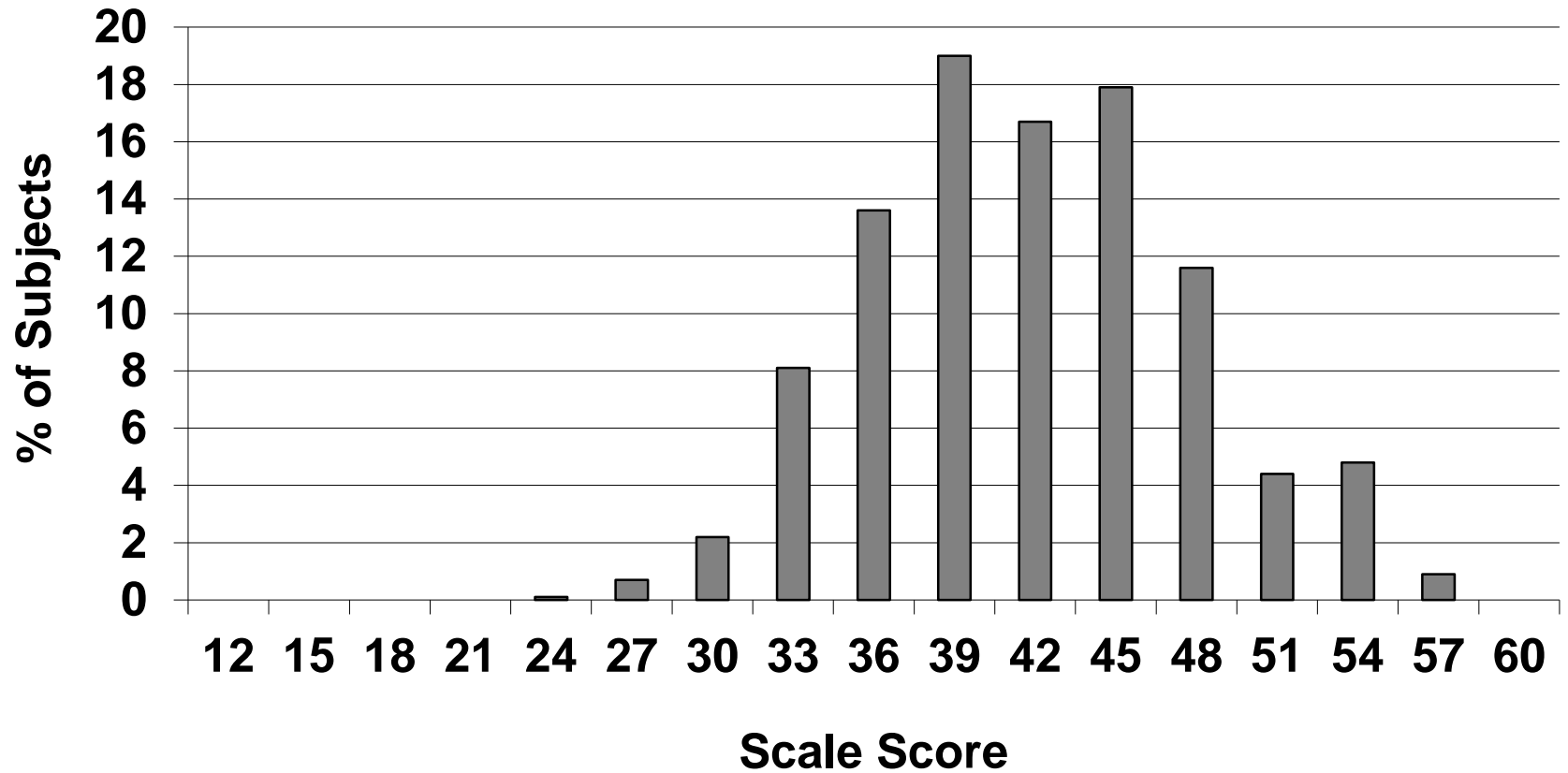
# Facets of Openness

Costa & McCrae (1985, 1992)

- **Fantasy**
  - I have a very active imagination
- **Esthetics**
  - I am sometimes completely absorbed in music I am listening to
- **Feelings**
  - Without strong emotions, life would be uninteresting to me
- **Ideas**
  - I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas
- **Actions**
  - I think it's interesting to learn and develop new hobbies
- **Values**
  - I believe that laws and social policies should change to reflect the needs of a changing world

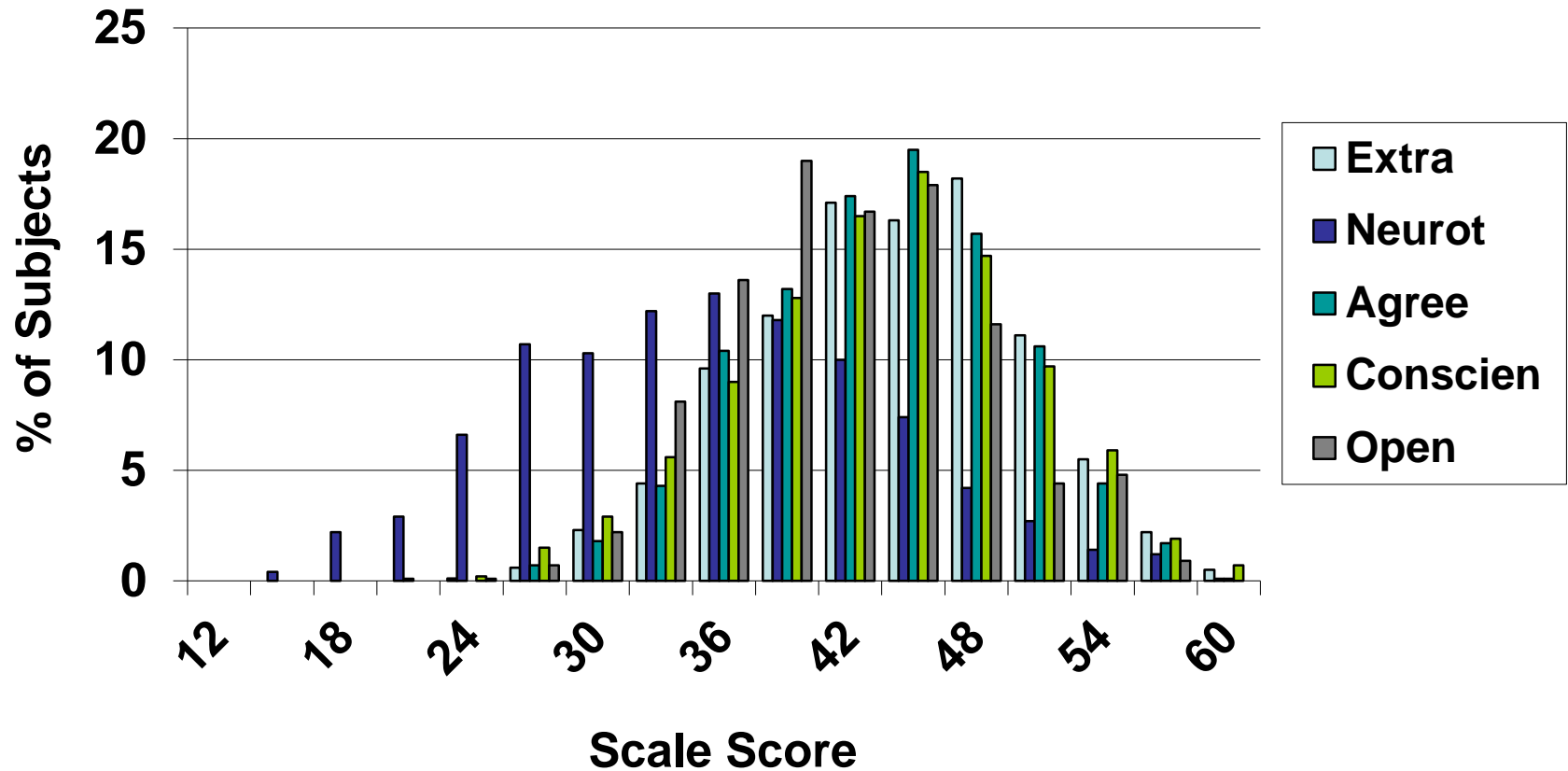
# Distribution of Openness

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991



# Distribution of “Big Five” Traits (Adding Neuroticism)

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991



# Relations Among “Big Five” Traits

NEO-FFI, >1,000 College Students, 1991

Trait	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>C</i>
Neuroticism	34.21	-----				
Extraversion	42.91	-.11	-----			
Openness	40.83	.01	.35	-----		
Agreeableness	42.57	.06	.27	.18	-----	
Conscientiousness	42.39	-.07	.22	.18	.31	-----

**Average (unsigned)  $r = .18$**

# The Doctrine of Traits

- *Weak Version* (aka the Biosocial View)
  - Traits **summarize** the coherence, stability, consistency, and predictability of individual behavior
- *Strong Version* (aka the Biophysical View)
  - Traits **cause** the coherence, stability, consistency, and predictability of individual behavior

# The Coherence of Personality

- Topographically Different Behaviors
- Semantically Different Traits
  
- Hierarchical Structure of Personality
  - Superordinate Traits
  - Basic-Level Traits
  - Behavioral Regularities (Habits)
  - Specific Behaviors

# Hierarchical Structure of Personality and Social Behavior

Superordinate Level



Subordinate Level

Tertiary Traits



Secondary Traits



Primary Traits



Habitual Actions



Specific Actions

# The Tertiary Level of Analysis

Rosenberg et al. (1968)

- Social Desirability
- Intellectual “Good-Bad”
  - Intelligence (+)
  - Openness to Experience (+)
- Social “Good-Bad”
  - Extraversion (+)
  - Neuroticism (-)
    - Emotional Stability (+)
  - Agreeableness (+)
  - Conscientiousness (+)

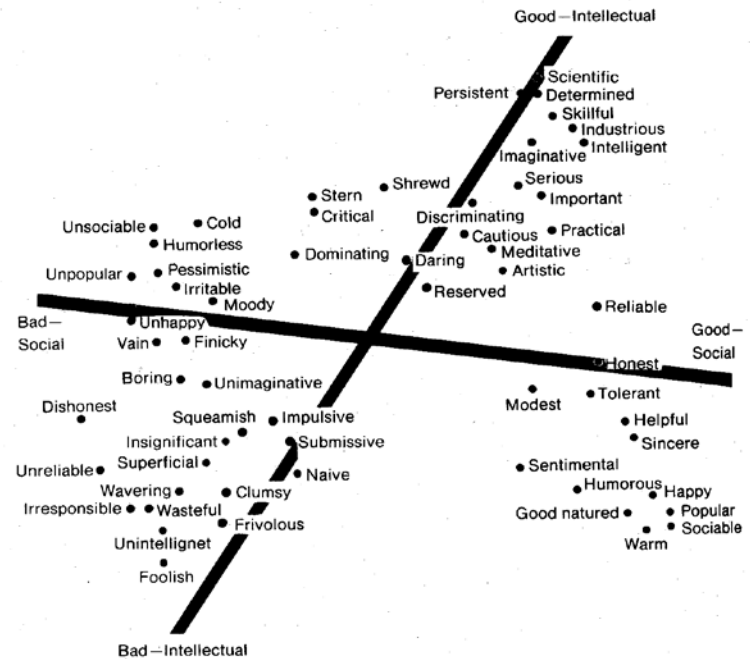


Fig. 7.1 Dimensions of traits. (From Rosenberg *et al.* 1968.)

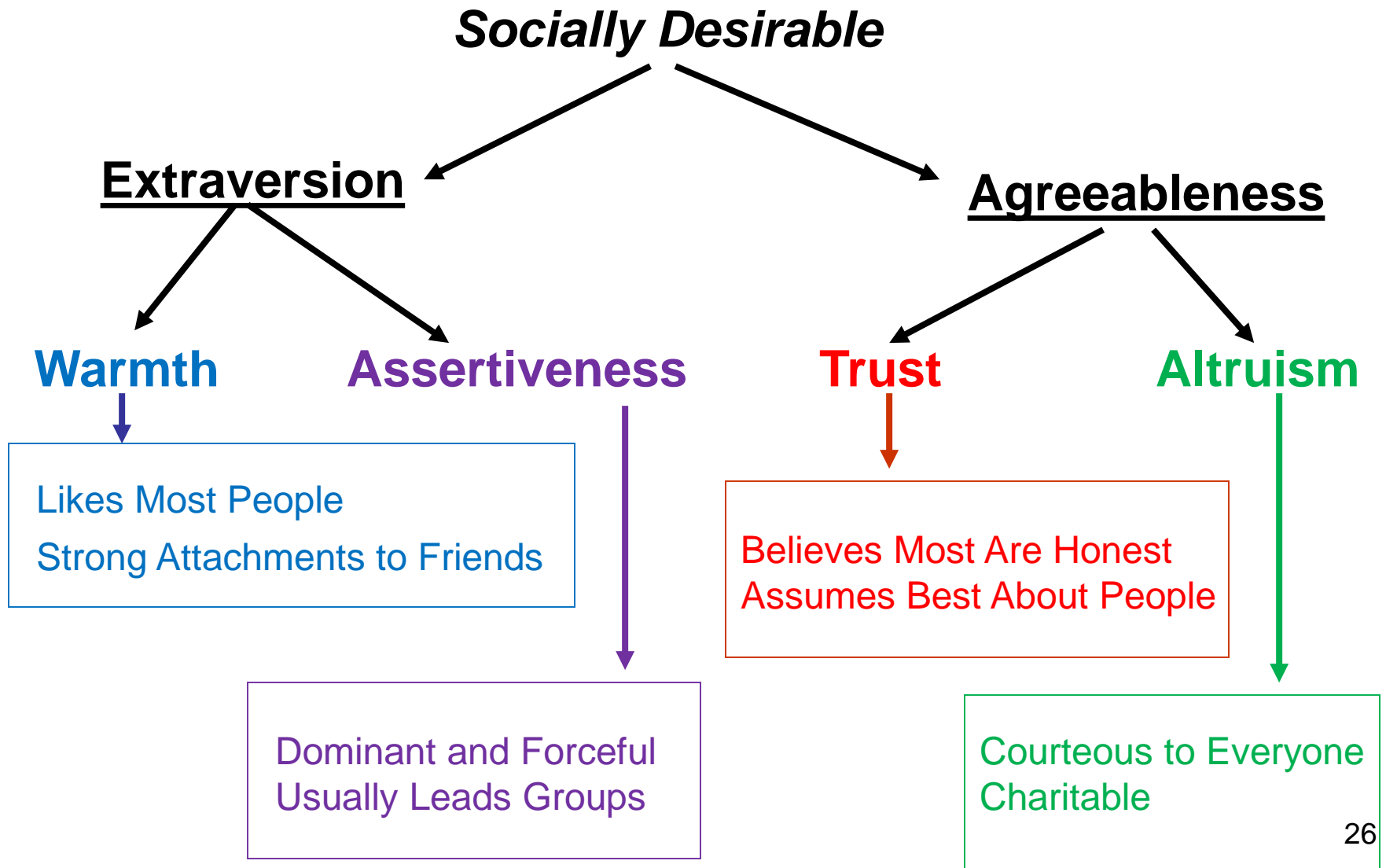


# Secondary Traits and Primary Traits

After McCrae & Costa (1992)

- Extraversion
  - Interpersonal Warmth
  - Gregariousness
  - Assertiveness
  - Activity
  - Excitement-Seeking
  - Positive Emotions

# Hierarchical Structure of Personality







# Coherence of Personality and Behavior

- The “Big Five” is Ubiquitous
- Restricted Level of Analysis
  - Primary Traits
  - Habitual Behaviors
- Implicit Personality Theory?
  - Self-Reports
  - Peer Ratings
    - By Acquaintances
    - By Strangers


# Stability Across Time

- Greatest Over Short Intervals
- Greatest at Superordinate Levels of Analysis

- **Tertiary Traits**  

- Secondary Traits  

- Primary Traits  

- Habitual Actions  

- Specific Actions

# Consistency Across Situations

- Greatest Across Similar Situations
- Greatest at Superordinate Levels of Analysis

- **Tertiary Traits**
  - Secondary Traits
  - Primary Traits
  - Habitual Actions
  - Specific Actions
- 
- ```
graph TD; A[Tertiary Traits] --> B[Secondary Traits]; B --> C[Primary Traits]; C --> D[Habitual Actions]; D --> E[Specific Actions];
```

# Predictability

- Greatest Between Adjacent Levels
- But What About Predicting Specific Actions in Specific Situations?

