

## RESEARCH TERMS TO KNOW

### Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical technique that allows us to know which variables go together. Typically, a factor analysis study will collect a large number of variables on a group of individuals. The statistical technique creates factors that describe which of these variables are responded to in a similar way. For example, if a number of individuals were given a variety of cognitive tests, it is possible to see that those who do well on one type of problem also do well on another. One study found five factors related to intelligence. These were reasoning, spatial ability, memory, processing speed, and vocabulary (Deary, Penke, & Johnson, 2010). Another study examined psychopathology over 20 years in terms of personality functioning, life impairment, family histories and developmental histories of psychiatric disorders, and measures of brain integrity (Caspi et al., 2014). These researchers reported three factors. These were an internalizing liability related to depression and anxiety, an externalizing liability related to antisocial and substance-use disorders, and a thought disorder liability related to symptoms of psychosis.