

Advanced Placement Psychology

Chapter 14: Personality

(<http://www.ApPsychology.net>)

- **Personality**
 - An individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting
 - Four basic perspectives
 - Psychoanalytic
 - Trait
 - Humanistic
 - Social-cognitive
- From Freud's theory which proposes that childhood sexuality and unconscious motivations influence personality

The Psychoanalytic Perspective

- **Psychoanalysis**
 - Technique of treating psychological disorders by seeking to expose and interpret unconscious tensions
 - Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality sought to explain what he observed during psychoanalysis
- **Free Association**
 - Method of exploring the unconscious
 - Person relaxes and says whatever comes to mind, no matter how trivial or embarrassing
- **Unconscious**
 - Freud-a reservoir of mostly unacceptable thoughts, wishes. Feelings and memories
 - Contemporary-information processing of which we are unaware
- **Preconscious**- information that is not conscious, but is retrievable into conscious awareness

Personality Structure

- **ID**
 - A reservoir of unconscious psychic energy
 - Strives to satisfy basic sexual and aggressive drives
 - Operates on the pleasure principle. Demanding immediate gratification
- **SUPEREGO**
 - The part of personality that presents internalized ideals
 - Provides standards for judgement and for future aspirations
- **EGO**
 - The largely conscious, "executive" part of personality
 - Mediates among the demands of the id, superego and ego
 - Operates on the reality principle, satisfying the id's desires in ways that will realistically bring pleasure rather than pain

Personality Development

- **Psychosexual Stages**- the childhood stages of development during which the pleasure-seeking energies focus on distinct erogenous zones
- **Oedipus Complex**- a boy's sexual desires towards his mother and feelings of jealousy and hatred for the rival father

Freud's Psychosexual Stages

| STAGE | FOCUS |
|-------------------------|--|
| Oral (0-18 months) | Pleasure centers on the mouth---sucking, biting, chewing |
| Anal (18-36 months) | Pleasure focuses on bowel and bladder elimination; coping with demands for control |
| Phallic (3-6 years) | Pleasure zone in genitals; coping with incestuous sexual feeling |
| Latency (6 to puberty) | Dormant sexual feelings |
| Genital (puberty on) | Maturation of sexual interests |

Personality Development

- **Identification-** the process by which children incorporate their parents' values into their developing superegos
- **Gender Identity-** one's sense of being male or female
- **Fixation-** a lingering focus of pleasure-seeking energies at an earlier psychosexual stage, where conflicts were unresolved

Defense Mechanisms

- **Defense Mechanisms-** the ego's protective methods of reducing anxiety by unconsciously distorting reality
- **Repression-** the basic defense mechanism that banishes anxiety-arousing thoughts, feelings, and memories from consciousness
- **Regression-** defense mechanism in which an individual retreats, when faced with anxiety, to a more infantile psychosexual stage where some psychic energy remains fixated
- **Reaction Formation-** defense mechanism by which the ego unconsciously switches unacceptable impulses into their opposites. People may express feelings that are the opposite of their anxiety-arousing unconscious feelings.
- **Projection-** defense mechanism by which people disguise their own threatening impulses by attributing them to others
- **Rationalization-** defense mechanism that offers self-justifying explanations in place of the real, more threatening, unconscious reasons for one's actions
- **Displacement-** defense mechanism that shifts sexual or aggressive impulses toward a more acceptable or less threatening object or person...as when redirecting anger towards a safer outlet

Neo-Freudians

- **Alfred Adler-** importance of childhood social tension
- **Karen Horney-** sought to balance Freud's masculine biases
- **Carl Jung-** emphasizes collective unconscious...concept of a shared, inherited reservoir of memory traces from our species' history

Assessing The Unconscious

- **Projective Test-** a personality test, such as the Rorschach or TAT, that provided ambiguous stimuli designed to trigger projection of one's inner dynamics
- **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)-** a projective test in which people express their inner feelings and interests through the stories they make up about ambiguous scenes
- **Rorschach Inkblot Test-** the most widely used projective test, uses a set of 10 inkblots designed by Hermann Rorschach to identify people's inner feelings by analyzing their interpretations of the blots.

The Trait Perspective

- **Trait-** a characteristic pattern of behavior; a disposition to feel and act, as assessed by self-report inventories and peer reports

- **Personality Inventory-** a questionnaire (often with true-false or agree-disagree items) on which people respond to items designed to gauge a wide range of feelings and behaviors; used to assess selected personality traits

The “Big Five” personality Factors

| Trait Dimension | Description |
|------------------------|---|
| Emotional Stability | Calm versus anxious Secure versus insecure Self-satisfied versus self-pitying |
| Extraversion | Sociable versus retiring Fun-loving versus sober Affectionate versus reserved |
| Openness | Imaginative versus practical Preference for variety versus preference for routine Independent versus conforming |
| Extraversion | Soft-hearted versus ruthless Trusting versus suspicious Helpful versus uncooperative |
| Conscientiousness | Organized versus disorganized Careful versus careless Disciplined versus impulsive |

- **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)**
 - The most widely researched and clinically used of all personality tests
 - Originally developed to identify emotional disorders (still considered its most appropriate use)
 - Now used for many other screening purposes
- **Empirically Derived Test-** a test developed by testing a pool of items and then selecting those that discriminate between groups...similar to MMPI

Evaluating The Trait Perspective

- Situational influences on behavior are important to consider
- People can fake desirable responses on self-report measures of personality
- Averaging behavior across situations seems to indicate that people do have distinct personality traits

Humanistic Perspective

- **Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)-** studied self-actualization processes of productive and healthy people
- **Self-Actualization-** the ultimate psychological need that arises after basic physical and psychological needs are met and self-esteem is achieved; the motivation to fulfill one’s potential
- **Carl Rogers (1902-1987)-** focused on growth and fulfillment of individuals
 - Requires three conditions
 1. Genuineness
 2. Acceptance- unconditional positive regard
 3. Empathy
- **Unconditional Positive Regard-** an attitude of total acceptance toward another person
- **Self-Concept-** all of our thoughts and feelings about ourselves, in an answer to the question “Who am I?”
- **Self-Esteem-** one’s feelings of high or low self-worth
- **Self-Serving Bias-** a readiness to perceive oneself favorably
- **Individualism-** giving priority to one’s own goals over group goals and defining one’s identity in terms of personal attributes rather than group identifications

- **Collectivism-** giving priority to the goals of one's group (often one's extended family or work group) and defining one's identity accordingly

Value Contrasts Between Individualism and Collectivism

| Concept | Individualism | Collectivism |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Self | Independent (identity from individual traits) | Interdependent (identity from belonging) |
| Life task | Discover and express one's uniqueness | Maintain connections, fit it |
| What matters | Me—personal achievement and fulfillment; rights and liberties | We—group goals and solidarity; social responsibilities and relationships |
| Coping method | Change reality | Accommodate to reality |
| Morality | Defined by individuals (self-based) | Defined by social networks (duty-based) |
| Relationships | Many, often temporary or casual; confrontation acceptable | Few, close and enduring; harmony valued |
| Attributing behavior | Behavior reflects one's personality and attitudes | Behavior reflects social norm and roles |

Evaluating The Humanistic Perspective

- Concepts like self-actualization are vague
- Emphasis on self may promote self-indulgence and lack of concern for others
- Theory does not address reality of human capacity for evil
- Theory has impacted popular ideas on child rearing, education, management, etc.

Social-Cognitive Perspective

- **Reciprocal Determinism-** the interacting influences between personality and environmental factors
- **Personal Control-** our sense of controlling our environments rather than feeling helpless
- **External Locus of Control-** the perception that chance or outside forces beyond one's personal control determine one's fate
- **Internal Locus of Control-** the perception that one controls one's own fate
- **Learned Helplessness-** the hopelessness and passive resignation an animal or human learns when unable to avoid repeated aversive events
- Built from research on learning and cognition
- Fails to consider unconscious motives and individual disposition
- Today, cognitive-behavioral theory is perhaps predominant psychological approach to explaining human behavior

Bibliography

Myers, David G., Psychology Fifth Edition. Worth Publishers, Inc. New York, NY ©1998