



# Personality

SSPVB2: The student will evaluate assessment tools and theories in personality.

# What is personality?

- An individual's unique patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that persists over time and across situations.
- Approaches to Measuring Personality:
  - Trait
  - Psychoanalytic
  - Social-Cognitive
  - Humanistic



# The Trait Perspective

- Goal: to describe an individual's personality in terms of a set of distinct dimensions or traits
- Little emphasis on how the personality developed
- Approaches:
  - Factor Analytic Approach (What are the basic traits?)
  - Empirical Approach (Can we differentiate different groups?)

# Factor Analysis

- Cattell's 16 Personality Factors
  - Used factor analysis to summarize over 4500 different terms used in the English language to describe personality traits
  - Found 16 source traits/factors
- Eysenck's Tri-dimensional Theory
  - Extroversion—how outgoing or social
  - Neuroticism—emotional stability (degree of anxiety, worry, or moodiness)
  - Psychoticism—tendency to be insensitive, uncaring, or cruel



# Factor Analysis

- The Big-Five Theory
  - Neuroticism vs. emotional stability
  - Introversion vs. extroversion
  - Nonopenness vs. openness to experience
  - Antagonism vs. agreeableness
  - Undirectedness vs. conscientiousness
  - Why 5 instead of 3 or 16?
    - Depends on how you apply factor analysis
    - Almost all personality terms correlate highly with one or more of the factors
    - Cross-cultural similarities
    - High predictive validity

# Empirical Approach

- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)
  - Designed to diagnose personality disorders (1943)
  - 11,000 statements tested on 770 people (true/false/cannot say)
  - Revised in 1980s
  - Still popular today
- Evaluating the Trait Perspective
  - People can fake desirable responses
  - Situational influences on behavior



# Psychoanalytic Approach

- Psychoanalysis is both a treatment and a theory of personality
- Assessing the unconscious
  - Free association
  - Slips of the tongue
  - Dream analysis
  - Projective tests
    - Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
    - Rorschach Inkblot Test



# Freud's Personality Structure

- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): Austrian physician
- Id
  - Source of all energy
  - Functions entirely in unconscious
  - Represents instinctual drives present at birth
  - Does not distinguish between reality and fantasy
  - Operates according to the pleasure principle



# Freud's Personality Structure

## ○ Superego

- Represents internalized social and parental standards
- Strives toward unrealistic perfection
- Responsible for guilt

## ○ Ego

- The largely conscious, “executive” part of personality
- Mediates among the demands of the id, superego, and ego
- Operates on the reality principle

# Freud's Personality Development

- “Personality forms during the first few years of life, rooted in unresolved conflicts of early childhood.”
- Psychosexual stages
  - Oral stage (birth-1 year)
    - Mouth, lips, tongue are associated with sexual pleasure
    - Weaning a child can lead to fixation if not handled correctly
    - Fixation can lead to oral activities into adulthood
  - Anal stage (1-3 years)
    - Anus is associated with pleasure
    - Toilet training can lead to fixation if not handled correctly
    - Fixation can lead to anal retentive or expulsive behaviors in adulthood



# Freud's Personality Development

- Psychosexual stages (continued)
  - Phallic Stage (3-5 years)
    - Focus of pleasure shifts to the genitals (masturbation)
    - Oedipus complex and Electra complex: a child's sexual attachment to parent of the opposite sex and jealousy toward the parent of the same sex
    - Fixation can lead to excessive masculinity in males and the need for attention or domination in females
  - Latency Stage (5-puberty)
    - Sexuality is repressed
    - Children participate in hobbies, school, and same-sex friendships
  - Genital Stage (puberty-on)
    - Sexual feelings re-emerge and are oriented toward others—usually marked by mature sexuality
    - Healthy adults find pleasure in love and work, fixated adults have their energy tied up in earlier stages

# Freud's Personality Development

## ○ Fixation

- A partial or complete halt at some point in the individual's development
- An attempt to achieve pleasure as an adult in ways that are equivalent to how it was achieved in these stages

## ○ Defense Mechanisms

- Repression: banish anxiety from consciousness
- Regression: retreat to infantile psychosexual stage
- Reaction formation: express feelings that are opposite of their feelings
- Projection: people disguise their own impulses by attributing them to another
- Rationalization: self-justifying explanations instead of real reasons
- Displacement: redirecting anger or impulses toward a safer outlet



# Evaluating the Psychoanalytic Perspective

- Criticisms
  - Too vague to test
  - Little experimental support
  - Focus on disorder
  - Negative view
  - Does not take into account individual control
- Praise
  - Unconscious forces
  - Internal conflict
  - Defense mechanisms
  - Childhood events

# Social-Cognitive Theories

- Reciprocal Determinism: interacting influences between personality and environmental factors
- Bandura's Contribution
  - Personality is shaped through learning
  - Expectancies: what a person anticipates in a situation or as a result of behaving in certain ways
  - Self-efficacy: the expectancy that one's efforts will be successful
- Personal Control
  - Internal locus of control: one can control his/her own fate
  - External locus of control: one's fate is determined by chance, luck, or the behaviors of others



# Evaluating Social-Cognitive Theories

- Fails to consider unconscious motives and individual disposition
- Is perhaps the predominant approach to explaining human behavior

# Humanistic Perspective

- Stresses the fundamental goodness of people and their striving toward higher levels of functioning
- Maslow and Self-Actualization
  - Studied healthy, creative people: Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and Eleanor Roosevelt
  - Self-actualized individuals are
    - Self-aware and self-accepting
    - Open and spontaneous
    - Loving and caring
    - Problem-centered not self-centered



# Humanistic Perspective

- Rogers' Person-Centered Approach
  - Given the right environmental conditions, we will develop to our full potential
  - Self concept and degree of congruity with experience
  - Unconditional positive reward
- Evaluating the Humanist Perspective
  - Concepts often vague
  - May promote self-indulgence and lack of concern for others
  - Does not address reality of human capacity for evil
  - Has impacted popular ideas on child-rearing, education, management, etc.