

GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY (PSYC 210)

Study Guide: Personality

Clara B. Jones, Ph.D.

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What is personality?: An individual's unique and relatively stable behavior patterns

- Not to be confused with character: no implication about good or bad
- Not to be confused with temperament
 - “temperament” (see Study Guide on Developmental Psychology) is inborn “raw material” from which personality is formed

--Traits: specific lasting qualities within a person that are inferred from observed behavior; traits imply consistency (Discussion/thought question: What do you perceive to be your most characteristic personality traits?)

--Personality “types” (e.g., “motherly type,” “athletic type,” “strong, silent type”)

- How valid are “types?” This is an empirical question. (e.g., Carl Jung’s “introvert” and “extrovert” or “Type A” and “Type B” personalities)

--Self-concept: an individual’s perception of his/her own personality traits; all your ideas and feelings about who you are

- Assumes that a stable self-concept guides behavior
- Self-concepts can be accurate (e.g., “passive-aggressive” personality)
- Self-concepts relate to beliefs, attitudes, values, behavior

Personality Theory: system of assumptions, ideas, and principles proposed to explain personality. Four broad theoretical perspectives: Trait Theories, Psychodynamic Theories, Behavioristic Theories, and Humanistic Theories

1. Trait Theories: classify traits and discover which are most basic (typical characters relatively permanent and enduring qualities)

- Gordon Allport: Central Traits are building blocks of personality (small number of traits most consistent)
- Raymond Cattell: Source Traits (traits that appear in clusters); differed from Allport’s subjective classification by using statistical techniques for analysis, in particular, factor analysis (a multivariate statistical technique)
 - Cattell identified 16 underlying source traits
 - each individual administered a test [16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (PF)]: led to Five Factor Model which reduced Cattell’s 16 Source Traits to five (5) universal dimensions (The Big Five: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience)

2. Psychoanalytic (Psychodynamic) Theories not content to study traits; want to study what motivates personality (e.g., drives, conflicts, energies); Psychoanalysis is both a set of ideas, a theory, and a method of “talking” therapy

- Sigmund Freud: anxiety, hypnosis, case studies primarily rely upon studies of female patients.
- Freud believed that personality determined by three (3) basic structures
 - a. Id: unconscious, selfish, operates on “pleasure principle” (pleasure-seeking urges freely expressed); infants said to be “all id;” id thought to be source of energy for entire personality; energy (drive) called libido, flowing from life instincts (sexual); death instinct, thanatos, responsible for aggressive and destructive urges; id discharges energies related to sex and aggression; personalities not well socialized thought to be dominated by id
 - b. Ego: the “executive” center of personality; relates the id to external reality; ego guided by “reality principle”; concern for appropriate behavior and conscious control of personality (Discussion/thought question: Is reality just a mental construct?)
 - c. Superego: the judge or censor for the ego comprised of the “conscience” (causing guilt) and the “ego-ideal” (causing pride). Suggestion: Watch the movie “Shine.”
 - d. Id, Ego, and Superego are separate and conflicting mental processes
 - e. The Ego is caught in the middle, so to speak, between the Id and Superego and must balance conflicting demands/drives from Id and Superego
 - f. Freud’s Psychosexual Stage Theory of Personality Development (n.b. search the concept of “fixation” in your textbook and on www.google.com): Each stage identifies the primary sources of pleasure and pain for the individual and the primary sources of conflict/“neurosis”/anxiety

Oral Stage (0 – 1 yr)

Anal Stage (1 – 3 yrs)

Phallic (3 – 6 yrs): Oedipus Conflict (♂♂); Electra Conflict [♀♀: “penis envy” (according to this idea, ♀♀ feel “castrated”; thus, “the other,” “lack,” ♀♀ as inadequate ♂♂)]

Latency (6 – 11 yrs) n.b. some texts dispute whether Freud intended this to be a stage

Genital (puberty through adulthood) n.b. Freud’s influential but incorrect view of the female orgasm

- Contributions
 - early experience determines adult personality
 - early feeding, toilet training, sexuality are important
 - one of first stage theorists
- Criticisms: psychoanalysis is phallogocentric (discuss) and circular (Why?)
- How influential has psychoanalysis been in the USA compared to Europe?

- N.B. Most of Freud's ideas are considered incorrect today and/or have very little empirical support; nonetheless, many of his conceptual contributions (e.g., "defense mechanisms") have been incorporated into our common discussions of personality and behavior
- Other Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic Theorists
 - Karen Horney: rejected Freud's view that ♂♂ are superior to ♀♀; rejected Freud's view of neurosis (this term no longer employed by psychologists—"anxiety" employed instead)
 - Carl Jung (rather mystical, in my opinion): contributed idea of "introversion/extroversion;" different view of unconscious than Freud ("collective unconscious;" "archetypes"); first to use the term "self-actualization"

3. Learning Theories: What other theorists call "traits," can be learned (e.g., introversion, honesty); learning theorists interested in "situational determinants" of behavior external factors determine behavior (i.e., prior experience and present conditions) N.B. Trait Theorists believe that situations interact with "hard-wired" traits.

- Dollard & Miller's learning theory to explain habits: drive (stimulus, as, hunger)--> cue [signals from environment guiding response (e.g., food)]--> response (to achieve reward)--> reward (eating)
 - according to Dollard & Miller (also, Dollard, Doob, & Miller), there is consistency in what behaviors the environment rewards; thus, "personality"
 - N.B. Dollard & Miller's model leaves out cognitive and social factors emphasized by Social Learning Theorists
- Social Learning Theory (imitation, modeling): the cognitive behaviorism of Social Learning Theory can be illustrated by Rotter's principles
 - Rotter's principles: (1) the psychological situation (How does person interpret or define a situation?); (2) expectancy (Anticipation that a response will lead to reinforcement.); (3) reinforcement value (Individuals attach reinforcement value to different responses.)
 - Discussion/Thought Exercise: Example of Rotter's principles (I like to think of eating pasta—plain spaghetti vs. spaghetti with a good tomato sauce and cheese.)
- Behavioristic view of personality development: similarities between Freud and behavioristic theories
 - importance of early experience [i.e., importance of (1) feeding, (2) toilet or cleanliness training, (3) sex training, and (4) learning to express anger or aggression (N.B. Dollard & Miller)]
- Gender identification (social learning theory): identification (modeling), imitation, and the role of reinforcement and punishment (Is this view similar to Freud's?)

4. Humanistic Theories (these grew out of Psychoanalytic Theories): view human nature as inherently good and humans as capable of "free choice" (How different from psychoanalytic/psychodynamic theories?); emphasis upon subjective experience (Thus, to understand personality, we must understand subjective reality.)

- Abraham Maslow: “self-actualization” theory
 - characteristics shared by self-actualized persons (e.g., non-hostile sense of humor, efficient perceptions of reality)
 - Maslow techniques of study were subjective and based upon clinical experience (similar to Freud’s)
 - Maslow believed that self-actualization is a process
 - very little empirical research by these theorists and on this theory; nonetheless, it has been very influential in clinical/counseling psychology in the USA
- Carl Rogers’ Self Theory: “fully functioning person” is one who has achieved an openness to feelings and experiences and has learned to trust inner urges and intuitions; most likely to occur where individual has received sufficient love and acceptance
 - understands personality as attempt to maintain consistency between self-image and behavior and congruence between self-image and ideal-self [N.B. These views have been very influential in American psychology (such as “cognitive-dissonance” theory).]
 - N.B. “ideal-self” similar to Freud’s “ego-ideal”
 - “incongruence” leads to tension and anxiety (N.B. Freud; “cognitive-dissonance”)
 - Rogers believed that incongruence may be “repressed” (sic) and may lead to poor mental health (note similarity to Freud’s Ego Defense Mechanisms)
- Humanistic view of personality development: parents lay groundwork by giving children feelings of self-worth and positive self-regard; humanistic theorists believe that this process is learned
- Humanistic theories have been very influential in clinical/counseling psychology in the USA; however, there is little research on these theorists’ ideas

How useful are psychoanalytic theories?

- Trait theories: circular (i.e., if extroverted, then gregarious; if gregarious, then extraverted)
- Psychodynamic theories: circular; overemphasis on sex and Na
- Behavioristic (Learning) theories: underemphasis on Na
- Humanistic theories: difficult to measure; “fuzzy”