

Personality — refers to an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms, hidden or not, behind these patterns.

Psychodynamic perspectives

- Theoretical view emphasizing that personality is primarily unconscious
- Understanding personality involves exploring the symbolic meanings of behavior and the unconscious mind
- Early childhood experiences sculpt the individual's personality

Personality Structure

Id

- Instincts and reservoir of psychic energy
- Pleasure principle

Superego

- Moral branch of personality "conscience"

Ego

- Deals with the demands of reality
- Reality principle

Defense mechanisms

The ego's tools for managing anxiety

Operate automatically and unconsciously in response to anxiety

- Relieve anxiety
- Distort reality
- Denial: disbelieve present reality
- Repression: forget the unacceptable
- Displacement: shift feelings to new object
- Projection: attribute own faults to others
- Reaction formation: convert to opposite emotion
- Regression: revert to earlier, "safer" period
- Rationalization: calm different motive
- Sublimations: transform vile to valuable

Psychosexual Development

Stages are universal and all about sex

Fixation — over / under indulgence at given phase influences everything else about personality for rest of one's life

Stage one: oral

- age birth - 18 months
- Pleasure centers on the mouth
- Adult personality: oral receptive personality, oral sadist personality

Stage 2: anal

- Age 1.8 - 3 years
- Pleasure involves eliminative functions

Stage 3: phallic (oedipal)

- Age 3 - 6 years
- Pleasure focuses on the genitals
- Adult personality: phallic personality type

Stage 4: latency period

- Age 6 - puberty
- Non-sexual
- Not really a developmental stage

Stage 5: genital stage

- Age puberty - adulthood
- Sexual reawakening
- Source of sexual pleasure is someone else
- Repetition compulsion: for the rest of life, everyone is the same person with the same conflicts after 6 years old.

Oedipus complex

Boys

- All men are oedipus
- Castration anxiety

Girls

- Electra complex
- Penis envy

Evaluating psychodynamic theory

Criticisms

- Too much emphasis on early experiences
- Too much faith in unconscious mind's control
- Too much emphasis on sexual instincts
- Theory cannot be tested

Contributions

- Importance of childhood experiences
- Development proceeds in stages
- Role of unconscious processes

Trait perspectives

Trait — an enduring disposition that leads to characteristic responses. Traits are the building blocks of personality

Trait theories — people can be described by their typical behavior

Trait perspectives

Five factor model of personality:

- Openness: Practical, routine, conforming / imaginative, variety, independent
- Conscientiousness: Disorganized, careless, impulsive / organized, careful, disciplined
- Extraversion: retiring, somber, reserved / sociable, fun-loving, affectionate
- Agreeableness: ruthless, suspicious, uncooperative / softhearted, trusting, helpful

- Neuroticism/ emotional stability: calm, secure, even-tempered / anxious, insecure, self-pitying

Five factor model of personality

Do the big five show up in the assessment of personality in cultures around the world?

- Yes, especially extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

Do the big five personality traits shown up in animals?

- Yes, in dogs, hyenas, and dolphins

Contributions

- Traits influence health, cognitions, career, success, and interpersonal relations

Criticism

- Ignores the role of the situation in behavior
- Ignores nuances of an individual's personality

Personality assessment

Self-report tests

- Social desirability issue
- Way to avoid it: test items not related to purpose of the test

Projective tests

- Psychodynamic approach
- Project own meaning on ambiguous stimuli
- Thematic apperception test (TAT) or picture story exercise (PSE)
- Series of ambiguous pictures viewed one at a time
- Elicited stories reveal an individual's personality

Myers-Briggs is not a legitimate personality test

- Categories instead of continuum
- No test-retest reliability
- Not empirically supported

Other assessment methods

- Direct behavioral observations
- Peer ratings
- Interviews