Unit 8 Notes: Personality

**Definition**

- *personality* is an individual’s unique thoughts, feelings and behavior that persist over time and different situations.

**Six Psychological Perspectives**

- There are six main schools of thought regarding personality:
  - **psychodynamic**: focuses on unconscious motives and structures to explain personality
  - **humanistic**: focuses on the fundamental goodness of people and their attempts to strive for higher levels of functioning
  - **constitution (or type)**: proposes a relationship between body type and personality characteristics
  - **trait**: examines stable characteristics of the person that help explain behavior
  - **social-cognitive (or sociocultural)**: focuses on environmental contingencies and accompanying mental processes to explain personality
  - **behavioral**: focuses on the fundamentals of learning to explain behavior

**Psychodynamic: Sigmund Freud**

- the most well-known psychodynamic theorist if Sigmund Freud.
- Freud focused on the power of inner forces as motivators to shape personality.

  - Freud’s psychodynamic theory is based on a few key concepts:
    1. underlying symptoms can be relieved through the expression of the *strangulated affect*, or bring these unconscious motives to the surface--the process of purging these emotions is called *catharsis*
    2. the symptoms someone displays have an *emotional logic* and the key to psychoanalysis is to unlock the mysteries of these symptoms
    3. a lot of abnormal behaviors are a result of *emotionally abrasive experiences* in our childhood; they unconsciously grow into abnormal behaviors as the person gets older

  - Freud’s theories are based on *psychic determinism*: the assumption that our early life determines our behavior and unconscious reactions.

  - Freud believed we all had certain drives and instincts which guide our behavior:
    - **eros**: the life instinct which seeks to preserve the species;
    - **libido**: our sexual energy
    - **thanatos**: our desire to return to the womb; shown in aggressive and destructive behavior

  - Freud believed that everyone progressed through five stages of *psychosexual development*:
    - these stages are:
      1. **oral stage** (0-1 years): achieves libidinal satisfaction from oral activities such as eating and sucking
      2. **anal stage** (1-3 years): autonomy is developed through bladder and bowel control
      3. **phallic stage** (3-6 years): the child comes to develop a sexual attachment to the opposite sexed parent and to see the same sexed parent as a rival for those affections
        - *Oedipus Complex*: boys want to possess the mother and see their father as a sexual rival
        - *Electra Complex*: girls want to possess the father and see their mother as a sexual rival
      4. **latency period** (6-puberty): a period of sexual rest for both sexes where sex-role identities develop
      5. **genital stage** (puberty on): a reawakening of sexual urges and a desire for heterosexual relationships
• Freud believed that the mind or our personality was made up of three constructs:
  – the id: the child within us that seeks expression of wishes and emotions (called the pleasure principle)
  – the ego: uses the reality principle to satisfy the id and superego safely and effectively in the real world
  – the superego: society’s values and morals; the parent within us which is guided by the idealistic principle

• Individuals constantly strive to present their best self and reduce anxiety
• Freud called this preserving ego integrity
• To do this, individuals employ a variety of defense mechanisms:
  – repression: involuntary memory loss about something anxiety-producing
  – suppression: voluntarily not thinking about something anxiety-producing
  – denial: not facing up to the reality of a situation
  – rationalization: making up excuses for our actions
  – displacement: rechanneling aggression in a negative way; taking our frustrations out on a substitute person or object
  – sublimation (also called compensation): rechanneling aggression in a neutral or positive way
  – projection: putting onto others our own tendencies, motives or traits
  – reaction formation: behaving outwardly that opposite of how we inwardly feel
  – procrastination: putting off something anxiety-producing until a later time
  – fixation: becoming stuck at a specific stage of psychosexual development because it is safer for ego integrity
  – regression: returning to an earlier stage of psychosexual development

• neo-Freudians refined and developed Freud’s theories
• they did not agree that our libido guided the majority of our actions but found other sources for our motives

**Psychodynamic: Carl Jung**

• Carl Jung was Freud’s handpicked successor
• Jung believed that our personality or mind was made up of three constructs.
  – conscious ego: our consciousness awareness of ourselves and how we present our self to the outside world
  – personal unconscious: motives and behaviors that are unique to the individual hidden away in the unconscious
  – collective unconscious: racial memory; our understanding of mankind’s past; our intuitive tendencies toward universal, reoccurring symbols called archetypes

• some of the more notable archetypal characters found in literature are:
  – hero: saves the day; defeats evil; protects the weak
  – mother: surrounds, encompasses and protects the individual; can be both a person or an institution
  – shadow: the dark side of our nature; our hidden, bad tendencies we do not like to acknowledge
  – trickster/magician: plays sly pranks and malicious tricks; usually represented as half man, half animal
  – child-god: an individual who has powers or knowledge beyond their years
  – anima: the projection of femininity from a man’s collective unconscious; seeing in others our own opposite sexed characteristics
  – animus: the projection of masculinity from a woman’s collective unconscious; seeing in others our own opposite sexed characteristics
  – persona: the Greek word for “mask;” the different faces we put on in different environments
• Jung believed in *mandala symbolism*, our striving for completeness or wholeness
• Jung also believed that what most people felt were coincidence were actually acts of *synchronicity*—an individual’s unconscious awareness of a greater understanding in the world

• Jung also examined personality types and temperaments
• he believed that personality traits lay along a continuum and individuals tended to fall somewhere along this continuum
• the opposite ends of this continuum he called *polar opposites*

**Psychodynamic: Alfred Adler**
• Alfred Adler believed that individuals possess innate positive motives that are the primary determinant of our personality
• our major goal was the achievement of perfection
• we would strive to overcome personal and social obstacles through compensation
• Adler later modified his theories and believed that individuals attempted to overcome feelings of inferiority, what he termed the *inferiority complex*
• later, he revised his theories again and focused on how the individual strives for personal and social perfection
• to help us achieve this, we develop *fictional finalisms* which are goals we set to guide our behaviors

**Psychodynamic: Karen Horney**
• Karen Horney thought that basic anxiety was a greater motivating force than our libido
• this may develop in children whose parents are overly oppressive, indifferent or inconsistent in their child-rearing
• in coping with these, individuals develop one of three *neurotic trends*, irrational approaches to dealing with this anxiety
• Horney believed that, in interacting with others, we tend to develop into the following types:
  – *compliant type*: moving toward others in attempts to be submissive
  – *aggressive type*: moving against others in attempts to gain power
  – *detached type*: moving away from others to avoid being hurt

**Psychodynamic: Erik Erikson**
• Erik Erikson believed that individuals went through eight crises throughout their lives in which a positive or negative resolution to the crisis occurred.
• these make up Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development

**Humanistic Perspective**
• the focus of *humanistic theory* is:
  – on the here and now
  – attempting to help the individual through the process of *unconditional positive regard* (unconditional support) in achieving *self-actualization*
  – a realization of the individual’s full potential and comforting sense of place in the world
• the emphasis is on the whole person, not an examination into only one dysfunctional part of personality
Humanistic: William James

- William James developed the concept of self--anything that a person can lay claim to be part of his or her person that distinguishes them from others
- James defined four parts to the self:
  - **material self**: refers to material possessions
  - **social self**: how we are perceived by others (akin to Jung’s persona)
  - **spiritual self**: our reasoning, emotions and psychological faculties
  - **pure ego**: the person’s internal stream of consciousness

Humanistic: Carl Rogers

- Adler’s concept of striving toward perfection and James’ concept of self where building blocks for Roger’s theories
- he believed that all organisms had a biological push toward fulfillment called an *actualizing tendency*
- individuals attempted to fulfill their own self-concepts or images they have formed of themselves through a *self-actualizing tendency*
- when an individual’s *real self* matches their potential or *ideal self*, Rogers believes the individual has become a fully functioning person--individuals strive for this *congruence*

Humanistic: Abraham Maslow

- Abraham Maslow also believed in our self-actualizing tendency by satisfying certain needs he arranged these in a hierarchical structure
  - the lower level needs represent our survival needs
  - the upper level needs our growth or meta-needs
- Maslow represented this *hierarchy of needs* in a pyramid, using the concept that the lower needs had to be met to form the foundation on which to build the higher level needs
- most of our time is spent toward the lower level needs
- the number of people who are self-actualized is relatively small.
- higher level needs are more difficult to measure because of the subtlety of their nature

Constitution or Type Perspective

- *constitution theory* focuses on the connection between a person’s body type and their personality

Constitution: Hippocrates

- Hippocrates believed that our personalities were associated with the four basic fluids in our body
- these humors of the body are:
  - black bile: melancholy or sad
  - blood: sanguine or cheerful
  - phlegm: phlegmatic or apathetic
  - yellow bile: choleric or excitable

Constitution: William Sheldon

- William Sheldon divides the human physique into three body types, or *somatotypes*
- the somatotypes are:
  - endomorphs: round bodies with large abdomens
  - mesomorphs: upright bodies with strong bones and muscles
  - ectomorphs: thin, fragile bodies
- Sheldon also divided our personality or temperaments into three types:
  - viscerotonia: fond of food, people and comfort; very sociable
  - somatotonia: love of activity and physical adventure
  - cerebrotonia: very private, restrained and self-conscious
Trait Perspective

- *trait theory* concerns itself more with describing rather than explaining personality
- traits cannot be observed in a person but can be inferred from their behaviors
- traits can be classified in three ways:
  - *cardinal traits*: a general trait that influences everything an individual does; this is very rare
  - *central traits*: traits that an individual typically exemplifies in their normal behavior
  - *secondary traits*: traits which appear only in specific situations

Trait: Gordon Allport & H.S. Odbert

- Gordon Allport believed that each individual had their own unique constellation of traits
- along with H.S. Odbert, Allport identified 17,953 words from the dictionary that described personality
- only about 4500 of these words made up stable or enduring traits.
- when synonyms were removed, the list was reduced to about 200 basic traits.

Trait: Raymond Cattell

- Raymond Cattell found that when these 200 traits were attributed to people, certain traits tended to cluster around each other
- based on his research, called factor analysis, he found that there were between 16 and 25 basic personality traits

Trait: Tuples & Christal

- Tuples and Christal has subsequently demonstrated that there are five basic dimensions of personality traits

Sociocultural Perspective

- the socio-cognitive theory focuses on the influence on the environment on the individual and how his or her behavior is changed correspondingly
- the process by which the individual, the situation and the environment all influence one another is called *reciprocal determinism*

Social-Cultural: Walter Mischel

- Walter Mischel proposed that there is only an apparent consistency of behavior when we observe others because we are seeing them in only a limited number of social situations
- he believes that we tend to look for behaviors to validate our assumptions about the consistency of someone’s behavior and ignore evidence to the contrary
- he later revised his theory indicating there are actually some aspect that are relatively consistent, for example intelligence and academic achievement

Social-Cultural: Albert Bandura

- Albert Bandura is probably the most well-known of the social learning theorists
- he believed that we developed behaviors based on *observational learning*
- Bandura believed that an individual then evaluates their behavior in a situation according to *internal expectancies*
- the environmental feedback that ensues from this behavior can alter the internal expectancies for future behavior

Social-Cultural: Julian Rotter

- Julian Rotter proposed that these expectancies can be influenced by one’s *locus of control*, or an expectancy that reinforcement is under either internal or external control
- people who believe they are masters of their own fate have an *internal locus of control*
- those who believe their behavior is due to destiny have an *external locus of control*
Behavioral Perspective: B.F. Skinner & John Watson

- B.F. Skinner believed that a person's behaviors were a result of past conditioning rather than some innate personality characteristic
- the parameters of their behaviors are based on what has worked for them in the past which, in essence, are conditioned responses to environmental stimuli
- new behaviors can change due to changes in reinforcement contingencies

Methods of Personality Testing

- objective tests:
  - personality tests that are administered and scored in a standard way
  - used by trait theorists
  - 16PF and MMPI are examples
  - self-report bias is possible as is familiarity with the test format
- projective tests:
  - personality tests consisting of ambiguous or unstructured material
  - used by psychodynamic theorists
  - the TAT and Rorschach test are examples
  - a more relaxed type of testing
  - unconscious thoughts can be uncovered
  - the true purpose of the test can be disguised
  - analysis relies on the skill of the examiner