

Chapter 9

Personality

Outline

I. Introducing Personality Theories

- A. A **theory** is an organized collection of testable ideas used to explain a particular subject matter.
- B. **Personality** includes the affects, behaviors, and cognitions that characterize a person with some consistency in a variety of situations.

II. The Psychoanalytic Approach

- A. The **psychoanalytic approach** is associated with Sigmund Freud and his followers.
- B. Two basic premises characterize the approach.
 - 1. Freud believed that innate drives could explain human behavior.
 - 2. He accepted the power of unconscious forces to mold and shape behavior.
- C. Freud believed that there were three levels of consciousness: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious.
- D. Freud believed that innate biological drives, or instincts, rule personality.
 - 1. **Life instincts (eros)**, or impulses for survival, motivate sex, hunger, and thirst.
 - 2. **Death instincts (thanatos)** are impulses of destruction.
 - a. When these are directed inward, they give rise to feelings of depression or suicide.
 - b. When they are directed outward, they result in aggression.
 - 3. Freud believed that life is an attempt to resolve the conflicts between these two natural instincts.
- E. Freud proposed that personality consisted of three separate, though interacting structures: the id, ego, and superego.
 - 1. The **id** is the instinctive aspect of the personality that seeks immediate gratification and resides in the unconscious mind.
 - a. The driving force of the id is **libido**, or sexual/sensual energy.
 - b. The id operates on the **pleasure principle**, the basic function of which is to find satisfaction for pleasurable impulses.
 - 2. The **ego** develops through one's experience with reality, and is the rational, reasoning part of one's personality.
 - 3. The **superego** reflects the internalization of society's rules and one's sense of morality or conscience.
 - a. The superego operates on the **idealistic principle**, which demands that one do what is right and proper, no matter what the circumstances.
 - b. The superego has no contact with reality.

4. The **reality principle** is the force that governs the ego, arbitrating between the demands of the id and the conscience of the superego.
- F. If the ego cannot find acceptable ways to satisfy the drives of the id, or if it cannot deal with the demands of the superego, conflict and anxiety result.
1. Freud proposed that **defense mechanisms** are unconsciously applied techniques that protect the self (ego) against strong feelings of anxiety.
 - a. **Repression**, or motivated forgetting, is a matter of forgetting some anxiety-provoking event or desire.
 - b. **Sublimation** involves the repression of unacceptable sexual or aggressive impulses and channeling them into socially acceptable behaviors.
 - c. **Denial** occurs when a person refuses to acknowledge the realities of an anxiety-provoking situation.
 - d. **Rationalization** occurs when one makes up excuses for one's behaviors rather than facing the real reasons for them.
 - e. **Fantasy** provides an escape from anxiety through imagination or daydreaming.
 - f. **Projection** is a matter of seeing in others one's own unacceptable, anxiety-provoking thoughts, motives, or traits.
 - g. **Regression** occurs when one returns to earlier, more primitive levels of behavior that were once effective.
 - h. **Displacement** refers to directing one's motives or behaviors at a substitute person or object rather than expressing them directly.
 2. Using defense mechanisms is a normal reaction, but they can become maladaptive.
- G. Freud proposed that one's personality develops through a series of **psychosexual stages**.
- H. Freud believed that at each stage of development, a crisis had to be resolved, or **fixation**, an over-investment of psychic energy would occur.
1. Fixation in the **Oral Stage** (birth to 1 year) would result in overeating, nail biting, smoking, or talkativeness.
 2. In the **Anal Stage** (age 1 to 3 years) satisfaction is gained through control of bladder and bowel habits.
 - a. Toilet training accompanied by high levels of stress and anxiety can lead to anal fixation.
 - b. Adults who are overly neat and orderly or extremely disorganized and messy can demonstrate the anal stage.
 3. The **Phallic Stage** (age 3 to 5 years) signals the awareness of one's sexuality.
 - a. Resolution of the Oedipus/Electra complex is the central crisis of this stage.
 - b. The superego begins to develop here.
 4. During the **Latency Period** (age 6 until puberty) there is no crisis to be resolved and sexual development is on hold.
 5. During the **Genital Stage** (after puberty) there is a renewal of sexual impulses.

III. **Neo-Freudians** were analysts who were bothered by the strong emphasis on biological instincts and lack of concern for social influences.

- A. Alfred Adler (1870-1937) proposed that goals and incentives motivate people.
 - 1. He believed that one's goal in life is the achievement of success or superiority.
 - 2. An inferiority complex can cause one to feel less able than others to solve life's problems and get along in the world.
- B. Carl Jung (1875-1961) believed that the major goal in life was to unify all aspects of personality, conscious and unconscious, introverted and extroverted.
 - 1. Jung believed there was a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious.
 - 2. He thought that the collective unconscious included archetypes, universal forms, and patterns of thought that transcend history.
- C. Karen Horney (1885-1952) focused on basic anxiety as a prime motivator.
 - 1. She claimed that there were three distinct ways in which people interact with each other: moving away, toward, and against each other.
 - 2. She disagreed with Freud's position regarding the biological basis of differences between men and women.
- D. The psychoanalytic approach is complex and comprehensive, and has both supporters and critics.

IV. The Behavioral-Learning Approach

- A. American psychology was oriented toward the lab and theories of learning.
 - 1. John B. Watson (1878-1958) emphasized the role of the environment and learning in shaping one's behaviors.
 - 2. B.F. Skinner's (1904-1990) variety of behaviorism focused on observable stimuli and observable responses and for relationships among them.
 - 3. John Dollard (1900-1980) and Neal Miller (b. 1909) posited that a system of habits developed in response to cues in the environment, and that behavior was motivated by primary and learned drives.
 - 4. Albert Bandura (b. 1925) considered internal cognitive processes of the learner, observation, and social influence to be important to personality.
- B. Critics suggest that these approaches dehumanize personality and that they are too deterministic.
- C. Supporters value the approaches for their emphasis on experimentation and for the forms of behavior therapy that have evolved.

V. The Cognitive Approach

- A. In this approach, it is thought that many of the cognitive processes humans use intersect with patterns of thought and perception.
 - 1. According to George Kelly (1955) each person has a set of personal constructs that directs thoughts and perceptions.
 - 2. Walter Mischel (1973) proposed a cognitive model that included "person variables."
 - a. Cognitive and behavioral construction competencies
 - b. Encoding strategies and personal constructs
 - c. Subjective stimulus values
 - d. Self-regulatory systems and plans

3. Cantor and Kihlstrom (1987) proposed the notion of **social intelligence**, which are all the skills, abilities, and knowledge that a person brings to all social situations, and uses to solve life tasks.
 4. Cantor and Langston (1989) identified defensive pessimism and optimism as life task-strategy packages.
- B. The cognitive approach to personality fits in well with what is known about human cognition, and its future seems bright.

VI. The Humanistic-Phenomenological Approach

- A. This optimistic approach claims that people have the ability to shape their destiny, and that biological, instinctive, or environmental influences can be overcome or minimized.
1. Carl Rogers (1902-1986) thought that the most powerful of human drives was to become fully functioning.
 2. Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) focused on the positive, and thought that the major goal in life was to self-actualize.
- B. This approach has strengths, but is criticized for being a vision for the nature of personality rather than a scientific theory.

VII. The Trait Approach

- A. Guilford defined a **trait** as “any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from others.”
- B. Traits fall on a continuum and are descriptive of personality dimensions.
- C. Gordon Allport (1897-1967) proposed two types of personality traits: common traits and personal traits.
1. Common traits are dimensions of personality shared by most.
 2. Allport claimed that there were three subtypes of personal traits.
 - a. A cardinal trait is one that is so overwhelming that it influences virtually everything a person does.
 - b. A central trait is a disposition that characterized someone in five to ten words.
 - c. Secondary traits are found in specific circumstances.
- D. Raymond Cattell (1905-1998) offered an empirical approach with the correlational procedure called factor analysis to identify groups of highly related variables.
1. Cattell relied on psychological tests, questionnaires, and surveys.
 2. He argued that there are two types of personality traits.
 - a. Surface traits are clusters of behaviors that go together and are easily observed.
 - b. Source traits are not directly observable but determine which surface traits become expressed in behavior.
- E. *Hans Eysenck* argued for three “supertraits,” extroversion-introversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism.
1. Below these three were more common sorts of personality traits.
 2. Below those were clusters of habitual patterns of behaviors.
 3. Below those were specific behaviors or responses

- F. *The Big Five Model* describes the traits that have the most research support and include the following:
1. Extroversion/Introversion where being high on **extroversion is related to having more positive emotions than negative ones**
 2. Agreeableness or Friendliness
 3. Conscientiousness
 4. Neuroticism/Emotionality
 5. Openness to Experience and Culture/Intelligence – **the trait best and consistently correlated with measures of intelligence**
- G. There continues to be debate concerning the number of traits that are important in personality and predicting behavior.
- H. The value of personality traits varies from culture to culture.

VIII. The Biological Approach

- A. Focuses on biological, physiological, and genetic mechanisms to describe and explain personality.
- B. Physiological/Anatomical correlates of personality.
1. The ascending reticular formation may be related to introversion-extroversion.
 2. The neurotransmitter norepinephrine has been associated with “sensation-seeking.”
- C. There is almost certainly a correlation between some personality traits and one’s genetic predispositions, although the correlations are weak.
- D. **Contemporary research efforts are looking at brain structures or physiological processes related to characteristics of traits listed as the “Big Five.”**

IX. Gender and Ethnic Differences in Self-esteem and Locus of Control

- A. *Self-esteem* reflects the evaluative judgments or attitudes that people make about themselves.
1. There appears to be little difference—overall—in the self-esteem of adult females and adult males.
 2. In adolescence, males have a small—but consistently—more positive levels of self-esteem than do females.
 3. In general, African Americans have a higher sense of self-esteem than do Caucasians, whose self-esteem is higher than that of Latino Americans and Native Americans.
 4. There is growing support for the notion that self-esteem *per se* is not terribly well correlated with most standard measures of success, academic or otherwise.
- B. *Locus of control* in psychology refers to the general source of one’s reinforcement or satisfaction.
1. People with an internal locus of control see their destinies in their own hands, under the control of their own abilities and efforts.
 2. People with an external locus of control tend to see outside forces as those that matter most in their lives
 3. As adolescents grow older, their locus of control tends to shift toward an internal locus—for males and females alike.

4. African Americans who are comfortable with their ethnicity tend to have an internal locus of control.

XI. Personality Measurement or Assessment

- A. **Behavioral observation** involves drawing conclusions about one's personality based on observations of behaviors.
- B. The data of the **interview**, a conversational interchange, provides one of the oldest, most widely used, but not necessarily most accurate method of personality assessment.
- C. The **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)** is a popular paper-and-pencil personality test designed to aid in the diagnosis of people with mental disorders.
 1. The MMPI-2 is a revision published in 1989 that was designed to update and improve the original test.
 2. It consists of 567 true-false questions and is considered a criterion-referenced test.
 3. A trained psychologist must interpret the pattern of responses.
- D. The California Personality Inventory (CPI) assesses 18 personality traits.
- E. Cattell's 16 PF Questionnaire was designed in conjunction with his trait theory approach.
- F. The Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale has gained wide acceptance as a measure of anxiety.
- G. The Endler Multidimensional Anxiety Scale claims to distinguish between anxiety and depression.
- H. A **projective technique** asks a person to respond to ambiguous stimuli in the hopes that the person will reveal aspects of his or her personality.
 1. The **Rorschach inkblot test** is a projective technique in which a person is asked to say what he or she sees in a series of inkblots.
 2. The **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** consists of a series of pictures about which a person is asked to tell a story.
- I. The scoring and interpretation of projective tests are usually subjective and impressionistic.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define personality.
2. Discuss the three levels of consciousness proposed by Freud, and explain the role instincts play in Freud's theory.
3. List Freud's three structures of personality and the principles by which they operate.
4. Describe Freudian defense mechanisms and their purposes.
5. Describe Freud's psychosexual stages of personality development..
6. Explain the contributions of Adler, Jung, and Horney to the psychoanalytic approach and the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.
7. Describe the contributions made to personality theory by Watson, Skinner, Dollard and Miller, and Bandura, and explain the criticisms leveled at the behavioral-learning approach.
8. Understand the assumptions of Mischel's cognitive approach to personality.
9. Explain social intelligence and its relationship to personality.
10. Discuss the humanistic approach to personality theorized by Rogers and Maslow, and explain how this approach has been evaluated.
11. Discuss how the trait approach to personality can be evaluated.
12. Explain the personality trait approach according to Allport and Cattell.
13. List the "Big Five" personality dimensions.
14. Explain interactionism and describe how this relates to the construct of personality.
15. Explain behavioral observations and how they are used for assessing personality.
16. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the interview as a personality assessment technique.
17. Describe the MMPI-2, explain why it was designed, and define multiphasic.
18. Explain how the California Personality Inventory differs from the MMPI.
19. Describe the characteristics of projective techniques.
20. Explain the Rorschach and the TAT, and discuss their reliability and validity.

Key Terms and Concepts

theory_____

personality_____

psychoanalytic approach_____

life instincts (eros)_____

libido_____

death instincts (thanatos)_____

conscious_____

preconscious_____

unconscious_____

id_____

pleasure principle_____

ego_____

reality principle_____

superego_____

idealistic principle_____

defense mechanisms_____

repression_____

sublimation_____

denial_____

rationalization_____

fantasy_____

projection_____

displacement_____

neo-Freudians_____

inferiority complex_____

trait_____

biological approach (to personality)_____

behavioral observation_____

interview_____

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2)_____

projective technique_____

Thematic Apperception Test_____

Practice Test Questions

Multiple Choice

1. Ideas, thoughts, or memories of which we are not immediately aware, but which we can think about with reasonably little effort, are said by Freudians to be stored in our _____ level of awareness.

<input type="checkbox"/> a. immediate	<input type="checkbox"/> c. preconscious
<input type="checkbox"/> b. unconscious	<input type="checkbox"/> d. subconscious
2. Freud might “explain” war and man’s inhumanity toward man in terms of

<input type="checkbox"/> a. thanatos.	<input type="checkbox"/> c. wish-fulfillment.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. libido.	<input type="checkbox"/> d. eros.
3. The aspect or structure of one’s personality that is most responsible for feelings of guilt or blame is the

<input type="checkbox"/> a. id.	<input type="checkbox"/> c. libido.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. superego.	<input type="checkbox"/> d. ego.
4. Otis did not take the time to study for his test in psychology and, as a result, failed it badly. Otis blames the instructor for asking so many “picky” questions and blames the author of his text for writing such a “poor and useless” book. It sounds like Otis is engaging in

<input type="checkbox"/> a. repression.	<input type="checkbox"/> c. projection.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. fantasy.	<input type="checkbox"/> d. rationalization.
5. The so-called Neo-Freudians left Freud and devised their own theories of personality because they objected to — more than anything else — Freud’s heavy emphasis on

<input type="checkbox"/> a. instincts and biological concepts.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. the importance of early childhood.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. parent-child social interactions.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. the idea of levels of consciousness.
6. The concept of “inferiority complex” is best associated with

<input type="checkbox"/> a. Freud.	<input type="checkbox"/> c. Adler.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Jung.	<input type="checkbox"/> d. Horney.
7. More so than any other theorists discussed, psychologists such as Watson, Dollard, Miller, and Skinner tended to talk about personality in terms of

<input type="checkbox"/> a. conscious choices made by individuals faced with difficult decisions to make.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. explaining a person’s behaviors by referring to environmental factors.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. personality traits that remained relatively stable once they were formed.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. cognitive representations of the world that guide one’s behaviors.

8. Which of these is the most valid criticism of the behavioral approach to personality?
- ☐ a. It emphasizes the environment so much, there is little left for the inner, individual person.
 - ☐ b. It relies too heavily on concepts borrowed from biology and physiology.
 - ☐ c. Focusing on only one level of consciousness, it leaves out much of the rich fabric of unconscious processes.
 - ☐ d. Most of the terminology of this approach is very loosely defined.
9. To say that a personality theory is phenomenological is to say that it emphasizes
- ☐ a. instinctive, biological mechanisms.
 - ☐ b. how people see themselves and their environments.
 - ☐ c. unconscious, unknown and unknowable influences.
 - ☐ d. learning and conditioning.
10. Personality traits have been defined most commonly
- ☐ a. in terms of how one's personality is tied to survival.
 - ☐ b. to describe how someone scores on a personality test.
 - ☐ c. to explain individual differences among people.
 - ☐ d. by statistical procedures such as factor analysis.
11. In the context of personality theories, what makes the Big Five so remarkable?
- ☐ a. The five major theorists involved have agreed on what personality is.
 - ☐ b. We now can determine when the environment is most important and when personality is most important.
 - ☐ c. There seems to be a consensus on how best to describe personality.
 - ☐ d. There are actually five levels of consciousness, not just the three that Freud described.
12. Which concept can best describe how the so-called "person-situation" debate has been resolved?
- ☐ a. a no-win situation
 - ☐ b. useless or pointless
 - ☐ c. evolutionary
 - ☐ d. interactionism
13. If we hear someone talking about "dispositional traits" and "situational traits" to what is she or he referring?
- ☐ a. nature/nurture
 - ☐ b. internal forces/external forces
 - ☐ c. growth/development
 - ☐ d. male issues/female issues
14. According to Freud, the first time one becomes aware of and finds pleasure in one's own genitals is when one enters the _____ stage of development, at about the age of three years.
- ☐ a. sexual
 - ☐ b. latency
 - ☐ c. phallic
 - ☐ d. genital

15. For which of these assertions is there the most evidence?
- ☐ a. Males are more physically aggressive than are females.
 - ☐ b. Males are more analytical in their thinking than are females.
 - ☐ c. Females are more creative in their problem solving than are males.
 - ☐ d. Females are generally more sociable than are males.
16. As opposed to intellectual assessment, personality assessment
- ☐ a. seldom uses psychological tests.
 - ☐ b. attempts to measure you at your best.
 - ☐ c. is used to predict behavior.
 - ☐ d. measures normal, or typical, behaviors.
17. To say that a test, such as the MMPI-2, is “criterion referenced” implies that
- ☐ a. questions do not have right or wrong answers.
 - ☐ b. people from different known groups respond to items differently.
 - ☐ c. the test is designed to predict who might become mentally ill in the future.
 - ☐ d. test scores have been factor analyzed.
18. The test in which one is assumed to project his or her personality into descriptions of ambiguous inkblots is the
- ☐ a. Thematic Apperception Test.
 - ☐ b. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.
 - ☐ c. Rotter Incomplete Sentences Test.
 - ☐ d. Rorschach Test.

True/False

1. ☐ True ☐ False Freud based his approach to personality on his experiences as a therapist.
2. ☐ True ☐ False B. F. Skinner never had a theory of personality, claiming that learning theory would do just fine.
3. ☐ True ☐ False Unlike Freud, Carl Rogers never engaged in psychotherapy.
4. ☐ True ☐ False Most trait theories, including the so-called “Big Five” theory, do not include intelligence as a personality trait.
5. ☐ True ☐ False While men have a greater sense of self-esteem than do women (at least in adulthood), they also have more of an external locus of control.
6. ☐ True ☐ False All of your personality traits change over time.
7. ☐ True ☐ False Both the Rorschach and the TAT are projective tests.

Answers to Practice Test Questions

Multiple Choice

1. **c** The key here is “reasonably little effort.” This indicates that the information is stored at the preconscious level.
2. **a** In fact, Freud had quite a bit to say about war and its destructive power. He suggested that humans must have some sort of drive for destruction, which he called thanatos, to match their drive for life and survival, which he called eros.
3. **b** It is our superego that informs us of moral issues and keeps us in touch with “right and wrong.” When forces of the id overwhelm the superego, the result is often guilt.
4. **d** Otis is rationalizing. He is making up excuses for his behaviors instead of facing — the anxiety-producing — reasons for them.
5. **a** There were many grounds on which people broke away from Freud. Of these, the first statement here summarizes a problem that many had.
6. **c** As you know by now, I usually don’t like questions about names, but I think that for each of the theorists discussed in this chapter, you ought to have at least one or two well-formed associations, such as Adler and inferiority complexes. This might be a good place to remind you of the value of flash cards for studying.
7. **b** The psychologists listed here would say that forces outside the organism—forces in the environment, not the person — should be used to explain behavior.
8. **a** Although a reasonable criticism of all behavioral approaches, this one is most often leveled at Skinner’s.
9. **b** Phenomenology has to do with perception. Here the issue is the perception of one’s self and the perception of others. Here again we have the point that what matters most is what is perceived, not what is.
10. **d** Personality traits are dimensions of description and have been determined most often by factor analyzing test scores of many persons to see which characteristics might be interrelated.
11. **c** The Big Five are personality traits (or clusters of traits). What makes them remarkable is the extent of consensus about their universality.
12. **d** We’ve seen this term before in other contexts. Here we are talking about the interaction of situational and dispositional influences on behavior.
13. **b** Referring to one’s disposition is to make reference to internal, personality characteristics, whereas situational traits refer to forces of the environment.
14. **c** It’s a little word, but the key word here is “first.”
15. **a** If I had not put the “physically” in this alternative, even it would be in doubt. There is virtually no evidence for the last three alternatives.
16. **d** On an intelligence test, I want you to do as well as you can, but on an assessment of personality, I want you to act normally and give me your characteristic responses, not what you think might make you look better.
17. **b** What makes the MMPI-2, for example, criterion-referenced is that each item tends to be answered differently by people from different known groups.
18. **d** Which is why it is referred to as the Rorschach Inkblot Test.

True/False

1. **T** Actually, Freud was a physician and therapist first and a personality theorist later. He based his theories on many things, including observations of his patients and himself.
2. **T** In fact, we may argue that Skinner never really had much of a learning theory either, but to the extent that learning theories were developed, they would suffice for Skinner.
3. **F** Roger's form of therapy was quite different from Freud's, of course, but Rogers developed a very popular form of psychotherapy.
4. **F** Virtually all personality theories, including the listing of the "Big Five," include intelligence (or something very much like it) as an important aspect of one's personality.
5. **F** This is really a two-part statement, and it is wrong on both parts!
6. **F** A very tough call on this one, because in fact, many personality characteristics do remain remarkably stable over time.
7. **T** They are projective tests in the sense that they are so ambiguous that the person must project aspects of his or her personality into test responses.

Experiencing Psychology

Assessing One Aspect of Personality

Humanistic approaches to personality emphasize the analysis of the factors that enter into a person's perceptions and evaluations of his or her life experiences. Carl Rogers refers to these perceptions as the *self-concept*. Mark Snyder (*The Many Me's of the Self Monitor*, Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1980) has prepared a Self-Monitoring Scale that indicates the extent to which one is aware of one's own wants, needs, and traits; that is, is aware of one's own "self."

These statements concern personal reactions to a number of different situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so consider each statement carefully before responding. If a statement is true, or mostly true, as applied to you, circle the **T**. If the statement is false, or usually not true, as applied to you, circle the **F**.

- T F** 1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.
- T F** 2. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain certain people.
- T F** 3. I would probably make a good actor.
- T F** 4. I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I really am.
- T F** 5. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention.
- T F** 6. In different situations and with different individuals, I often act like very different people.
- T F** 7. I can only argue for ideas I already believe.
- T F** 8. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what other people expect me to be more than anything else.
- T F** 9. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.
- T F** 10. I am not always the person I appear to be.

SCORING: Give yourself one point for each of the questions 1, 5, and 7 that you answered **F**, and give yourself one point for each of the remaining items that you answered with a **T**. If your total points are seven or more, you are probably a high-monitoring person; three or below and you are probably low on self-monitoring.

Three points to ponder: (1) To what extent does the situation determine the extent to which one acts openly and honestly in the presence of others? (2) Can you think of any behaviors or characteristics that should be correlated with one's degree of self-monitoring? (3) How would you proceed to test the reliability and the validity of this scale, and how would you create norms for it?

Psychology on the Internet

A confirmation of our point that defining personality is a difficult task can be confirmed when one tries to search the Internet for websites related to “personality.” You can find all sorts of things that nothing whatsoever with the sorts of issues addressed in psychology texts. Indeed, the most common usage of the term implies that personality is something that one can have to greater or lesser degrees and can be evaluated on a scale from good to bad. When your goal is to do nothing more than waste time, you might just enter the term “personality” in your favorite search engine and take a (brief) look at what turns up. Here are some of the more academic sites related to personality theory.

1. THE PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

In a chapter on theories of (or approaches to) human personality is it any surprise that we begin with Sigmund Freud? The truth is, everybody does. In many ways, Freud began the enterprise of writing about personality issues, and surely no one since has produced a greater reaction or had a greater impact on Western civilization than did Sigmund Freud. I tell my students that reading about Freud and his work is all well and good, but no matter what one thinks of his personality theory, nearly everyone credits his writing skills. His writings are not all that technical. You can handle it. And think about all that Freud wrote about — sex, aggression, love, lust, slips of the tongue, defense mechanism — great stuff.

<http://www.pschoanalysis.org>

(the homepage of “The New York Psychoanalytic Institute and Society” — and a nice site it is — the innocent appearing “about us” link provides a good summary of psychoanalysis. There also are good links to “resources” and “journals.”

<http://www.freud.org.uk>

(a site worth a visit. Its focus is the Freud Museum in London, but it provides many other links)

<http://users.rcn.com/brill/freudarc.html>

(simply, “Sigmund Freud and the Freud Archives” — lots of good stuff)

<http://mythosandlogos.com/psychoanalysis.html>

(scores of links — check out “A Brief History of Psychoanalysis,” then pick and chose from among theorists — a huge mega-site)

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/beystehner.html>

(a good, thorough summary/review of Freud's approach to personality)

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/plaut.html>

(a paper, "Psychoanalysis: From Theory to Practice, Past and Present")

2. THE BEHAVIORAL-LEARNING APPROACH

When you consider that the major thrust of the behavioral/learning approach to personality might be summarized by the observation that there is no need for a theory of personality—learning theory will be quite adequate — it is not surprising that there is not much to be found on the Internet on this subject. Still, a little careful looking and you can find a few sites that add to our discussion in the textbook.

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Watson/Battle/watson.htm>

(a classic, 1929, paper on Watson's approach, by Watson himself)

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/naik.html>

(a paper, "Behaviorism as a Theory of Personality: A Critical Look")

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/behaviorism.html>

(a great site on behaviorism, with great links)

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/skinner.html>

(an article treating B. F. Skinner as if he were a personality theorist)

3. THE COGNITIVE APPROACH

The cognitive approach to personality is not unlike the behaviorists' approach in that no one (with the possible exception of Kelly) ever tried to write a full, comprehensive theory of personality as such. What we have is a series of tidbits.

<http://www.enquirewithin.co.nz/HINTS/skills2.htm>

(an excellent summary of the position of George Kelly)

<http://www.wilderdom.com/personality/L11-0CognitivePerspectivesPersonality.html>

(a very concise, reasonable statement of the cognitive approach to personality theory)

4. THE HUMANISTIC-PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

This approach to personality theory — even as much as psychoanalysis — grew with a parallel approach to psychotherapy. There are others involved in the humanistic approach, but the major contributors are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

<http://www.ahpweb.org>

(You'll love it! — the homepage of the “Association for Humanistic Psychology” — check out the links, particularly “a brief history...”)

<http://www.revision-notes.co.uk/revision/72.html>

(a set of study notes on Rogers and Maslow and self-actualization)

<http://www.wynja.com/personality/rogersff.html>

(a great piece: “An Analysis of Carl Rogers’ Theory of Personality”)

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/maslow.html>

(a wonderful article on Maslow and personality)

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/rogers.html>

(Dr. Boeree again, here on Carl Rogers)

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Rogers/personality.htm>

(some observations on the nature of personality from Carl Rogers himself, 1947)

5. THE TRAIT APPROACH

Those psychologists who favor a trait approach to the study of personality are not so much interested in explaining personality as they are in adequately describing it. There is a very long tradition in psychology of attempts to measure personality traits. What keeps this approach in the limelight these days is the so-called “Big-Five Personality Traits.”

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Allport/concepts.htm>

(a classic by Gordon Allport, 1927—“Concepts of Trait and Personality”)

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/genpsytraits.html>

(a short article on trait theories, describing a few that are not covered in the text)

<http://www.cattell.net/devon/rbcmain.htm>

(a most touching website, “A Memorial to Raymond Bernard Cattell,” hosted by his family members — what a wonderful use of the Internet!)

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/bigfive.html>

(a very nice website on the Big Five Model of personality — do check out the links)

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/popkins.html>

(a paper explaining the five-factor model of personality)

<http://test.personality-project.org>

(a real, live Internet test on the Big Five personality traits—you take the inventory and results will be emailed to you — not to worry, this one is safe)

6. IS THERE A PERSONALITY?

Of course there is a personality. Personality, as the term is used in psychology, may not be as powerful a force as was once thought, but surely everyone does have a system of relatively stable dispositions that he or she brings to any endeavor. What psychologists have come to appreciate is that the power of the situation may override internal, personal dispositions. As you know, this issue of disposition vs. situation has been resolved in favor of an interactionist position of disposition-AND-situation as determinants of actual behaviors. There is really not much new on this issue on the Internet.

<http://www.personalityresearch.org/courses/B15/notes/situation.html>

(a short summary — with a good link at the end)

<http://www.princeton.edu/~harman/Papers/Character.pdf>

(a wonderful essay in pdf format on the presence/absence of character or personality)

7. PERSONALITY MEASUREMENT OR ASSESSMENT

It is for this section that my warning about being careful with some of the “personality test” websites becomes relevant. That being said, I also suggest that — when time allows — you check out some of the weird sites that are available. I would argue that the sites below are significantly not weird.

<http://www.guidetopsychology.com/testing.htm>

(This site is rather “wordy,” and not very “pretty,” but it provides a good summary of some important concepts: the reliability and validity of psychological tests.)

<http://www1.umn.edu/mmpi>

(Dr. James Butcher is an expert of the first order on the MMPI. He spent a celebrated lifetime researching and developing this test. This is his website. There is a good bit of technical material here, but you should find the link to “Selected available articles” an interesting place to explore.)