

August 27, 2013

Personality Psychology Lecture

Definition

- An individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms—hidden or not—behind those patterns
- Psychological mechanisms—lots of theories
 - Freud: unconscious forces
 - Kelly: constructs, framing situations
 - Skinner: nope, nothing hidden

Personality psychologists stud

- Psychological triad: the combination of how people think, feel, and behave
- Overlap with clinical psychology
 - Normal vs. extreme
- The whole person
 - How all comes together
 - Goal= explain the whole person in his or her daily environment
 - Impossible to account for everything at the same time

The Trait Approach

- Trait= the informal ways we describe each other (ie arrogant, shy)
- Many formal definitions
 - Raymond Cattell: Trait: "tendencies towards certain types of reactions, basic structural units of the personality"
 - Text: reality stable part of personality
 - Traits= personal LEGO pieces
- Trait research is empirical
 - Mostly correlational (two factors that vary together. don't imply causation—ie eating ice cream more likely to drown in pool (summer))
 - Emphasizes accurate measurements of traits
- Trait approach focuses on individual differences
 - Strength: assesses and attempts to understand how people differ
 - Weakness: neglects aspects of personality common to most people

Measurements of Individual differences

- Trait approach focuses on second level "every man like some other man"

People are inconsistent

- Situations are important.. do traits exist? Is everybody basically the same and behavior changes according to situation?

Person-Situation Debate

1. Does the personality of the individual transcend trait into circumstance of situation
2. Common ordinary intuitions about fundamentally flawed or basically correct?
 - a. Positive, general, best foot forward—qualitative answer

- Situationalist
 - There is an upper limit to how well one can predict what a person will do based on any measurement of that person's personality, and upper limit is small
 - Situations more important than trait (behavior determined by situations, not personality)
 - Personality assessment is a waste of time, and everyday intuitions about people are fundamentally flawed
 - Zimbardo experiment (prisoners)
 - Predictability
 - Personality is not a good predictor of behavior
 - Mischel: behavior is too inconsistent across situations for individual differences to be characterized by traits
 - Ability of trait judgments to predict behavior
 - Using past behavior to predict future behavior
 - Correlations weren't particularly strong (.3/.4)
 - Criticized as short unfair and selective
 - Poor methodology
 - Too many experiments in lab
 - Should focus on behavioral trends in prediction
 - Correlation not as bad as it sounds (could predict w 70% accuracy how a person would behave)
 - Can't assume that "not personality variable" means definitely a situational variable—another variable you didn't measure?
 - Situationists haven't done much formal measuring (lots of assuming)

Chapter 7—Using Personality traits to understand behavior

- Traits connected with behavior
 - Single trait approach—"what do people like that do?"
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 - Many-trait approach—"who does that?"
 - Delay of gratification
 - Men less prone than women
 - Necessary for important goals
 - Ego control and ego resiliency (adjustment)
 - California Q set. 100 phrases
 - Categorize as characteristic or uncharacteristic or neither, most placed in center category
 - Have to restrict number of traits compared
 - Essential-trait approach—which traits are most important

- Attempt to condense list of traits
 - Undercontrolled vs overcontrolled
 - Most important factors of personality ought to be found across different sources of data
- o Big five traits list
 - o Extraversion
 - Warmth, outgoing, assertiveness
 - o Neuroticism
 - Inability to deal with problems, anxious, hostile
 - o Conscientiousness
 - Integrity
 - Tested to predict job performance
 - Tests do not show racial or ethnic differences
 - Avoid risk and seek protection from themselves—live longer
 - More years in school= marker variable, even though uncorrelated w IQ
 - o Agreeableness
 - Friendly compliance, likeability
 - o Openness
 - Creative, imaginative, clever, open-minded
 - o Self-monitoring—relationship between inner reality and external self
 - High self-monitors carefully survey situation looking for cues on appropriate way to act—flexible, more popular
 - Low self-monitors are more consistent regardless of situation because behavior more guided by inner personality— inflexible, stubborn
 - Related to experience of emotion—look to environment vs. look within
 - o Narcissism
 - Charming, arrogant, aggressive when threatened, crave power
 - Good and bad characteristics
 - In some individuals, reaches extreme and may be disorder
- o Drug users tested, those who were more likely to abuse drugs had significant problems in early childhood (ie restless, nervous, emotionally unstable)
- o Depression- traits evident at early age (unsocialized, undercontrolled)
- o Society's different expectations for men and women can affect their psychological health and development
- o Political orientation observed at young age w trait demonstration
 - o Conservation
 - o Liberal
 - o Authoritarian
 - o Must examine core values