5. PERSONALITY II

5.1 What are the big five dimensions of personality: Personality researchers have proposed that there are five basic dimensions of personality.

Today, many contemporary personality psychologists believe that there are five basic dimensions of personality, often referred to as the "Big 5" personality traits. Previous trait theorist had suggested a various number of possible traits, including Gordon Allport's list of 4,000 personality traits, Raymond Cattell's 16 personality factors and Hans Eysenck's three-factor theory.

However, many researchers felt that Cattell's theory was too complex and Eysenck's was too limited in scope. As a result, the five-factor theory emerged to describe the basic traits that serve as the building blocks of personality.

What Are the Big Five Dimensions of Personality?

Today, many researchers believe that they are five core personality traits. Evidence of this theory has been growing over the past 50 years, beginning with the research of D. W. Fiske (1949) and later expanded upon by other researchers including Norman (1967), Smith (1967), Goldberg (1981), and McCrae & Costa (1987).

The "big five" are broad categories of personality traits. While there is a significant body of literature supporting this five-factor model of personality, researchers don't always agree on the exact labels for each dimension. However, these five categories are usually described as follows:

1. **Extraversion:** This trait includes characteristics such as excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness and high amounts of emotional expressiveness.

2. **Agreeableness:** This personality dimension includes attributes such as trust, altruism, kindness, affection, and other pro-social behaviors.

3. **Conscientiousness:** Common features of this dimension include high levels of thoughtfulness, with good impulse control and goal-directed behaviors. Those high in conscientiousness tend to be organized and mindful of details.

4. **Neuroticism:** Individuals high in this trait tend to experience emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, and sadness.

5. **Openness:** This trait features characteristics such as imagination and insight, and those high in this trait also tend to have a broad range of interests.

It is important to note that each of the five personality factors represents a range between two extremes. For example, extraversion represents a continuum between extreme extraversion and extreme <u>introversion</u>. In the real world, most people lie somewhere in between the two polar ends of each dimension.

Big 5 Personality Research

McCrae and his colleagues have also found that the big five traits are also remarkably universal. One study that looked at people from more than 50 different cultures found that the five dimensions could be accurately used to describe personality.

Based on this research, many psychologists now believe that the five personality dimensions are not only universal; they also have biological origins. Psychology David Buss has proposed that an evolutionary explanation for these five core personality traits, suggesting that these personality traits represent the most important qualities that shape our social landscape.

Final Thoughts

Always remember that behavior involves an interaction between a person's underlying personality and situational variables. The situation that a person finds himself or herself in plays a major role in how the person reacts. However, in most cases, people offer responses that are consistent with their underlying personality traits.

These dimensions represent broad areas of personality. Research has demonstrated that these groupings of characteristics tend to occur together in many people. For example, individuals who are sociable tend to be talkative. However, these traits do not always occur together. <u>Personality</u> is a complex and varied and each person may display behaviors across several of these dimensions.

 5.2 Psychology Personality Theories: Much of what we know about human thought and behavior has emerged thanks to various psychology theories. For example, behavioral theories demonstrated how conditioning can be used to learn new information and behaviors. Psychology students typically spend a great deal of time studying these different theories. Some theories have fallen out of favor, while others remain widely accepted, but all have contributed tremendously to our understanding of human thought and behavior. By learning more about these theories, you can gain a deeper and richer understanding of psychology's past, present and future.

Behavioral Theories

Behavioral psychology, also known as behaviorism, is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Advocated by famous psychologists such as John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner, behavioral theories dominated psychology during the early half of the twentieth century. Today, behavioral techniques are still widely used in therapeutic settings to help clients learn new skills and behaviors.

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive theories of psychology are focused on internal states, such as motivation, problem solving, decision-making, thinking, and attention.

Developmental Theories

Theories of development provide a framework for thinking about human growth, development, and learning. If you have ever wondered about what motivates human thought and behavior, understanding these theories can provide useful insight into individuals and society.

Humanist Theories

Humanistic psychology theories began to grow in popularity during the 1950s. While earlier theories often focused on abnormal behavior and psychological problems, humanist theories instead emphasized the basic goodness of human beings. Some of the major humanist theorists include Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

Personality Theories

Almost every day we describe and assess the personalities of the people around us. Whether we realize it or not, these daily musings on how and why people behave as they do are similar to what personality psychologists do. Personality psychology looks at the patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behavior that make a person unique. Some of the best known theories in psychology are devoted to the subject of personality.

Social Psychology Theories

Social psychology is focused on helping us understand and explain social behavior. Social theories are generally centered on specific social phenomena, including group behavior, prosocial behavior, social influence, love and much more.

Learning Theories

Learning theories focus on how people learning and acquire new knowledge. This is an interdisciplinary topic of interest that often draws upon information from psychology, education, instructional design, and other areas.

5.3 The Structure of the Mind According to Freud: Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud believed that behavior and personality derives from the constant and unique interaction of conflicting psychological forces that operate at three different levels of awareness: the preconscious, the conscious, and the unconscious. What do these terms mean? What exactly happens at each level of awareness?

The Mind According to Freud

Many of us have experienced what is commonly referred to as a **<u>Freudian slip</u>**. These misstatements are believed to reveal underlying, unconscious thoughts or feelings. Consider this example:

James has just started a new relationship with a woman he met at school. While talking to her one afternoon, he accidentally calls her by his ex-girlfriend's name.

If you were in this situation, how would you explain this mistake? Many of us might blame the slip on distraction or describe it as a simple accident. However, a psychoanalytic theorist might tell you that this is much more than a random

accident. The psychoanalytic view holds that there are inner forces outside of your awareness that are directing your behavior. For example, a psychoanalyst might say that James misspoke due to unresolved feelings for his ex or perhaps because of misgivings about his new relationship.

The founder of psychoanalytic theory was <u>Sigmund Freud</u>. While his theories were considered shocking at the time and continue to create debate and controversy, his work had a profound influence on a number of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, literature, and art.
The term <u>psychoanalysis</u> is used to refer to many aspects of Freud's work and research, including Freudian therapy and the research methodology he used to develop his theories. Freud relied heavily upon his observations and case studies of his patients when he formed his theory of personality development.

Freud's Three Levels of Mind

Before we can understand Freud's theory of personality, we must first understand his view of how the mind is organized.

According to Freud, the mind can be divided into three different levels:

1. <u>The conscious mind</u> includes everything that we are aware of. This is the aspect of our mental processing that we can think and talk about rationally. A part of this includes our memory, which is not always part of consciousness but can be retrieved easily at any time and brought into our awareness. Freud called this the preconscious.

2. <u>The preconscious mind</u> is the part of the mind that represents ordinary memory. While we are not consciously aware of this information at any given time, we can retrieve it and pull it into consciousness when needed.

3. <u>The unconscious mind</u> is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that outside of our conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable or unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. According to Freud, the unconscious continues to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences.

Freud likened these three levels of mind to an iceberg. The top of the iceberg that you can see above the water represents the conscious mind. The part of the iceberg that is submerged below the water but is still visible is the preconscious. The bulk of the iceberg lies unseen beneath the waterline and represents the unconscious.

Each person also possesses a certain amount of psychological energy that forms the three basic structures of personality: the id, the ego, and the superego. These three structures have different roles and operate at different levels of the mind. In the next article in this series, learn more about the functions of each of these structures.