Chapter 12: Personality
Module 12.2: Personality Development

Psychology 100
Introduction to Psychology

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How Personality Develops

- Freud’s psychodynamic approach
  - Structure of the mind
  - Role of the unconscious mind
  - Structure of personality
  - Defense mechanisms
  - Psychosexual development
  - Later psychodynamic approaches
  - Was Freud right?
  - Humanistic approaches to personality
  - Social-cognitive approaches to personality

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Freud: The Structure of Mind

- Psychodynamic theory holds that much of behavior is governed by unconscious forces
- Mind is divided into three parts:
  - Conscious mind contains things that occupy one's current attention
  - Preconscious mind contains things that aren't currently in consciousness, but can be accessed
  - Unconscious mind contains memories, urges, and conflicts that are beyond awareness

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Role of the Unconscious Mind

- Contains memories, urges that are forbidden or dangerous (more on this later)
  - These are kept from consciousness, but can still cause problems
  - Example: Prior traumatic experience can cause irrational anxiety
- Dreams express contents of unconscious mind
  - Manifest content: What you remember from the dream
  - Latent content: True unconscious meaning of the dream

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The Structure of Personality

- Personality divided into three parts:
  - Id: Governed by inborn instinctual drives, especially those related to sex and aggression
    - Obey the pleasure principle
  - Superego: Motivates people to act in an ideal fashion, according to moral customs of parents and culture
    - Obey the idealistic principle
  - Ego: Induces people to act with reason and deliberation, and to conform to the requirements of the outside world
    - Obey the reality principle
  - Id is entirely in unconscious mind; superego and ego divided between conscious and unconscious

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Emergence of the 3 Components of Personality from the flow of Libidinal (aka Psychic) energy

Fig. 12.11
Defense Mechanisms
- Different parts of personality are in constant conflict, especially with regard to the id.
- Defense mechanisms ward off the resulting anxiety from these confrontations.
- These are unconscious.
- Often involve self-deception or replacing one urge with another.

The Arsenal of Defense Mechanisms
- Denial: Refusal to believe information that leads to anxiety.
- Rationalization: Creating an explanation to deal with threatening thoughts or actions.
- Intellectualization: “lofty” rationalization.
- Projection: Dealing with unacceptable feelings or wishes by attributing them to others.
- Reaction formation: Transforming an anxiety-producing wish into a kind of opposite, or behaving opposite to how you really feel.
- Displacement: Channeling unacceptable impulses onto safer targets.
- Sublimation: Channeling unacceptable impulses into socially acceptable activities.
- Repression.
- Suppression.
- Identification: Taking on characteristics of the threat.

Psychosexual Development
- Conflicts, memories, urges in the unconscious mind come from experiences in childhood.
- Emerging sexuality, pleasure, is the focus of many stages of development.
- Each stage has a focus of early sexuality/pleasure.
- Failure to move through a stage properly leads to fixation.
- Fixed individuals continue to act in ways appropriate for a much earlier stage.

Stages of Psychosexual Development
- First year: Oral stage.
  - Pleasure comes from sucking, putting things in mouth.
  - Fixation at this stage can cause overeating, smoking, nail-biting.
- Second year: Anal stage.
  - Pleasure comes from retaining or passing feces.
  - Fixation at this stage can cause excessive neatness or excessive messiness.

Stages (contd.)
- Ages 3 to 5: Phallic stage.
  - Pleasure comes from self-stimulation of genitals.
  - Erotic feelings directed toward opposite-sex parent.
  - Fixation here can cause relationship, sexual problems; also Oedipus or Electra complex.
- Ages 5 to puberty: Latency period.
  - Sexual feelings suppressed; energy directed towards school, social relationships.
- Puberty to adulthood: Genital stage.
  - Mature sexual relationships with opposite sex.
Other Psychodynamic Approaches

- Adler: Dealing with basic feelings of inferiority guides personality development.
- Jung: Each person has a “collective unconscious,” or symbols and ideas shared with the rest of humanity.
- Horney: Disagreed with Freud’s male-dominated view of sexuality, especially “penis envy;” irrational beliefs, not unconscious conflicts, cause psychological problems.
- Eriksson: Life “crises” that must be overcome.

Was Freud Right?

- Extremely influential on Western culture, but not accepted by many modern psychologists.
- Criticisms:
  - Lack of scientific evidence for concepts including parts of personality, defense mechanisms.
  - Over-reliance on case studies of disturbed individuals.
  - Biased against women.
  - Freud attributed reports of sexual abuse to unconscious conflicts.

Humanistic Approaches

- Focuses on people’s unique capacity for choice, responsibility and growth.
- Rogers: Personality comes from self-concept.
  - We tend to act in accord with self-concept.
  - Problems arise from incongruence between self-concept and experiences, “conditions of worth.”
- Maslow: Personality reflects where you are in a hierarchy of needs.
  - We all have a need for self-actualization.
  - Problems arise from failure to satisfy needs.

Were the Humanists Right?

- Also influential, especially with regard to optimistic view of human potential for positive growth.
- Emphasis on personal choice, responsibility, free will balance Freud’s ideas well.
- Criticisms:
  - Hard to predict or explain why drive for growth, self-actualization are sometimes expressed and sometimes not.
  - Too optimistic?

Social-Cognitive Approaches to Personality

- Experience, plus how people interpret experience, determine personality growth and development.
- Has its roots in the behaviorist tradition; emphasizes learned behaviors over innate nature.
- Important concepts:
  - Locus of control: How much control you feel you have over your environment.
  - Self-efficacy: Beliefs you hold about your own ability to perform a task, accomplish a goal.
  - Reciprocal determinism: Beliefs, behavior, environment interact to shape what you learn from experience.
Is the Social-Cognitive Approach Right?

- Idea that some personality traits are learned is widely accepted, as is the role of cognitive factors in learning
- Example: Expectations and beliefs
- Criticisms:
  - Over-emphasizes how a person responds in particular situations rather than on traits of person as a whole
  - Under-emphasizes biological, genetic factors in development