Unit 10: Personality

1. Introduction
    1. **Personality** is <u>a person's typical way of thinking, feeling, and acting</u>. It's what makes each person unique.
    2. Personality is a bit of a wishy-washy area of psychology. Whereas biological psychology can be nailed down in black-and-white, for instance, personality can be very gray in its answers.
    3. There are two main approaches of personality psychology…
        1. **Psychoanalytic approach** proposed mostly by Sigmund Freud. This approach suggests that people do things because of unconscious struggles started in childhood, often sexual in nature.
        2. **Humanistic approach** led by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. This approach focuses on our potential for growth and reaching our full potential.
    4. Modern personality psychologists build on these theories and study things in a more scientific manner. They study biology of personality, interactions of people and the environment, self-esteem, self-serving bias, and cultural influences.
2. Exploring the unconscious
    1. **Sigmund Freud** is likely the most recognizable name in psychology. He was a bright student who became a physician. As a doctor studying nervous disorders, he found out that some people had problems that had no physical explanation. He sought a psychological explanation.
    2. Freud thought the key to explaining a psychological cause was in a person's unconscious.
        1. He first tried hypnosis to "unlock" the unconscious.
        2. Then he tried "free association" where he'd say a word and they'd say whatever immediately popped into their heads.
            1. The idea was that they'd be revealing clues to their unconscious.
            2. Freud thought the clues would lead back to the person's painful childhood memories.
        3. Freud used an iceberg to illustrate the mind.
            1. The conscious part of our mind is above the water line.
            2. The waterline itself was the preconscious, where memories sort of floated above and below.
            3. Most of the iceberg is below the water, the unconscious. He felt these memories were "repressed" into the unconscious because they were too painful to remember.
                1. The theory says that these repressed memories "surface" by directing our actions, unknowingly to us.
            4. They might also come out in a "Freudian slip," that's when we say the wrong thing out loud, but to Freud, it's the truth surfacing.
            5. Freud analyzed dreams. The **manifest content** was what was remembered – it was the censored version. He was interested in the **latent content**, that which was not remembered.
    3. For Freud, a person is constantly struggling with him/herself. Think of it like a play, there were 3 main "characters"…
        1. **Id** – The id is the bad guy. Id is the little devil on your shoulder saying , "Do it! You know you want to, do it!"
            1. These are unconscious desires. The id goes for whatever feels good, right now. The id wants sex and drugs, for instance.
        2. **Superego** – The superego is the good guy. Superego is the little angel on your shoulder saying, "You know that's not right. Do what's right and *don't* do what's wrong."
            1. This is our moral compass that details right from wrong. Superego knows it's just not right to go around satisfying our sexual cravings anywhere and everywhere. Freud thought this kicked in starting around age 4 or 5.
        3. **Ego** – The ego is the negotiator who keeps them both happy.
            1. Ego is the "smart guy" who figures out some way for the id to get what he wants, but in a manner that superego is okay with.
    4. Freud thought people went through **psychosexual stages** of development. There are…
        1. Oral stage – 0 to 18 months – pleasure centers on the mouth.
        2. Anal stage – 18 months to 3 years – pleasure centers on potty training.
        3. Phallic stage – age 3 to 6 – pleasure centers on the genitals including incestuous feelings.
            1. He thought boys struggle with an **Oedipus complex** where they have sexual desires for their mothers. Girls have a flip-flop "Electra complex", supposedly.
            2. In this struggle, he thought the boys saw Daddy as a "competitor", but knowing they couldn't compete with Daddy, their sexuality goes dormant into the next stage.
        4. Latency – age 6 to puberty – sexuality is dormant (inactive).
        5. Genital – puberty on – sexuality is mature.
            1. Freud thought this is where sexuality re-emerges. The desires of the earlier days are now hidden in the unconscious.
            2. The superego takes in the parents' moral values.

3. Boys and girls begin to behave and agree with their same-sex parent in a, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" philosophy.

6. If a person is unable to overcome the struggles of any of these stages, the person might **fixate** (or "get stuck") on that stage.

1. For example, a person who got too much oral pleasure, or too little, may grow up to be a smoker or lash out verbally.

2. Or, a person who grew up either too strict in potty training might become a neat-freak, hence the term "anal retentive."

5. **Defense mechanisms** emerge when the ego can't do his job and keep both the id and superego happy.

1. These are methods to reduce anxiety by distorting reality. It's like lying to ourselves.

2. Some examples of defense mechanisms are…

1. **Repression** – This is pushing desires that cause anxiety out of our consciousness.

1. Freud thought repression was our #1 defense mechanism. This makes sense because he thought most of our mind existed in the unconscious.

2. Freud also thought these repressed feelings, memories, or desires come out (a) in dreams symbolically and (b) through slips of the tongue.

2. **Regression** – This is going back to our comfortable childhood days when we face a stressful situation. A child who's sent to kindergarten might start sucking his thumb again.

3. **Reaction formation** – Freud thought we had desires that we knew we couldn't allow to surface. So, the ego unknowingly changes those forbidden desires into their opposites. This is reaction formation. For example, the bully may really be very insecure inside.

4. **Projection** – This hides those bad desires by projecting them onto other people. For example, a girl who thinks a guy ignores her might say, "He's such a jerk, he cares about no one."

5. **Rationalization** – This occurs when we make up a justification for doing something that we know is wrong. A smoker might say, "I smoke because it helps me relax and that makes me more productive."

6. **Displacement** – This directs the unwanted desire (sex or aggression) toward something more acceptable than the root of the desire. For example, a child who gets in trouble at school might want to lash out at the teacher, but instead goes home and takes it out on his little brother.

7. **Sublimation** – This is changing those unwanted desires into something socially valued. For example, a filmmaker might take out his aggression by making a movie filled with violence; it might be accepted as a work of art.

8. **Denial** – This is where a person rejects that a problem is real or that it's actually serious. For example, a person running up a huge credit card debt might think it's no big deal.

3. **Neo-Freudian** and **psychodynamic theories**

1. Freud gained lots of critics and some followers. His followers accepted the id, ego, superego, that personality was defined in childhood, and in the unconscious. But they differed by (1) increasing the role of the conscious and (2) decreasing the roles of sex and violence.

2. **Alfred Adler** and **Karen Horney** (pronounced HORN-eye) felt that a child's social, not sexual, struggles define their personality formation.

1. Adler spoke of an *inferiority complex* that occurs when we fail to overcome struggles as kids.

2. Horney spoke of a kid's sense of helplessness that creates in us a desire for love and security.

1. She fought back as a woman in a male-biased arena.

3. **Carl Jung** (pronounced YOO-ng) agreed with Freud that the unconscious drove people. In this, he disagreed with the other Neo-Freudians.

1. Jung thought the unconscious was more than just repressed desires, memories, and feelings. He thought all people shared a **collective unconscious**. This is our supposedly common collection of images that we have gained together as human beings.

2. Jung focused on different people's myths, religions, and symbolic images. For example, he referred to the nurturing mother or brave warrior.

3. These ideas aren't really accepted anymore.

3. Today's psychodynamic psychologists only accept from Freud the idea that the unconscious is one of the factors that makes up our psyches.

4. Assessing unconscious processes

1. Psychoanalysts like Freud faced a problem – how do you study the unconscious? They came up with these "tools"…

1. **Dream interpretation** and **free association** were used. Supposedly, a trained psychoanalyst could pick out the symbols of a dream, or line up the free associated words to see a trend into the unconscious.

2. **Projective tests** were used. These tests can be interpreted in different ways and supposedly, the person will project their unconscious in their response.

1. In the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**, people were shown a picture that could be interpreted differently.

2. The **Rorschach inkblot test** is probably the most well-known. It's a series of symmetrical shapes that the person tells what they see. The way that the person responds to the TAT and

ink blots is supposed to reveal their unconscious and their personality.
1. The Rorschach test has supporters who say it's right-on, or at least it's useful in getting a sense of the person's personality before moving on.
2. Others say it's nonsense. They say these tests are not valid – they don't measure what they're supposed to (except for hostility and anxiety). They say these tests are not reliable – they do not give the same results when given over and over.

5. Evaluating the psychoanalytic perspective
1. It's unfair to judge Freud's ideas as foolish based on modern research.
2. Still, many of Freud's ideas don't meet today's knowledge.
1. He might have misjudged the significance of dreams and Freudian slips. If you make a goof while speaking, it appears that it just might be a goof, not that you're psycho-sexually wacked out.
2. It appears Freud might have overestimated some things, mostly, the impact of childhood on a personality.
3. Another fundamental misjudgment might have been Freud's emphasis on repression. It appears today that that's simply not the case. There are two theories for traumatic experiences…
1. Traumatic experiences are too bad to deal with so we push them into our unconscious. Freud would lean in this direction.
2. Traumatic experiences are seared into our memories, never to be forgotten. History has shown that more often than not, this is the case.
1. Evidence to this lies in cases like abuse by the Nazi concentration camps, rape, and child abuse. Those memories cannot be forgotten, even if they wished they were.
4. To Freud's credit, our unconscious does play a huge impact.
1. For instance, we can drive to work or school almost unconsciously, on auto-pilot, we've done it so many times.
2. Researchers today identify a **false consensus effect** which is the tendency to overestimate how much others share our beliefs.
3. A person's **terror management theory** tries to deal with death. In it, a person offers up defenses when thinking of their own death.
5. In terms of science, Freud fell woefully short. He wasn't a scientist. His theories just popped into his head, not as observations from an experiment as a true scientist.
6. Around 1960, many people disliked psychoanalysis and behaviorism.
1. Psychoanalysis focused too much on sex and aggression. We had no free will of our own, we just sought pleasures.
2. Behaviorism was too mechanistic – it made people like robots who just sought rewards and shunned punishment. Again, we had no free will of our own.
3. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers offered a third and positive choice.
1. **Abraham Maslow** said people are motivated by a hierarchy of needs and seek self-actualization – that is to reach one's full potential.
1. Maslow said we fulfill the most basic needs first, then move on to others.
2. Maslow's needs are (just FYI, this list is upside down as compared to the pyramid)…
1. Physiological – hunger and thirst
2. Safety – to feel the world is organized and predictable
3. Belongingness and love – the need to love and be loved, to be accepted and avoid loneliness
4. Esteem needs – we need self-esteem, achievement, competence, independence, recognition, respect from others
5. Self-actualization – to live up to our full potential
6. Self-transcendence – to find meaning beyond ourselves
3. Maslow studied "high achievers" like Lincoln, Jefferson, and Eleanor Roosevelt. He saw that they were secure in themselves and focused on what they felt was their life mission.
2. **Carl Rogers**, agreed with Maslow, and believed that people are basically good and unless stopped, would move toward self-actualization. Rogers thought 3 parts were needed to self-actualize…
1. **Genuineness** – a person must be honest with him/herself and not put up fronts.
2. **Acceptance** – a person must accept others and ourselves for who we are. We must give **unconditional positive regard** which is an attitude of grace. Grace is giving something that is undeserved, like undeserved forgiveness. For instance, we accept a good friend despite any faults he/she might have.
3. **Empathy** – a person should share another's feelings, he or she should "feel their pain." This means we honestly listen to others and honestly put ourselves in their shoes.
3. A person's **self-concept** is crucial for a humanist. This is our sense of knowing who we are. A positive self-concept enables us to live positive lives. A negative self-concept means we fall short of living up to our full potential.
7. Assessing the self
1. Humanists tried to measure a person's self-concept. They'd have people describe how they'd like to be, then describe how they think they really are. If the ideal and real selves are close, that's a sign of a positive self-

concept.
    2. Some humanists thought surveys were too impersonal and rather used 1-on-1 interviews.
8. Evaluating the humanistic perspective
    1. Maslow's and Rogers' most basic ideas were that people are good and that a positive self-concept leads to a happy, fulfilled person. These ideas have made their way into much modern thought. Think about "self-help" books that usually stress a positive attitude and motivation.
    2. Critics point out…
        1. Humanism is very unscientific. It's very subjective.
        2. Humanism is almost entirely me-focused. Rogers said that the only thing that mattered was whether a person lived in a way satisfying to himself. Caring for others also gives great rewards, often even more than caring for one's self.
            1. The humanists say that to care for others, you must first care for yourself.
        3. Humanism is very naïve. Humanists ignore that people are very capable of doing terrible evil. To think "we're all good at heart" is to not truly live in reality.
9. Exploring traits
    1. Some psychologists prefer to describe personality based on the traits that a person shows. It's like saying, "Rather than try to dig out an unconscious personality, let's just let the personality speak for itself."
    2. The "Trait Perspective" was started by Gordon Allport when he interviewed Freud. Allport, unlike Freud, was not interested in why a person behaved as they did, but in simply describing the person's traits.
    3. Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katharine Briggs made a questionnaire that sorted people into Carl Jung's personality types. This is called the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** (**MBTI**).
        1. The MBTI is widely used today (2 million people take it per year).
        2. It asks either-or questions, like "Do like routines or spontaneity?"
        3. The results are tabulated and given back to the taker in positive terms. For instance, liking a set routine or spontaneity could both be good.
        4. Critics point out that the science behind the survey is lacking.
    4. Nailing down a person's traits can be tricky. Psychologists use "factor analysis" to group together clusters of descriptive words and thus lean toward certain traits (and away from others).
    5. The Eysenck couple came up with a test that rates people on a circular scale.
        1. The Eysenck test tries to measure how much a person is **introverted** vs. **extroverted** (outgoing vs. reserved), and how much they are **emotionally unstable** vs. **emotionally stable**.
        2. If the circle was a clock, "unstable" is at 12:00 and "stable" is at 6:00. "Introverted" is at 9:00 and "extraverted" is at 3:00.
    6. Biology plays a role in our personality.
        1. PET scans have shown extraverts as different from introverts and they have higher dopamine levels.
        2. Genetics also greatly impacts our personality.
10. Assessing traits
    1. If traits are long-lasting, can we measure them? **Personality inventories** try to. They're long questionnaires on a variety of topics – feelings, behaviors, etc.
    2. The most famous personality inventory, and widely used is the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory** (**MMPI**).
        1. The MMPI tries to pinpoint abnormalities in personality.
        2. It breaks things down into 10 clinical scales, like depressive tendencies, masculinity-femininity, and introversion-extraversion.
        3. This test can be computer-given and graded, so it's rather objective in its analysis.
        4. It also offers a "lie scale" which tries to pinpoint when a person is faking answers.
11. The big five factors
    1. Modern personality tests focus on the "**Big Five**" factors of personality, using the mnemonic "CANOE" or "OCEAN":
        1. Conscientiousness – how much you care about things that you do.
        2. Agreeableness – how you get along with others.
        3. Neuroticism (emotionally stability/instability) – are you secure in yourself or flighty.
        4. Openness – do you prefer newness and variety or the usual and routine?
        5. Extraversion - are you outgoing or reserved?
    2. Research on the Big Five shows that…
        1. These traits are very stable for adults.
        2. These traits are about 50% heritable (50% of the differences between people are due to genetics).
        3. The Big Five predict school grades with conscientious people getting higher marks and being "morning people." "Evening people" are slightly more extroverted.
12. Evaluating the trait perspective
    1. The **person-situation controversy** asks, "What's more important, me as I am or me as others see me?"
    2. Most psychologists believe that people's traits tend to change little. Even though we certainly can change, our tendency is to stay as we are. And the older we get, the more our personalities stabilize.
13. Reciprocal influences

1. Many modern psychologists take an all-encompassing "biopsychosocial" approach to personality. This means personality is influenced by our bodies, minds, and interactions with our surroundings.
2. **Albert Bandura** started the **social-cognitive perspective** of personality which looks at how our traits interact with the situation that we're in. It's the mix of nature and nurture. This idea believes…
   1. We learn behaviors by conditioning or watching others (the social part).
   2. What we think about the situation also matters (the cognitive part).
   3. Bandura said three things interact with one another:
      1. Our behavior
      2. Internal cognitive factor (our thinking)
      3. Environmental factors
   4. Bandura's ideas come back to a major theme: we are made up by the dance between our bodies and the environment that we live in, with how to *think* about these things mixed in too.
14. Personal control
    1. Whether we feel we are in control or are controlled by external factors is our sense of personal control. This is studied in two ways…
       1. By correlating people's *feelings* of control with their *achievements* and behaviors.
       2. By experimentation where researchers alter a person's control level then measure the feeling of control.
    2. Julian Rotter identified two theories on the topic of personal control…
       1. **External locus of control** – people believe that powers outside of themselves determine their fate. People in this group may develop **learned helplessness**.
       2. **Internal locus of control** – people believe they control their own fate. Consistently, people in this category do better in just about every category.
    3. **Self-control** is our ability to suppress desires and delay pleasures. People with high self-control do better in many categories and are less susceptible to depression.
       1. Physical exercise and time management are both good "exercises" for improving self-control.
       2. Improving self-control in one area tends to spill over into other areas.
    4. Personal control can be improved.
       1. Enabling a person to alter his/her environment (like the TV or workspace) boosts health and morale.
       2. The bottom line: people like control and choices and they thrive when given them.
       3. There is one drawback, too many choices can be a negative and lead to being paralyzed in decision-making.
    5. Optimism and pessimism are important to personality too.
       1. A person who's optimistic (looks at the good in a situation) enjoys better health than a pessimist.
       2. Too much optimism can breed laziness though. It takes just the right balance of optimism and realism.
          1. Too much optimism leads to the "it'll never happen to me" syndrome.
    6. Incompetence is often blind to those who are incompetent. Only someone who can do the task can see an incompetent person's shortcomings. For instance, if you can't spell, you don't recognize misspelled words, but a good speller does.
       1. The solution, if you're wondering, "Am I incompetent?" is to ask others for their candid input.
15. Assessing behavior in situations
    1. Social-cognitive psychologists are interested in how people behave in certain situations.
       1. The military, education, and business worlds have taken this view and puts their recruits through realistic simulations to see how they handle it.
    2. The belief is that the best predictor of future performance is past performance (not personality or anything else). This belief is nothing new, is widespread, and is probably right.
16. Evaluating the social-cognitive perspective
    1. People who criticize this approach say there is a failure to recognize the "people-factor", the emotions and innate personality involved. Too much focus on the situation, they say, removes the humanity from the situation which simply must play a part in a person's reaction.
    2. Also, our bodies matter. One person may have a different physical reaction to a situation than another (think nervousness or stuttering, for example).
17. The benefits of self-esteem
    1. Our concept of "**self**" has many faces – everything between how we imagine ourselves positively in the future and how we fear ourselves regressing back toward. Moving ahead to better times and avoiding backsliding to worse days both motivate us.
    2. The so-called **spotlight effect** says that we tend to overestimate how much others will certainly notice us.
       1. For example, if we feel that we're having a "bad hair day", we tend to think everyone will notice. In truth, few do.
    3. Having a high **self-esteem**, a feeling or self-worth, is beneficial. The positive effects are numerous and substantial, such as: better sleep, lower need to conform, persistence, less shy/anxious/lonely, and happier. They also predict higher salaries in the future.
    4. On the flipside, low self esteem has its negative effects such as…
       1. Being more critical of others.
       2. Increased racial prejudice.

18. Self-serving bias
    1. People usually have a **self-serving bias** which is <u>a tendency to view ourselves favorably</u>. Evidence to support this is:
        1. We're prone to accept credit for doing good, not bad.
            1. For example, after doing poorly on a test, students often blame the test itself or the teacher for their poor score. But, when receiving a good grade, they say they earned it.
        2. We're prone to see ourselves as above average.
            1. For example, people usually rate their job performance as above average. By the very definition of "average", this cannot be true.
            2. People have a strong tendency to come up with excuses as to why we have more positive qualities than others and fewer negative qualities.
    2. People who think of themselves as rather awesome are often "shot down" by others who simply don't see them that way. The person who thinks he's awesome often reacts back aggressively or violently.
    3. The recent "Generation Me" shows a trend toward a focus on me, me, me. The effects are not good – materialism, desire for fame, unrealistic expectations, relationships without responsibility, gambling, and cheating.
        1. Even people who put themselves down might actually do it for the purpose of getting attention. It's like they're saying, "Nobody cares about me," but they're thinking, "Hey, look at me!"
        2. Sometimes, we all put ourselves down. But, more often, we pump ourselves up.
    4. Two types of self-esteem have been noted…
        1. **Defensive self-esteem** focuses on defending yourself from "attacks" and correlates with aggression and antisocial behavior. It's like saying, "Nobody's gonna say I'm unfriendly! Are you calling me unfriendly punk?!"
        2. **Secure self-esteem** is <u>not as dependent on outside factors, but more on internal factors like being secure with yourself for who you are</u>. It's like saying, "I know who I am, and I'm okay."
19. Culture and the self
    1. The culture in which we grow up and live helps determine our values.
        1. **Individualism** is a person doing their own thing. This is typical of Western cultures like the U.S. and Western Europe.
            1. People here value setting, pursuing, and achieving personal goals.
            2. Think of a shark prowling the seas on his own. The value is in the individual shark, master of his domain.
        2. **Collectivism** gives priority to one's group. The group defines values, gives a sense of belonging and care. This is typical of Asian cultures.
            1. People here value being a part of the group rather than showcasing themselves.
            2. Think of a school of fish massed together, no one is any different from any other. The value is in the group (the school), not an individual fish.
    2. Across cultures, men tend to enjoy more individualism and freedom than do women.
    3. Individualist countries also have higher divorce rates, more loneliness, and more stress-related disease. They also demand more in relationships.

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