CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONALITY

MODULE 35

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

- Enduring behavior patterns of a person
  - Characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, & acting

WHAT INFLUENCES OUR PERSONALITY?

- Biology – neural behaviors
- Genetics

WHAT IS A TRAIT?

- Characteristic behaviors & conscious motives, typically self-assessed

FACTOR ANALYSIS

- See figure 35.1 pg 469

- Eysenck Personality Questionnaire
  - Views introversion v. extraversion
  - Views emotional stability v. instability

HOW CAN WE ASSESS OUR TRAITS?

- Personality inventories
  - Eysenck
  - MN Multiphasic Personality Inventory

    - Typically a true-false or Likert Scale-type inventory

THE "BIG FIVE"

- A broader set of factors
  - Conscientiousness
  - Agreeableness
  - Neuroticism
  - Openness
  - Extraversion

    - See Table 35.1 pg 472

THE "BIG FIVE"

- Are predictive

- Are useful b/c they are scientifically measureable, apply across cultures, & are fairly stable

- Fairly stable throughout adulthood
  - But conscientiousness and agreeableness tend to rise slightly with age, and openness, extraversion, and instability decreasing with age

IS PERSONALITY DEPENDENT UPON THE SITUATION?

- Aka – person-situation controversy

- Generally, no, our personality remains the same, though we may behave diff. in diff. situations
  - But over time we average out to the same personality

- This makes personality tests hard to rely on because we behave differently in different situations

SOCIAL-COGNITIVE THEORIES

- Albert Bandura
- Recognizes interaction of our existing traits w/the current situation
- **Reciprocal determinism**: personality is determined by
  1) Traits
  2) Environment
  3) Behaviors

SOCIAL-COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- Is all about learning how people interact with their environment

- The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior

COMPARE THE 5 MAJOR PERSONALITY THEORIES

- See Table 35.2 pg 478

FOCUS ON "THE SELF"

- The center of your personality
- Self-esteem – your feelings of self-worth
- Self-efficacy – your feelings of competence & efficacy

SPOTLIGHT EFFECT

- Belief that others notice us more than they really do

  - "If you knew how seldom people actually thought of you, you wouldn't worry so much about what they think."
    - -Dr. Phil

PEOPLE WITH SECURE SELF-ESTEEM

- Sleep better
- Feel less pressure to conform
- Are more persistent
- Less shy, anxious, and lonely
- Don't get stuck in negative thought patterns
- Are less likely to attack others (personally, racially)

  - Love thy neighbor as thyself, or loathe thy neighbor as thyself…

SECURE V. DEFENSIVE SELF-ESTEEM

- Secure: a healthy self-image

- Defensive: correlated w/antisocial behavior

SELF-SERVING BIAS

- The tendency to see ourselves favorably, & blame failures on other factors

- Most people view themselves as above average

- Reflects an overestimation of ourselves

- For some people, when the reality is revealed, can become aggressive
  The higher the self-esteem, the more aggressively they respond if you burst their bubble…

NARCISSISM

- Excessive self-love
- Generation Me – born in 80s and 90s – tend to show more narcissistic tendencies
  - Correlation with:
    - Materialism
    - Belief that the world "revolves" around them
    - Belief that they are "owed"
    - Desire to be famous
    - Inflated expectations
    - Fewer committed relationships
    - More cheating
    - More gambling
      - **How might tech such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. impact the incidence of Narcissism**

CULTURAL IMPACT ON SELF-ESTEEM

Based on cultural norms. Does your culture value:
  who you are in relation to other people?
  your raw individualism?
  the efforts of the larger group?
  being unique?
  maintaining traditions?
  your ability to overcome personal adversity?
  your ability to maintain social harmony?
  the person who rises above the rest?

IN TIMES OF CRISIS…

- How might behaviors of an individualistic society differ from those of a collectivist tradition?

IN SUMMARY…

- Personality remains generally consistent
  - "Personality Psychology"

- Behaviors are situation-based
  - "Social Psychology"